



**GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT
SUBMISSION**

TO THE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

INQUIRY INTO

EDUCATION IN REMOTE AND COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS

Inquiry into Education in Remote and Complex Environments Western Australian Whole-of-Government Submission

The Western Australian Context

The size of Western Australia and the distribution of the student population presents this State with many distinctive settings and challenges for school education. Western Australia covers almost one third of the Australian land mass and has approximately 22 per cent of the population spread across some 2.5 million km². As a result, there are many challenges in delivering schooling in an equitable manner to the geographically diverse schooling sector.

Families in remote communities in Western Australia may choose public or non-government schools for their children. The public schooling system includes the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE), which provides education to students across the State from Kindergarten to Year 12 who are unable to access regular schools or specific subjects and Schools of the Air. Families may also choose to home educate their children.

Many students in remote Aboriginal communities do not typically grow up speaking Standard Australian English. These students grow up speaking Aboriginal English, Kriol, a traditional language or any combination of these. These students learn Standard Australian English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD).

At the national 2019 (Semester Two) school census, a total of 170 Western Australian schools were located in remote or very remote locations as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Australian Statistical Geography Standard. This included 134 public schools and 36 non-government schools.

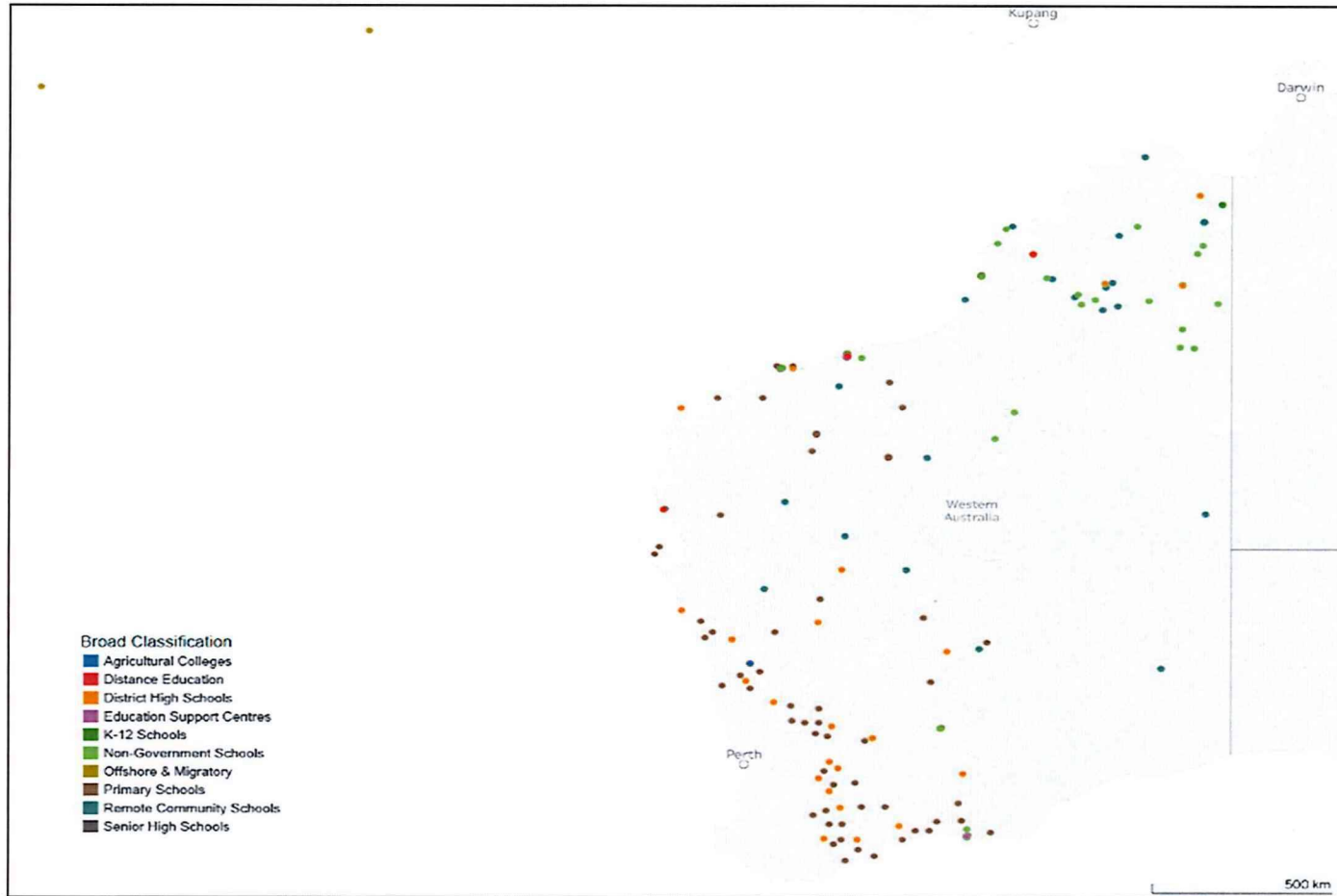
There were 26 627 children in remote and very remote Western Australian schools as at the national 2019 (Semester Two) school census. This comprised 5.8 per cent of all of Western Australia's school students at that time.

There were 9 839 Aboriginal students in remote and very remote Western Australian schools as at the national 2019 (Semester Two) school census. This represented 37 per cent of the students at these schools, and 32.3 per cent of all Aboriginal children in Western Australian schools at that time.

Further detail on the number of schools, students and Aboriginal students in remote and very remote schools in Western Australia, by school type in 2019, is provided at **Attachment 1**.

Figure 1 on the following page shows the locations and types of remote and very remote schools in Western Australia in 2019.

Figure 1: Locations and types of remote and very remote schools in Western Australia: 2019. ¹



¹ Data as at the national 2019 (Semester Two) school census.

Remote and very remote areas as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Australian Statistical Geography Standard.

The main campus is shown for schools with multiple campuses.

Some schools have multiple campuses in remote and very remote areas.

Offshore and Migratory denotes the two district high schools on Christmas and Cocos islands.

Distance Education denotes the schools of the air.

1. A child's journey through early childhood, primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary education in remote communities, like the tri-border region of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory

In Western Australia, Remote Community Schools are public schools located in isolated communities. There were 1 323 students from Kindergarten to Year 12 enrolled in Remote Community Schools as at Semester 2, 2019. The vast majority of students enrolled at Remote Community Schools are Aboriginal.

In many remote communities, a range of factors can have an impact on children's capacities to attend, engage and learn across all paths of the educational journey. In various locations, services from other agencies in the region, including health, paediatric services, child and adolescent mental health services, school health nurses and the school dental program, collaborate with schools to support students. Challenges that limit the effectiveness of these services, ranging from a lack of services in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands to imperfect coordination of many services in Kimberley communities, remain.

The opportunity to remain immersed and learn traditional content, culture and language is a strength of residing in a remote community. Learning begins well before a child begins formal schooling. Research confirms the importance of the home learning environment and communication between the child and caregiver to lay a strong foundation for later school success.

'Early childhood learning' in Western Australia is considered a key outcome of children's experiences in the home, in education and care services, and in schools. In the child's educational journey, early childhood initiatives in remote communities include the following:

- For children who attend an early childhood education and care service, the educational program and practice aims to stimulate, engage and enhance children's learning and development.
- Child and Parent Centres provide and coordinate a range of government and non-government programs and services to support families with children from pre-birth to eight years of age. The Western Australian Government funds 21 Child and Parent Centres, including in the remote towns of Roebourne, South Hedland, Kununurra, Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing.
- The Early Years Initiative is a partnership between the State Government, the Minderoo Foundation and the Telethon Kids Institute. It is a commitment to work differently with communities to improve the health, development and learning of children from conception to the age of four to create lasting change. At the State Government level, the key agencies are the Departments of Communities, Education and Health.
- There are currently 44 Early Years Learning Networks spread across Western Australia. These are integral to increasing the number of children who are developmentally on track on all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census. The Networks are made up of community members, early childhood educators, child health nurses, allied health professionals, library staff, teachers, community development officers and local community service providers who are interested in improving the lives of young children.
- Advice and support is provided to established and potential providers of education and care services. The capacity to find qualified staff and the physical environment can provide challenges to service continuity.
- In addition, funding is provided to a small number of services to deliver education and care services in locations where there are no, or limited, options available in the local community. A flexible service model allows families to access early education and care services and provides children with the opportunity to participate in a developmentally appropriate program.

- Several sites in the State have been selected to participate in the Commonwealth-funded Connected Beginnings program. This is a program to provide better support to families with young children to be school ready. The program commenced in the State in the Goldfields Region – East Kalgoorlie Primary School and in late 2019, planning commenced to establish the second site in Derby in the Kimberley Region.
- KindiLink is a play and learn program for Aboriginal families with children who are not old enough to enrol in Kindergarten at school. KindiLink is provided at 50 public schools. More than half are regional; 15 are in remote locations. Children attend with a parent/carer for six hours a week. Families are supported by a teacher and assistant to be actively involved in the activities with their children.
- A tailored KindiLink program is delivered through the Kimberley Schools Project for children 0 to 3 years of age. In 2020 there are 16 sites delivering this program to families and their children.

Primary schooling initiatives in remote communities include the following:

- In school-aged care services, the program nurtures the development of life skills and complements children's experiences, opportunities and relationships at school, at home and in the community.
- All four-year-olds in Western Australia, including those in remote localities, can enrol for free at a public school for a year of Kindergarten (the year prior to full-time schooling).
- Priorities for public schools include self-assessment and planning against the *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework*.
- Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers (AIEOs) play a pivotal role in schools with Aboriginal populations. Their assistance with cultural learnings (both to students and to teachers) and student attendance issues is vital.
- The Kimberley Schools Project commenced in 2018 with ten of Western Australia's most remote schools (nine public and one non-government) participating. The four pillars of the Project are targeted teaching; better early years learning and care; regular attendance; and increased student and community engagement. Each strategy is underpinned by the principles of the *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework*. The schools are supported to intensify and accelerate children's learning through targeted teaching practices, with planning underway for a focus on community engagement, early childhood initiatives and attendance. The Project provides expert staff visiting schools to deliver one-on-one support and advice to principals and teachers, and specifically developed curriculum materials. A second tranche of nine schools commenced in February 2019 and the third tranche included three further schools in July of that year. One school commenced in 2020, bringing the total number of participating schools to 23.
- EALD support is provided to all Western Australian remote community schools at all phases of learning. This includes:
 - provision of advice, support and mentoring;
 - provision of professional learning online and face-to-face; and
 - access to specialised EALD resources.
- The Tracks to Two-Way Learning resource addresses the specific language learning needs of Aboriginal students whose first language is not Standard Australian English. This professional learning for pre-service teachers:
 - positions Aboriginal English to be recognised and valued alongside Standard Australian English;
 - encourages the accepted use of diverse languages and dialects in schools; and
 - improves teachers' knowledge and ability to teach and engage with Aboriginal staff, students and community.

- At Semester 2, 2019, 189 students from Kindergarten to Year 6 were enrolled in Schools of the Air in Western Australia. The schools provide educational services to primary school students living in remote and isolated locations and are physically located at Derby, Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie, Meekatharra and Port Hedland. Students typically live on remote cattle stations, stations now catering to tourism, small Aboriginal communities or out-stations and smaller rural farming blocks. Home Tutors are usually included in this mode of delivery and are well supported by staff from the schools to fulfil their role to support enrolled students. Schools of the Air do not enrol students in Years 7 to 12.

Many Remote Community Schools enrol students from K-12, and within the extant staffing profile and the curriculum support of SIDE, can offer a range of services to students. Secondary education includes the following:

- Since 2014, the Big Picture Education approach has been used as a model for secondary schooling provision in some communities such as the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School. Through this approach, the school endeavours to tap into individual student interests and aptitudes in a manner in which students and their families are engaged in authentic and meaningful learning.
- There will be an additional pathway available for students to achieve the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE), for Year 11 students from 2020 and Year 12 students from 2021. Students seeking to achieve the WACE in 2021 must complete:
 - at least four Year 12 Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) courses; or
 - at least five Year 12 General courses (or a combination of General and up to three Year 12 ATAR courses or equivalent); or
 - a Certificate II (or higher) VET qualification in combination with ATAR, General or Foundation courses.
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an important part of senior schooling, enabling students to undertake a nationally recognised VET qualification while completing their WACE, which helps them to make effective post school transitions.
- Private training providers are contracted and TAFE colleges are funded to deliver throughout the State, including in regional and remote areas and communities, and programs that support Aboriginal people to transition to employment.
- An annual amount of funding is provided for fee-free training delivered to secondary students. The principles guiding the use of this funding allow some flexibility in regional areas to ensure students are able to access training opportunities where course and delivery options may be limited.
- The funding policy limits students to one funded qualification to maximise student access to a free place, and Certificate II or higher qualifications in line with WACE requirements.
- For VET agriculture students, the Muresk specialised agricultural training facility works closely with industry partners to meet the demand for skilled workers in the agricultural sector. During 2018-19, Muresk worked collaboratively with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and the Department of Education to raise awareness of careers in agriculture for school students. Around 120 stakeholders participated in an industry consultation event seeking industry input and co-investment. Muresk Institute also runs short courses that help Aboriginal people gain skills for employment, including the Jackaroo/Jillaroo Station Hand course for students from Clontarf College, to help maximise opportunities for employment after they finish school.
- In addition, the course fees for school-aged students who elect to leave school and go into full-time subsidised training are capped so they are not disadvantaged for choosing an alternative to school.
- Targeted funding is provided to schools to facilitate VET opportunities for students. This funding is in addition to the per student and student characteristics funding. The targeted VET funding supports schools to cover the additional costs associated with VET delivery, including staff training, engaging third party VET providers and managing offsite and workplace programs. Schools north of the 26th parallel receive a higher allocation per student to support increased costs. Principals determine how to use the VET Targeted Initiative funding to best meet the needs of their students.

- School resources are focussed on engagement and helping secondary students to determine interest-based pathways that allows for individual pursuits and more meaningful, connected learning. This is potentially more difficult in smaller campuses.
- There is a need to continue to find creative solutions to transience and low attendance of students. Mainstream learning curriculum, environment and pedagogical practices do not always meet the learning needs of remote Aboriginal children and may not align closely with their culture and priorities. Often cultural and family imperatives result in high levels of transience and interrupted attendance, which limit the impact of traditional school and classroom routines.
- The challenges encountered also include the remoteness and access to service provision, particularly around engagement in secondary education pathways and training opportunities. For example, many of the education and training pathways provided to the remote Pilbara communities are based in Newman.
- Opportunities for greater participation in VET in remote communities are being explored within the parameters of the requirements for the delivery of qualifications. A small number of schools are able to access staff and facilities to deliver VET programs. For example, a Trade Training Centre is located at One Arm Point Remote Community School.
- Some schools find 'Off Country' explorations and learning journeys to be a valuable extension to the curriculum requirements.

The journey to higher education in remote communities includes:

- Western Australian universities offer a range of services and activities that provide advice and guidance for regional secondary students. Many of these activities start when students are in early high school, to support awareness of opportunities and aspirations, and continue throughout high school and into university. The activities include:
 - on-campus familiarisation;
 - regional-based activities;
 - entry, scholarships and support; and
 - university support services for commencing students.
- Over the past two years, the Minister for Education and Training has had a series of discussions with the Vice-Chancellors of Western Australia's universities at meetings of the Western Australian Higher Education Council (WAHEC).
- A Widening Participation Working Party, comprising representatives of all Western Australia's universities and the Department of Education, is exploring ways in which the universities can work collaboratively to encourage young people in regional Western Australia to aspire to a university education.
- Research by WAHEC into university facilities in the regions is continuing, with the goal of providing bases for students to participate in online learning supplemented by local tutoring where possible. Study hubs incorporating this method are currently being partially funded by the Commonwealth Government in Geraldton and the Pilbara.
- The Geraldton Universities Centre, the national model for study hubs, has over time received Western Australian Government funding for buildings and for non-capital development.
- The Western Australian Government has committed to invest \$550 000 into establishing the new Pilbara Universities Centre, a not-for-profit education support service for current and aspiring students undertaking university education within the Pilbara region. This community organisation and facility is focused on providing a learning environment through which students gain access to educational support, application and enrolment assistance, guidance on courses and pathways, connections with local industry, comfortable and modern facilities in which to study and connect with other students, as well as administrative and student support. The Centre works alongside councils, local businesses and industry to bring university opportunities to Pilbara communities.
- A consortium in Broome, associated with the Broome Future Alliance, was formed in late 2019 and is seeking to foster the provision of tertiary education in Broome to complement the existing campus of Notre Dame University. One of the areas that the consortium is considering servicing is the international student market.

The learning journey in the tri-border region of Western Australia

The Ngaanyatjarra Lands are situated in the east of Western Australia covering some 250 000 km² (about the size of Victoria), stretching from the tristate border with South Australia and the Northern Territory. Approximately 2 000 Aboriginal people live in eleven communities that comprise the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

The Ngaanyatjarra Lands School, in the tri-border region, is comprised of eight schools, combined to form one multi-campus school which is headed by an Executive Principal, with each campus having its own Principal line-managed by the Executive Principal. Although the campuses are separated by large distances, they are bound together by the culture of the Ngaanyatjarra people.

A child's journey through the different stages of schooling in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands can be quite different between families, and sometimes within families. A range of factors can affect families and the possibility of students accessing a sustained education in one campus or even across the eight Lands campuses from early childhood through to secondary and tertiary. These factors may include health (which may require treatment elsewhere), overcrowding, substandard housing and other social issues.

There is very limited access to pre-school education in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Presently there is a playgroup that operates five days a week in Warburton and playgroups that operate in Blackstone and Jameson communities two days per week. There are no child-care facilities at all that could allow parents to engage in work and for children to have access to early childhood resources.

The major challenge is to improve the attendance levels of students. Considerable effort has been put into ensuring a close relationship between the various campuses and their respective communities and on ensuring that students experience a safe, welcoming and stimulating learning environment while at school.

The students are very mobile across the communities and it is well known that students are welcome to attend at any of the campuses. While some students manage this well, many students still find it challenging to attend regularly at campuses with which they are less familiar. Anecdotally there is consensus that the common approach provides a sense of familiarity for students and maintains their academic and social/behavioural momentum.

There is a whole-school approach to the professional learning of staff, with a central focus on supporting staff to address the needs of students whose first language is not English. There is also a focus on developing a common set of strategies, and shared language, to manage students in classrooms and to expand the range of effective classroom practices.

The Ngaanyatjarra Lands School has created a common approach to curriculum and behaviour management across the eight campuses. This has provided a sustainable approach to maintaining consistency with student learning and the potential for professional collaboration for teachers.

The school's integrated curriculum approach operates as a three-year cycle based on the Science or Humanities and Social Sciences learning areas. There are curriculum outlines for early childhood, primary and secondary phases of learning that focus on the appropriate Western Australian Curriculum science outcomes, incorporating links to local knowledge and practices. The outlines build on the previous phase of learning to provide a cumulative approach to learning. Once the three-year cycle begins again and the unit is repeated, the students are in the next phase of learning. While the integrated curriculum approach is not the only curriculum taught across the term, this cross-curricular approach allows for language and learning to be addressed in a range of ways that embed the students in a focus for the term.

The school implements measures that delineate the different stages of schooling in an effort for students to experience a progression and to have a sense that while they might still be in the same classroom, there will be different opportunities and approaches.

While some families seek boarding school opportunities for their children, this is minimal and there are not many examples of students continuing at schools outside of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School. Often students who have attended school for a term or more in other places have significant challenges returning to the community schools. A few senior secondary students are being supported to access SIDE units, but again this requires a significant amount of support for Aboriginal EALD learners, and this often cannot be facilitated with the current staff available at campuses. Students find the challenge of independently accessing, understanding and navigating the independent work and technology required to undertake SIDE lessons and forums challenging and often require one-on-one assistance. This puts additional pressure on available limited staff in the campuses, to teach a class as well as facilitate individual programs with students where there is little or no family capacity to assist, though it is always considered and supported where possible.

There is very limited access to training and tertiary education in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. This has been a significant focus for the school to initiate and participate in broader conversations with state, federal and independent agencies regarding provision for training and vocational opportunities. Currently there are no students undertaking formal vocational or tertiary courses. There is sporadic access to TAFE courses, which operate with the support of school personnel and are always short-term courses.

Outside the school, there is one facility available for training, which does not include trade training or facilities other than training rooms. This training centre does not include access to technology. Some communities have access to media centres that may have access to a number of computers but do not have trainers or facilitators. Warburton has the best provision in that there are several government and non-government agencies providing services and the possibility for students to be involved in some work experience. There is a youth arts facility in Warburton that provides access to music, arts and other creative pursuits for post-school-aged youth.

The Tjuntjuntjara Remote Community School in the Great Victoria Desert, close to the border with South Australia, north of the Nullarbor Plain and 630 km north-east of Kalgoorlie, is considered to be one of the most remote communities in Australia. Maintaining traditional culture while preparing their children for a rapidly changing world is a key community priority and the school works closely with the Tjuntjuntjara community to address this. A broad curriculum is offered with a strong focus on learning English as a second language through the use of Aboriginal Literacy Strategies. There is strong community support and involvement, with elders acting as valued role models and mentors for the students.

2. Key barriers to the education journey, including the effects of environmental factors such as drought on families and communities

Local conditions

Vast distances from a major regional centre, resources and supplementary educational facilities affect the education of students in the remote areas of the Kimberley, Pilbara, Midwest and Goldfields. This isolation and relatively small student numbers cause limited access to the provision of secondary pathways in remote and independent schools and limit the opportunity for further tertiary or vocational education pathways while remaining within the community.

During the wet/cyclone season, many of the remote communities become isolated. This can affect the mobility and transiency of families who need to return home or visitors to leave the community. Food access can also be limited during the wet season, with fresh provisions only going into communities when the road is open. This can have a particular effect on Aboriginal students who are often required to move between communities or go to a larger regional centre for various cultural or medical reasons, or to meet the requirements of the justice system. This in turn may produce a negative effect on student engagement and attendance at school.

Transportation to and from the remote areas where there is no or limited public transport and unsealed roads present challenges for families who have travelled to locations for cultural business, health or justice requirements are not always able to return due to the lack of reliable transport.

Dry season incidents and drought-like conditions that run for multiple years can have business, employment and financial implications for families and communities; for example, affecting services available in the local area, family/business decisions about moving out of the community or decisions about sending children to boarding school. Two years of drought in the Goldfields Education Region (only recently broken by significant, flooding rains), have resulted in much dustier conditions as vegetation has died off. This can result in increased hearing and sight issues. Drought has also resulted in far less bush food being available to supplement family food resources.

The environment and conditions in which many children and families live within the remote communities can also have an impact on the education journey. These issues include the impact of past government policies on Aboriginal people, intergenerational trauma, social disadvantage due to access to government infrastructure and services, the suitability and availability of housing, family dysfunction and other social issues.

In Western Australia, transiency for families and young children undermines the establishment of enduring relationships with educators and other service providers. This, in turn, undermines communications between home and school, and a sense of belonging for students at school.

Attraction of quality teachers and leaders is important in all locations. The availability and turnover of suitably trained and experienced teachers, support staff and leaders remain a challenge in Western Australia and can affect program continuity and the building of relationships between teachers, students and parents. Good relationships are often fundamental in students, and particularly Aboriginal students, attending school and achieving satisfactory outcomes. The integrity, passion and quality of teachers and staff is particularly important in remote communities. Induction prior to appointment and community-specific induction on arrival are important preparations for the additional responsibilities required in remote regions.

Early Childhood and Schooling

In early childhood and care barriers to the education journey include the following:

- lower numbers of education and care providers in remote communities;
- access to, and retention of, qualified staff to provide the educational program; and
- small education and care services are competing with the Western Australian Department of Education and large service providers for access to an early childhood teacher. The National Law has attempted to address the difficulties by allowing services to employ staff on a 'working towards' basis (this is a time-limited regulation) or by applying for a waiver. Research by Manning *et al* has shown that higher teacher qualifications are closely linked to improvements in quality of a child's learning environment.²

Key barriers to the effective education journey of Aboriginal students in remote communities include language difference, with the diverse language backgrounds of Aboriginal students needing to be taken into account in teaching and learning to read and write in English. For some staff, limited understanding of the complexities of Aboriginal English and its impact on teaching and learning may have flow-on effects for their Aboriginal students' outcomes and success in schooling.

The delivery of Kindergarten in rural and remote localities is an ongoing challenge. To attract and retain properly qualified staff, especially to remote and very remote localities, it is necessary to provide incentives (additional pay and conditions), which are very costly. The Nous Group's Review of the Universal Access National Partnership indicates lower preschool participation, particularly in disadvantaged communities and rural and remote areas, and notes the continuing challenge to provide quality preschool programs for rural and remote children in some States. The latest Universal Access National Partnership funding is due to expire at the end of 2020. Certainty of Commonwealth funding through an equitable, long-term arrangement for Universal Access funding is critical to maintaining and building upon the benefits already achieved in children's early learning.

The family and social factors that result from poverty can have an impact on the capacity of some students to attend or to do well when they are attending school and a negative impact in the community. It also affects the school and learning in significant ways, including the schools' provision of breakfast and lunch every day, which is required for the students to be able to concentrate and engage in school.

Attendance data shows lower rates of attendance by early childhood and secondary students, with the best attendance shown during the middle primary years. While there has been significant and continued focus on attendance and targeted cohorts, it has been difficult to determine definitive patterns and causes for this.

Distance and isolation in remote areas affect the capacity of schools to provide broad secondary pathways that lead to future career pathways, especially for secondary cohorts with small student numbers. This includes the provision of specialist vocational education courses and work placement options. Additionally, low student enrolments affect schools and the wider communities, with families moving to larger locations if they are able to.

In the wet season in the Kimberley, families in small isolated communities that are often cut off from larger service centres by flooding, move to those larger centres for the duration of the season. If the wet is significant, the smaller communities may be inaccessible for a period of time and this may mean that the local school cannot open.

² Manning M, Garvis S, Fleming C, Wong T. W. G. The relationship between teacher qualification and the quality of the early childhood care and learning environment. *Campbell Systemic Reviews* 2017: 1

Despite measures to encourage attendance at the larger centre, including establishing the community school within the larger school, this opportunity is not always maximised. It can also take time for families to move back to the home community when roads open and this can further limit attendance.

Fibre optic broadband services to regional and remote schools

Currently, 24 public school sites in Western Australia do not have fibre optic broadband services to the premises. Nineteen of these schools have a very high indigenous student cohort and are based in remote Aboriginal communities. Bringing fast, reliable digital connectivity to remote and regional Western Australian schools and communities would support Closing the Gap and improved educational outcomes.

In 20 of the 24 sites, significant financial investment could rectify the issue and provide fibre optic broadband services to the schools, but there is currently no financial support from the Commonwealth Government to provide these communication services. A list of the schools is provided as **Attachment 2**. New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory all have full coverage to Government schools.

Improved access to fibre optic broadband services to schools and communities includes:

- increased opportunities to access a range of materials, services and engagement channels including remote delivery of curriculum and improved peer connection;
- fibre optic services are superior to traditional copper, wireless, microwave, 4G and 5G mobile and satellite services in speed and capacity; and
- feasibility studies undertaken by Telstra have indicated that 20 out of the 24 sites are economically viable to connect to fibre optic broadband. However, without additional funding the projects are not financially viable. The remaining four sites that are currently not economically viable are Kalumburu, Burringurrah and the two schools in Indian Ocean Territories – Cocos Island and Christmas Island.

Other community services

The Community Development Program (CDP) has had an impact on families where they are in effect mostly operating on eight weeks of Newstart Allowance and then eight weeks off as many CDP participants are unable to meet the 50 hours of required activity per fortnight or the reporting processes that can be undertaken online.

Limited access to health and mental health services in very remote locations can also be a barrier to development and learning. Medical conditions, including hearing loss, otitis media and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) can affect a child's ability to learn. FASD is a medical condition that can be difficult and expensive to diagnose. The Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre is a community-led and government-sponsored group that has undertaken much research in FASD and continues to educate local communities in the Fitzroy Valley area.

Duplication and limited coordination of services (from a range of agencies) can be a barrier to effective program implementation in remote areas. More effective coordination of visits from outside agencies and programs would provide improved support to children, families and schools.

VET

VET is an important pathway for regional and remote secondary students. However, the following may be considered as barriers to young people being able to access a broad range of VET opportunities and qualifications:

- remoteness and isolated locations;
- wages and conditions;
- transport, licensing, drug and alcohol and other social issues;
- negative perceptions of some industries such as agriculture and aged care;
- language, literacy and numeracy difficulties of students;
- viable cohorts;
- capacity of TAFEs to service remote communities; and
- thin markets (exists where the number of students enrolled in a given year is less than the benchmark number set through the Department of Training and Workforce Development's (DTWD's) funding model).

Factors limiting access to career pathway opportunities, especially VET programs, include:

- access to TAFE colleges;
- availability of private training providers;
- availability of qualified trainers;
- distance from larger regional centres;
- availability of facilities that meet the training package requirements;
- limited use of the flexibilities that are available through the use of technology (e.g. web-conferencing); and
- limited access to relevant and meaningful work experience.

The delivery of VET qualifications often means that schools and training centres face a significant challenge to cater for individual pathways, and students in these locations will be taught the same qualification, based on what is able to be organised and delivered locally. Young people having to move away from home and community and associated supports, including financial, to attend training and higher education alternatives is a barrier to further learning. There is limited public transport available for students to access tertiary courses and limited course availability in smaller regional centres.

The State Training Board released a report, *Strategies to grow apprenticeships and traineeships in Western Australia*, which considered ways to increase the take-up of apprenticeships and traineeships in Western Australia. The report also identified the following common barriers reported by employers associated with apprenticeships and traineeships:

- The additional cost burdens regional employers and apprentices face. The cost of living is often higher in regional Western Australia.
- Rental accommodation, fuel and food costs are more expensive in regional Western Australia and this can make it difficult for apprentices to continue with their apprenticeship. There may also be additional travel costs to attend off-the-job training in Perth or other regional areas as students advance in their apprenticeship.
- Other regional issues included the lack of training providers in remote areas, particularly for less common pathways, and very low uptake of agricultural traineeships, and ensuring appropriate levels of supervision by agricultural enterprises.

3. The role of culture and country in a child's learning

Aboriginal students' cultural knowledge, identity and connection to country is central to their mental and emotional wellbeing and essential for improving life outcomes. This will form a key principle of the forthcoming whole-of-government response on Aboriginal youth suicide.

Aboriginal people have a strong connection to their country, and in many remote communities, children learn on-country, and through story-telling and song, their histories and song lines, which help them to understand the world and develop their skills for life. Genuine consultation, engagement and co-design have a very important place in improving the effectiveness of State-supported projects and initiatives targeted towards Aboriginal people and their communities.

Schools have an important role to play in providing opportunities for Aboriginal students to embrace their cultural and linguistic identities, promoting wellbeing and providing support to vulnerable students. Students who learn in a language that is not their own can benefit greatly from using their own language in support of learning the new language.

Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, like the other remote regions, have a close connection to country, although the impact of time and the disruption to community groups such as that caused by the wages case in the pastoral industry has seen some dislocation of people from country. Other government policies have also caused dislocation of people. Some students have very little access to cultural and on-country learning with family members. The Ngaanyatjarra Lands School is committed to being led by local people to facilitate young Ngaanyatjarra people to learn their roles as members of their community.

Aboriginal languages continue to be taught in Western Australian public schools. In 2018, there were 21 language programs, with 5 978 students in Western Australia learning an Aboriginal language. There were 13 Aboriginal languages being taught to 2,118 students across the Kimberley Education Region. Aboriginal languages are also embedded within the Languages learning area of the Western Australian Curriculum. The support and engagement of language-speaking community members is crucial.

The Department of Education provides training for Aboriginal staff who are speakers of an Aboriginal language via an in-school traineeship that focuses on language revitalisation strategies, language teaching methodologies and the development of teaching resources. Course delivery is fully funded and comprises a two-year in-school traineeship and a third probationary teaching year. In 2019, 11 participants from the Kimberley region were engaged in this training.

AIEOs play a significant role in connecting with Aboriginal communities and supporting improved attendance. Their understanding of local cultural and linguistic contexts, as well as their strong ties with communities, is invaluable in assisting schools to implement culturally responsive approaches to meeting the needs of students. Strengthening of in-school support for Aboriginal students has been reinforced by the State Government's commitment to increasing the number of AIEOs across public schools.

The role of community

The *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework* supports staff to create culturally safe and engaging learning environments for Aboriginal students. Schools are encouraged to use place-based approaches that are developed in consultation with their local Aboriginal communities, to strengthen the participation and engagement of Aboriginal students and improve interaction between staff, Aboriginal students, their parents and families, and the local Aboriginal community.

Some examples are:

- The Ngaanyatjarra Lands School uses the *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework* as the foundation for all school planning. There is an authentic and continued focus on continuing to improve the opportunity for students to learn from teaching that is focused on local cultural and ecological knowledge. A two-way approach is used that requires principals and teachers to work closely with Aboriginal school staff and community people. The Ngaanyatjarra Lands curriculum is based on a Ngaanyatjarra Language and Cultural curriculum and more recently engagement with the CSIRO two-way science program. Structures are in place in the school to engage and pay local elders to lead or participate in cultural or on-country learning.
- The Ngaanyatjarra Lands School works with a variety of organisations to provide avenues for students to learn on-country, through story and art as well as AIEOs training as Aboriginal Language Teachers to strengthen the range of local Aboriginal languages in school.
- Schools in the Kimberley apply the *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework* as a planning tool to guide school operations. The Framework assists school staff in developing relationships with their communities and seeking to be culturally responsive and meeting the needs of their students.
- The place of Elders in a number of communities in the Kimberley, for example, is important in guiding school staff and this is pronounced in small communities. These schools tend to be strong in their commitment to two-way learning, on-country provision and cultural practice. The school in the Kimberley with the best attendance rate – in excess of 90 per cent – is one of the smallest in terms of enrolments, yet strong in cultural connection through the local Aboriginal staff driving attendance with families.

Teachers have access to professional learning that builds their capacity to use their knowledge of Aboriginal students' culture and language backgrounds, family relationships and experiences to effectively teach Aboriginal students and to ensure that all staff and students develop a broader understanding of Aboriginal histories, cultures and languages.

The need for Aboriginal students to access opportunities to share their knowledge and culture within schools is also widely supported by a range of education policy and guidelines:

- *Focus 2019* and *Focus 2020*;
- Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (Standards 1.3, 2.4);
- Capability Framework, Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EALD Learners; and
- cross-curriculum priority: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island histories.

Challenges

Aboriginal communities value their children learning their culture, yet also learning how to be successful in the western world – the “two worlds” perspective of being strong in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways. Cultural obligations can affect student attendance, engagement and progress. For example, Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields and Midwest students may be transient and absent from school for extended periods during lore time, periods of mourning (Sorry Time) and for other cultural practices. Staying in other locations for durations of time can result in poor attendance, disengagement and issues within the communities. Students and their families may also be affected by cultural obligations and practices, including avoidance and gender roles.

Historical perceptions and experiences of education and schooling may affect a family's willingness or ability to engage with school/education. Providing the opportunity for two-way learning, as well as cultural learning for staff and all students, is essential to achieving better understanding and addressing the above highlighted challenges. In a number of communities, the presence of several language groups can affect the delivery of schooling programs and the school being seen as representative of the local community. AIEOs, elders and Aboriginal corporations play a significant role in supporting students to return to school.

4. Community and family structures that support a child's education and their attendance at school

Positive relationships between students, their parents, families and communities with school staff is essential to supporting student engagement and attendance at school. Improving student attendance is complex and challenging, and can only be addressed with strong co-operation between schools, families and the broader community and cross-agency effort.

Family structures that support a child's education and their attendance at school include:

- caregivers and siblings encouraging students to attend;
- caregivers and community people being involved in the school programs;
- caregivers who are aware of the importance of sleep, routine and nutrition on learning; and
- caregivers who engage strongly with school staff around their children's progress or challenges.

Strong school leadership is a key lever to improving the experiences and outcomes of all students. School leaders are encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with parents and the local community and to engage authentically. In collaboration with local Aboriginal community members, school leaders are expected to develop strong, sustainable education partnerships that reflect the expectations and aspirations of Aboriginal students.

There are many government, non-government, community and not-for-profit organisations that target and support the health, wellbeing and engagement of students and their families. However, many of these services are located within the larger regional centres in the Pilbara and the Kimberley and provide limited outreach support to the remote communities. As an example, services provided to the Western Desert communities are primarily based in Newman, and primarily in Kununurra for the East Kimberley.

The Department of Education recognises the need to strengthen student engagement and is reviewing its overall approach to improving student attendance, as well as policy and procedures, support for schools, and partnerships with other agencies and providers.

Early childhood and care centres use the National Quality Standard, which promotes collaborative relationships with families as fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children and that community partnerships that are based on active communication, consultation and collaboration are also essential. The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.

A variety of educational supports and resources are provided by the Department of Communities to enable children who are in its care to access and continue their education, including:

- tutoring for school-aged students requiring additional assistance;
- access to educational mentors;
- speech therapists to assist with speech and language development;
- delivery of donated books to read at home in the Wheatbelt;
- payment of fees to enable students to participate in extracurricular activities such as music lessons, dance and drama;
- purchase of iPads for educational use and reading apps for parents and carers to work alongside the children; and
- school holiday programs focused on healthy relationships including transitioning from school programs.

In the Goldfields, community structures that support a child's education and their attendance at school include:

- youth workers in some communities;
- stores and roadhouses that do not allow school-aged children to enter during school hours, supporting the school's focus on attendance;
- employers being willing to engage students in work experience or work shadow opportunities;
- community agencies being involved in school activities and working together with the school on different initiatives;
 - Wilurrara Arts in Warburton, Ngaanyatjarra Media in Wingellina, Warburton (Blackstone/Jameson) Playgroups.
 - Elders and community people facilitating cultural and on-country learning.

In the Midwest Education Region, the Rangeway Child and Parent Centre plays a significant role in supporting Geraldton families in early intervention and parenting. The Bundiyarra Aboriginal Corporation supports many Aboriginal families to connect to their culture and history.

Home Education

Home educators are required by the *School Education Act 1999 (WA)* to be registered with the Department of Education. The programs that home educators deliver and the progress children make is monitored by the Department of Education. The home education program and the child's progress are evaluated according to the *School Curriculum and Standards Authority Act 1997 (WA)*.

The Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline, which sets out the mandated curriculum and support resources, is accessible to home educators. It provides comprehensive information that schools and home educators can use to plan student learning programs, assess student progress and for reporting purposes. The Outline includes curriculum, policy advice and guidelines for all Western Australian education sectors – public schools, non-government schools and home educators.

As at Semester 2, 2019, 58 students were registered for home education in the Pilbara Education Region, 105 in the Goldfields Education Region, and 32 in the Kimberley Education Region. Three quarters of those 32 are based in Broome, with the remaining students in Derby and Kununurra. There are no remote students, as they are catered for through Kimberley School of the Air or the SIDE.

In Semester 2, 2019, 72 Midwest families had 125 children, which has steadily increased throughout the Midwest between 2017 and 2019.

5. Effective government initiatives, past and present, that support remote communities to enable greater educational outcomes, including those that have improved attainment in literacy and numeracy

In February 2019, the State Government launched the *Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity* program; a set of 12 measurable targets aimed at addressing complex, longstanding issues that matter to the community. The A Bright Future priority aims to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people by focusing on the following targets:

- By 2027, increase the number of children in Western Australia who are developmentally on track on all five Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains by 10%.
- By 2024, WA NAPLAN Year 5 and 9 Reading and Numeracy mean scores improve by more than 10 scale points.
- By 2024, have 85% of Year 12 students completing two or more science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) courses and/or STEM-related VET qualifications.

In order to achieve these targets, cross-agency senior officers' groups ('Outcome Activity Groups') have been formed to identify and implement actions that will drive progress towards the targets.

Early Childhood and Schooling

Under the National Law and Regulations, early childhood and care services are required to base their educational program on an approved learning framework. This should focus on addressing the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, while taking into account individual differences.

As indicated in section 1, the State Government provides important support to families and schools, with a focus on improving educational outcomes, through:

- the 21 Child and Parent Centres, which include centres in the remote towns of Roebourne, South Hedland, Kununurra, Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing;
- KindiLink at 50 public schools, of which more than half are regional and 15 are in remote locations; and
- the Kimberley Schools Project, focusing on evidence-based teaching strategies, better early learning and care, regular attendance, and increased community and student engagement.

The On-entry Assessment program provides teachers with high-quality diagnostic information about the literacy and numeracy skills and understandings of students in the year they commence compulsory schooling (Pre-primary). The information is used by school leaders and early years' teachers to:

- inform the planning and delivery of targeted programs;
- identify students at risk in critical aspects of literacy and numeracy;
- review a child's progress over time; and
- inform school planning.

Teachers and principals are able to access a range of individual and class reports upon completion of an assessment. Teachers are able to provide parents/carers with a summary of the skills and understandings their child demonstrated during the assessments. The On-entry Assessment program was implemented in public schools in 2011 and is mandatory for Pre-primary students. Since 2016, all WA Catholic schools and about one third of Independent schools also use the assessments with their Pre-primary students.

The student-centred funding model (SCFM) was implemented in 2015 in Western Australia and sets the prices and parameters that determine funding for all Western Australian public schools with enrolled students. The overarching objectives of the SCFM are:

- to allocate resources based on the learning needs of students;
- ensure funding is responsive to the needs of individual schools and their students;
- increase flexibility for school leadership in relation to financial and workforce management decisions; and
- provide a simple and transparent funding mechanism.

The SCFM allocates funds for each student enrolled in a public school, with different funding amounts allocated depending on the year level of the student. The model also provides targeted funding allocations for schools with eligible students to meet the specific learning needs of Aboriginal students, students facing social disadvantage, EALD students, and students with a disability. At a school level, there is a locality allocation and an enrolment-linked base allocation. Additional funding may be provided to specified schools for strategic programs and services through a range of targeted initiatives. The funding provided enables schools to develop meaningful programs and implement teaching and learning adjustments according to student need.

There have been changes to the locality allocation in 2020, which has been increased for schools that are more than 200 km from Perth, providing more support to regional schools in recognition of higher operating costs, including higher travel costs to attend professional development training.

Funding is allocated for each EALD student in a mainstream school, with a weighting depending on the concentration of EALD students in the school. Funding is also allocated for each Aboriginal student, with a weighting depending on the percentage of Aboriginal students at the school. There have been changes to the EALD allocation in 2020, including Aboriginal students being funded if they meet the eligibility criteria and have yet to demonstrate English language proficiency.

Following feedback from stakeholders, the Minister for Education and Training asked the School Curriculum and Standards Authority to investigate the impact of having to demonstrate the required literacy and numeracy standards on students with either an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or EALD background in order to achieve the WACE. The Authority has examined WACE achievement data, with a focus on EALD and Aboriginal students' achievement of a Category 3³ in the Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA). The Authority also examined the processes and procedures adopted by schools with Aboriginal or EALD students who have successfully demonstrated achievement of minimum literacy and numeracy standards to identify best practice and opportunities for shared professional learning. Some of the key strategies identified to address these concerns include a review of the OLNA questions by EALD specialists, special examination arrangements for EALD and Aboriginal students, and facilitating collaboration between principals and teachers to share strategies, with the aim of improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for all EALD students.

Local decisions in improving student outcomes have been made possible through increased school autonomy. Principals can now plan and use funding more flexibly to better target student needs, with a one-line budget delivered through the SCFM. A remote school principal now has the ability to more closely and innovatively cater for the needs of her or his students. However, in some regions, challenges include staff availability and the school's staffing profile, access to specialist services such as those provided by SIDE, and staff turnover.

³ Category 3: Students who have demonstrated the standard i.e. proficiency in using a range of Australian Core Skills Framework Level 3 skills in a component (reading, writing or numeracy), either through an OLNA test or through their performance in NAPLAN Year 9.

Soundfield Systems were provided in 2017 to regional and remote schools in the Pilbara, Kimberley, Goldfields and Midwest to amplify teachers' voices to improve classroom listening environments. Schools with an Aboriginal student population greater than 60 per cent could request systems due to the prevalence of middle ear infections and conductive hearing loss among Aboriginal students.

Earbus mobile ear health clinics offer a model of continuous care to Aboriginal children and young people in schools, day care centres, kindergartens and playgroups. The Earbus model provides comprehensive ear screening, surveillance and treatment, with the Earbus employing GPs, Audiologists and Ear, Nose and Throat specialists. The Western Australian Government committed to the WA Child Ear Health Strategy 2017–2021 in response to concerns regarding challenging ear health service provision. Education strategies include:

- provision of professional learning to school staff in the use soundfield systems, the impact of conductive hearing loss on student learning and the relevant teaching and learning adjustments on request;
- targeted support to schools in Kununurra and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School in the development of whole-school action plans to address the issues related to otitis media and conductive hearing loss;
- the development of a suite of otitis media/conductive hearing loss online independent learning modules for classroom teachers;
- delivery of online otitis media/conductive hearing loss webinars in Term 2 and 3, 2019; and
- collaborative partnerships with the Telethon Kids Institute WA Child Ear Health working group and the Pilbara Hearing Interagency Group.

Teacher Development

The Regional Learning Specialists Project is a three-year project that commenced working with schools at the start of 2019. This project is designed to strengthen the teaching of science, humanities and social sciences, mathematics and English for senior secondary ATAR students in regional, rural and remote schools, enrolled at SIDE. The Regional Learning Specialists also work with teachers in these schools to build their capacity to deliver the courses locally in the longer term.

To build the supply of high-quality staff, careers in rural and remote public education continue to be promoted. Student teachers and school psychologists receive financial support under the Country Practicum Program (previously the Rural Teaching Practicum Program) to undertake their final practicums in schools in the Goldfields, Midwest, Kimberley, Pilbara and Wheatbelt.

Professional development and support are provided through the Rural and Remote Training Schools project. This project was awarded the 2017 Australian Rural Education Award by the Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia for demonstrating excellence in professional learning practice in rural, regional, and remote settings.

To attract staff – particularly to regional, rural and remote public schools – public school teachers have access to organised and subsidised housing.

Residential Colleges

Residential colleges provide accommodation, care and services for isolated students who have to board away from home to attend school. There are nine residential colleges in regional Western Australia in Albany, Broome, City Beach, Esperance, Geraldton, Merredin, Moora, Narrogin and Northam.

Regional initiatives

In November 2017, Hon Mark McGowan MLA, Premier of Western Australia, signed the Pilbara Collaboration Charter. This is an agreement between the State Government, the Chamber of Minerals and Energy and eight major resources companies aimed at delivering further social and economic benefits to the community. Part of this initiative is a program that will enable Karratha students to complete a pre-apprenticeship course from 2020, with the opportunity for future employment in the mining sector. Year 11 students from Karratha Senior High School will be able to obtain a Certificate II Pre-Apprenticeship qualification in Electrotechnology Electrician or Engineering Mechanical Trade at North Regional TAFE.

The Pilbara Region currently has the Pilbara Partnership for Student Success project, which encompasses several initiatives aimed at improving student outcomes. Two of these are the Pilbara Cross-sector schools' partnership, which aims to support highly disengaged and transient students from remote communities, and the In-School Engagement of Students program, which focusses on increasing engagement and academic achievement of all students by enhancing teacher quality through training.

The Pilbara Literacy and Response to Intervention program utilises evidence-based screening and literacy/phonemic awareness training programs to increase student outcomes in literacy. Professional learning in region-wide literacy programs aims at establishing a consistent method of delivering the curriculum across the region to reduce the impact of transience on students' learning outcomes.

Initiatives in the Goldfields region that support remote communities to enable greater educational outcomes, including in literacy and numeracy, include:

- National Quality Standards program and training;
- health initiatives such as trachoma screening and hearing services;
- the Aboriginal Literacy Strategy;
- First Steps in Maths; and
- the Remote Teaching Service.

Allendale Primary School in Geraldton, for example, is a Regional Teacher Development School in Early Years, English and Mathematics, which provides extensive support, mentoring and professional learning for schools throughout the Midwest. There are four Networks in the Midwest, with key priorities such as Literacy and Numeracy, Student Engagement and Attendance, Early Childhood, Digital Technologies, and support for students with special educational needs being embedded in Network planning. There are key leaders who coordinate the implementation of key initiatives. Other regional Teacher Development Schools are in Kalgoorlie, Broome, Karratha, Manjimup, Dowerin and Merredin.

The Wheatbelt District Leadership Group developed the Wheatbelt Education, Engagement and Participation Plan 2019. The plan was formulated by numerous people in various agencies and support services in the Wheatbelt, and aims to improve the outcomes within the whole Wheatbelt community. The plan outlines agreed actions underpinning an education engagement focus, represented through a series of action plans in the areas of early childhood, community awareness and education engagement. The Wheatbelt Human Services Managers Forum believes that combined action with an educational focus has the potential to positively shift outcomes for individuals and families well beyond schooling, in particular for youth and Aboriginal people.

Pathways to employment for Aboriginal people

Western Australia recognises the importance of assisting Aboriginal people to participate effectively in the workforce and reducing long-term welfare dependency by:

- improving connections between employers and Aboriginal people; and
- through a more unified system of support, helping individuals progress through the various transitions towards sustained employment.

Since 2010, Aboriginal Workforce Development Centres provided an innovative network and collaboration model, working in partnership with other organisations providing employment, career, training and mentoring in the government, private or not-for-profit sectors to link existing services, value-add and broker solutions that lead to employment. The Aboriginal Workforce Development Centres have now been replaced by 13 Jobs and Skills Centres, each of which is a one-stop shop for career, training and employment advice and assistance, and which include a specialist service for Aboriginal people. A further 14 satellite and 39 outreach centres ensure wide access.

The comprehensive Jobs and Skills WA website also includes information for Aboriginal jobseekers and employers and a dedicated Jobs Board. The Jobs and Skills Centres Facebook page includes good news stories and links to training and employment opportunities. During 2018-19, over 12 000 individual clients received Jobs and Skills Centres services, of which nearly 1 600 (about 13 per cent) indicated they were from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) background.

The Employer Engagement – Working Together contract with the Western Australian Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry provides funding for five regional-based officers to work with their business client base to generate jobs in culturally sensitive workplaces for Aboriginal people. This program has implemented a range of activities to expand work opportunities (including work experience) for Aboriginal people. These include raising local employers' awareness of the potential benefits of employing Aboriginal people and encouraging them to list work opportunities on the Aboriginal Services Jobs Board.

Employers are also encouraged to offer part-time jobs and work experience opportunities to Aboriginal high school students and school leavers. Two chambers have established Aboriginal Business Networking Groups so that Aboriginal-owned businesses can have their own peer support and network. This complements the *Working Together* program and supports increasing job opportunities for Aboriginal people.

6. Innovative approaches to workforce, including recruitment, professional learning, retention and support, and lessons from communities that could be more generally applied

Pilots and programs

The *Rural and Remote Training Schools* (RRTS) project promotes rural and remote teaching to university students. The program targets the Pilbara, Kimberley, Midwest and Goldfields regions. Pre-service teachers who enter the program are supported before, during and after their practicum by the manager to help prepare them for, and encourage them to teach in, public schools. The project has delivered a significant increase in the number of pre-service teachers undertaking final practicums in rural/remote schools in these regions.

The majority of the pre-service teachers who take part in the RRTS program also receive funding through the Country Practicum Program. Collectively these two programs increase awareness of career opportunities by providing funding and support/mentoring to pre-service teachers and school psychologists to undertake practicums in regional, rural and remote public schools. The RRTS project and its methodology has also been widely recognised nationally for its quality processes and outcomes and in 2017, was a recipient of a Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia national award.

In 2019, the RRTS was also the only Australian program cited in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) recently released *Attracting Teachers to Schools in Rural and Remote Areas in Australia* as a model of best practice. The OECD noted the following as strengths:

- *(The project) addresses the shortages and quality of teachers working in remote and rural schools. By offering a wide range of significant incentives to teach in these schools, and providing pre- and in-service professional experiences in rural and remote areas, these programmes address some of the key challenges that both experienced and new teachers face when considering teaching in remote and rural schools.*
- *Enhances the chances of preservice teachers working in remote and rural schools in the future. The opportunity for a rural experience, even if it is based on a short period of time, has a positive impact on the way preservice teachers consider future employment in rural and remote areas after completing initial teacher education.*

The Aboriginal Teacher Pilot Program aims to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers in public schools, particularly in regional and remote areas. This pilot program, developed in partnership and delivered by Curtin University, supports current Aboriginal employees to become teachers through completion of a Bachelor of Education (Primary Education).

The Graduate Teacher Induction Program provides extensive support for graduate teachers. The professional learning modules focus on teacher efficacy and building early career teacher resilience and retention. These modules are offered in larger regional centres and online to support graduates employed outside of the metropolitan area.

The complementary In-Class Coaching Program assists graduate teachers to identify issues, explore possibilities and meet the challenges of effective classroom practice. Every graduate teacher who participates in this program receives classroom observation and coaching in their school. The Mentoring and Classroom Observation courses are offered throughout the year for school staff supporting graduate teachers.

The Public School Leadership Strategy enhances leadership development opportunities that are already in place and is in the process of implementing new and contemporary approaches to support and develop leadership across public schools. The strategy enhances the quality and capacity of school leaders through a focus on early identification, professional development and support, performance improvement and system leadership. When leaders have the capability to lead schools with strong cultures of teaching and learning, it is more likely that staff are retained and valued.

Launch, a program for newly appointed principals, was piloted in 2019. Of the 75 participants in the program, 44 were from regional areas. This program provided spaced learning, mentoring from an experienced principal and networking opportunities for the newly appointed principals. This program will become business as usual in 2020.

Leadership development programs are delivered at regional locations across the state, these include aspirant leadership programs. These programs aim to support the development of current and future leaders (e.g. Leading School Improvement).

The Leap program supports teachers to gain a further tertiary qualification to teach in an additional specialist learning area. Participants gain qualifications in primary languages and secondary mathematics, science, design & technology and English by completing post-graduate certificates of education or specialised short courses. Teachers who reside outside of the Perth metropolitan area receive travel, accommodation and access to online course components to ensure their participation. The program supports workforce development and management within smaller remote schools as teachers become multi-qualified and skilled to teach across the curriculum.

Ongoing attraction and retention measures

Teachers in remote schools receive a comprehensive induction as part of their on-boarding. The sequential approach includes a central welcome, regional induction and considerable local school and community on-boarding and ongoing support.

Employee housing and relocation assistance is an integral support to attract and retain quality teachers and school leaders in regional, rural and remote locations. Housing is provided to the Department of Education through the Government Regional Officers' Housing (GROH) program. GROH properties are either owned by the Department of Communities or leased from the private rental market. Employee rents are either partially or fully subsidised and the Department advocates for quality, secure housing that meets the needs of its staff. The costs of relocating furniture, personal effects and vehicles are also met when staff are appointed to regional, rural and remote schools.

Incentive allowances are provided to teachers and school leaders employed in schools that form part of the Country Teaching Program and the Remote Teaching Service. Teachers and school leaders in the Country Teaching Program receive country incentive allowances and locality allowances in the Remote Teaching Service. They also receive a range of additional benefits, including permanency after two years' continuous and satisfactory teaching service; additional sick leave entitlements; accommodation subsidies; additional leave entitlements for longer service in Remote Teaching Service locations and additional travel concessions for the teacher and their family when employed in the Remote Teaching Service, and in some Country Teaching Program locations.

Example 'lessons from communities':

There are numerous examples of schools and networks of schools working closely with communities in regional areas to retain and attract quality teachers, and to support their unique cohort of students to ensure their individual learning needs are met.

These include:

- The Kalgoorlie-Boulder Primary Schools Network has an established history and recognition for their approach to practicums across all Kalgoorlie primary schools. Placements are coordinated by a network-funded (part-time) position at O'Connor Primary School to ensure all schools can access pre-service teachers. The network has a range of accommodation solutions and works closely with the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Chamber of Commerce. The network has a 'Billet Register' to support practicums.
- Karratha Senior High School in the Pilbara has an arrangement in place with Woodside Energy, whereby pre-service teachers are provided with free accommodation in housing owned by Woodside. This partnership recognises the importance of attracting and retaining quality teachers to the Pilbara.
- Broome Senior High School in the remote Kimberley region is the region's only senior high school. Many students travel from remote parts of the Kimberley to finish their schooling in Broome, with many living at the collocated residential college. There is capacity for 116 student residents from across the Kimberley at the Broome residential college. These students come from many different communities and language groups. The school staff have worked with the residential college to meet the needs of the students.
- Esperance Senior High School in the state's south-west has a well-established pre-service and graduate teacher mentor program in place, with a dedicated teacher assigned to support beginning teachers across the school. This support extends to providing access to professional learning in the areas of teaching and learning and classroom management. The school also works closely with the collocated residential college, to provide affordable accommodation for pre-service teachers who travel to Esperance to undertake their practicums.

Initiatives in place in remote regions include:

- Remote Connections initiative through the Department of Education's staffing branch;
- Remote Teaching Service entitlements;
- teacher exchange program between remote and Intensive English Centre teachers;
- the Classroom Management Strategies program provides a productive conferencing aspect;
- practicum teachers or internships in remote schools;
- web-based training as part of a training approach;
- training in cross-cultural teaching and approach;
- graduate teacher and aspirant leaders professional learning;
- online professional learning through the Department of Education;
- personal support for staff through psychologist services and access to Employee Support;
- in-school mechanisms to communicate regularly with staff about how they are travelling, supports required and opportunities for interest-based initiatives for staff to facilitate; and
- networked leadership structure that allows for collective decision-making, distributed leadership and focussed initiatives.

The following initiatives are in place in the Goldfields Education Region:

- Longstanding engagement with professional learning facilitators who provide foundational training for staff, then follow up with individual mentoring or training. This requires facilitators to be in the Lands for up to two weeks and to travel around with a relief teacher to release the teacher to work with the facilitator, usually following shared classroom practice observation.
- The Ngaanyatjarra Lands School is benefitting from a full-time school psychologist now located in the Lands.
- A "buddy system" for new staff in the Lands, where they are paired with a teacher or principal in another campus but teaching within the same phase of learning.

In the Midwest Education Region, the Department of Education's *Innovation Partnerships Program* has seen Wandina and Allendale Primary Schools in Geraldton leading a two-year project in Digital Technologies and Aboriginal Education. Both programs have supported leaders in local schools to promote leadership opportunities in leading curriculum and through systemic initiatives. Several schools have been involved in the *Future Leaders Program*, which helps schools to identify and mentor aspirants.

7. Access and support to deliver the Australian Curriculum (including STEM) in a flexible way to meet local learning needs and interests of remote students, including examples of innovative ways in which the curriculum is being delivered in remote schools

As mentioned in section 5, one of the Our Priorities targets is to have 85% of Year 12 students completing two or more science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) courses and/or STEM-related VET qualifications by 2024. The State Government has also launched the State's first-ever State STEM skills strategy. An initial \$3.3 million investment over 2018–2021 will be used for professional development of more than 1 000 teachers in lower socioeconomic public schools, STEM communication, mentoring programs, and digital and technology programs.

The Government has committed \$12 million to convert 200 existing primary classrooms in public schools into science laboratories, with an additional \$5 million for grants to resource these converted facilities. About one-third of the laboratories are or will be in regional schools. In addition, selected public primary schools with a maximum of 100 students have received funding grants of \$5 000 or \$10 000 for science equipment and resources. Around half of these are regional schools.

Science Pathways for Indigenous Communities uses a Two-way Science teaching and learning cycle that connects indigenous ecological knowledge with western science and the Australian Curriculum. The program has been developed and delivered collaboratively by several remote Aboriginal desert schools, their communities and the CSIRO.

As described earlier, a Regional Learning Specialist team was established in 2019 to support students in the regions by providing curriculum support in the areas of Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, Mathematics and English. In addition, Independent Learning Coordinators have been appointed in 10 regional schools to supervise and help students undertaking courses through SIDE.

In the regions, the following initiatives are in place to provide access and support to schools to deliver the Australian Curriculum (including STEM) in a flexible way to meet local learning needs and interests of remote students:

- integrated curriculum approach across the different sites that allows for continuity for both students and teachers, flexible enough to structure effectively for each class and campus;
- basing teaching and learning on a two-way approach that centres on Aboriginal ecological knowledge;
- resourcing access for community members to participate in school programs and value cultural, language and on-country knowledge;
- bilingual, cross-cultural approaches;
- hands-on, relevant learning linked to established learning pathways and student interests;
- STEM rooms set up with technology and resources; and
- media, music, art and storytelling.

The Department of Education continues to expand and improve the delivery of ICT infrastructure and online services to all schools to support the delivery of curriculum and student engagement, regardless of geographic location. This includes:

- increased bandwidth and internet speeds; and
- access to learning and collaboration tools such as Connect, Microsoft365 and Webex webconferencing.

Online solutions, including digital delivery and video conferencing, can be utilised to deliver the curriculum in flexible and innovative ways. However, many remote communities within the Pilbara do not have a high level of access to broadband networks required to operate in a digital or online environment.

In the Midwest Education Region, a wide variety of programs promoting STEM and cross-curricular priorities are implemented in schools. The Geraldton Network has a proactive STEM Network group, primary and secondary schools have STEM for girls programs, and Digital Technologies is a key part of primary and secondary curriculum and transition.

In 2020, the Kimberley Education Region is introducing a program with SIDE to provide targeted support to remote schools, especially in the secondary domain. The intention is to seek to offer a broader curriculum for students and to increase their options. This will enable more senior secondary students to engage in the WACE pathway and access VET, as SIDE was approved by the Training Accreditation Council to commence operating as a Registered Training Organisation from 18 December 2019. Access to SIDE is also an outcome of efforts by the Department of Education to upgrade the networks of schools and provide better connectivity through online environments.

Aboriginal Education Teaching and Learning

STEM also provides an opportunity to draw on and embed Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives through connections to country, culture and languages, to support meaningful and relevant pathways for Aboriginal students. The Department of Education will continue its focus on creating culturally responsive classrooms that build on the strengths of Aboriginal students, engage them in learning and enable them to thrive academically and socially. It is important that the educational opportunities match the aspirations of families and communities.

AIEOs play a significant role in providing advice to schools. Their understanding of local cultures and languages, as well as their strong ties with communities, are invaluable in supporting schools to implement culturally inclusive education programs and to connect with Aboriginal communities.

The Aboriginal Languages Teacher Training course is nationally recognised and enables Aboriginal employees to become registered as unqualified teachers. Aboriginal language teachers draw on community links, knowledge and experience to successfully teach the language and positively incorporate Aboriginal knowledge in mainstream curriculum.

Schools may access face-to-face or online language programs, as well as professional learning and support through the eight Lead Language Schools.

8. Successful pathways to ensure students have the knowledge and skills they need to enter further education and the workforce

The Department of Education provides resources and activities to encourage and assist students to connect their current learning to future learning, work and life opportunities, including opportunities in STEM.

The Department of Education is working with the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation and DTWD in developing and delivering a state-wide career information strategy. Thirty-six career information events will be held across Western Australia in 2020. A strategic approach to future career development will include ongoing professional learning and support for teachers and better access for students to meaningful encounters with employers and workplaces.

The Department of Education's *Myfuture* license agreement with Education Services Australia provides a free online careers service that delivers access to Australian specific career information including up-to-date information, career exploration tools and interactive resources.

The Department of Education has partnered with DPIRD and DTWD to develop a state-wide project, PRIMED, which will support teachers to deliver secondary curriculum using primary industries contexts and promote the employment opportunities available in primary industries.

Initiatives in the Goldfields Education Region include:

- The Big Picture Education approach;
- attempting to formulate Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with local employers (council and shire) relating to pathways for students into training and employment;
- an empowered communities working group around Transition to Work and Study; and
- a collaborative Youth Services approach with other agencies in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

Students from the remote parts of the Pilbara have a reduced range of pathways within their communities, partially due to the small size of the schools. For students who are critically at risk, Education Training and Participation Programs (ETPP) are funded to provide an alternative to Year 11 and 12 schooling. However, the ETPP Programs have limited reach and are typically located in Karratha, Hedland and Newman.

In the case of the western desert communities, students will often move with family to Newman to access senior secondary schooling or further training opportunities. Newman Senior High School supports students through participation coordinators and school-based participation programs. Access to school-based traineeships in partnership with local businesses such as BHP and Martu Farm support students to build their knowledge and capacity to transition into work.

The Kimberley Region is seeking to improve the pathways for students to enter further education, training or the workforce through enhanced curriculum provision and opportunities through the establishment of the relationship with SIDE discussed previously.

The Kimberley Schools Project is also seeking to bring improved opportunities for secondary students in the long term by enhancing foundation skills, which will enable better engagement in school programs by senior students. Having an improved level of literacy and numeracy skills, such as achieving the Year 12 Graduation standard as defined by the Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA), will position students to be more successful in post-school pathways.

For several years, the Commonwealth funded an Aboriginal Junior Ranger program that prepared young people for a future career in land management and conservation as a Ranger. This program was delivered in several schools and in association with a local Ranger group and the associated Aboriginal corporation. While there is an indication for the program to be continued in 2020, the design of the course is still under consideration.

VET programs

Funding is provided through the Participation Program to assist people facing barriers to mainstream training by providing support services and subsidised courses. Registered training providers who are approved to deliver courses in the program may offer support and services such as mentoring and counselling, assistance with things like meals, transport and child care, and also language and literacy support. The program also assists with support for job seeking, résumé writing and work experience for eligible students.

A capped number of training places are allocated to the Department of Education to support at-risk students, including those in regional and remote areas.

An Aboriginal School-based Training program is funded to support Aboriginal students in Years 10, 11 and 12 to transition into further education and training. The program consists of an institutional pathway and a school-based apprenticeship or training pathway. The institutional pathway includes qualification choices for Year 11 and 12 regional and remote students who cannot access school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, and the ability for regional and remote schools to seek approval to combine year groups to form a viable class size for delivery.

The Western Australian Group Training Program provides incentives to group training organisations registered and operating in Western Australia to employ apprentices and trainees from priority groups, including Aboriginal people, people with a disability, school students and people living in regional and remote Western Australia.

The VET Regional Partnerships Program was implemented to provide an opportunity for regional TAFE colleges to invest in new and innovative long-term partnerships to create training and job opportunities in the community. An example of a program targeting secondary school students, is the *Agriculture, Fisheries, Fibre and Food Careers* program. This collaborative inter-agency and cross-sectoral five-year project aims to build capacity and contribute to the growth of the Agriculture, Fisheries, Fibre and Food industries.

The Muresk Institute, the Department of Education and DPIRD provide resources to collaboratively deliver the project, which will:

- address skills shortage areas in the agriculture, fisheries, fibre and food industries, by targeting education programs in the secondary school sector where there is the potential to influence career pathway selection;
- support teachers who are involved in career advice or subjects in which an agricultural, fisheries, fibre or food content can be delivered;
- involve Merredin College as a school hub to introduce agriculture, fisheries, fibre, food and forestry education and training for surrounding schools;
- facilitate delivery of the Start-up Business Entrepreneurial Learning in Action Program for York District High School and unaccredited career taste testers; and
- implement professional learning programs for teachers in 2020 and 2021, so that teachers have the resources, knowledge and confidence to deliver primary industries content.

Part of the Pilbara Collaboration Charter, the Teacher in Industry Placements program, which commenced in August 2019, provides educators with first-hand experience of technology, standard practices and skills required in the resources sector today. The industry placements will expose teachers to current practices and trends in the sector, enabling them to take their newfound experience and knowledge back to the classroom. The program initially began with science teachers from Karratha Senior High School and, if successful, will expand to cover other subject area teachers in 2020.

Within the Midwest Education Region, students access VET delivered to secondary students through a variety of options. Courses are designed for students who are still at secondary school but would like to start working or studying in a specific field. Students can complete full vocational qualifications in addition to their WACE. Some of the projects are:

- School Based Traineeships: A School Based Traineeship is a popular way to transition into the workforce or to learn valuable work-related skills.
- Pre-apprenticeship in Schools: These programs see students attend 'hands on' training at Geraldton TAFE for two days per week, where they are taught by lecturers with relevant and current trade qualifications. Students are also required to participate in work placement, which is an excellent opportunity for them to showcase their skills and work readiness to potential employers.
- A VET qualification can be a unique and an alternative pathway into university. Some of the Midwest's popular courses include Certificate IV Preparation to Health and Nursing Studies, offered over Years 11 and 12, and Information Technology
- PRIMED is a joint project between DOE, DTWD & DPIRD started mid last year. As of January 2020, the Midwest is establishing a pilot at Carnarvon Community College and is discussing potential with the Western Australian College of Agriculture – Morawa. Carnarvon Community College has a partnership with a local mango plantation, the DPIRD Research Station and the Carnarvon Growers' Association.
- The Morawa Education Industry Training Alliance was initially developed as a partnership of the Morawa Schools & Morawa Shire in response to families leaving town seeking improved educational opportunities available in metropolitan areas. This highlighted a decline in student numbers across a number of North Midlands Schools, resulting in the creation of the North Midlands Education Industry Training Alliance (NMEITA). NMEITA is seeking North Midlands schools to work as a cluster, cooperating and collaborating to offer improved, sustainable educational and training opportunities in the North Midlands, to reduce the number of families and skilled people leaving to move to the metropolitan areas.

Table 1: The number of schools, students and Aboriginal students in remote and very remote schools in Western Australia, by school type: 2019

School type	Number of schools	Number of students	Number of Aboriginal students
Agricultural Colleges	1	62	5
Schools of the Air	3	91	13
Remote Community Schools	21	1 323	1 281
Primary Schools	72	10 656	2 633
District High Schools	27	4 567	1 990
High Schools, Senior High Schools and Senior Colleges	6	4 342	1 129
K-12 Schools	2	1 396	780
Education Support Schools/Centres	2	36	21
Sub-total public schools	134	22 473	7 852
Non-government schools	36	4 154	1 987
WA Total	170	26 627	9 839

Data as at the national 2019 (Semester Two) school census.

Remote and very remote areas as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Australian Statistical Geography Standard.

District high schools includes the schools at Christmas and Cocos islands.

The figures for the Schools of the Air excludes SIDE, which is located in the Perth metropolitan area but can provide distance education to students in remote and very remote areas.

Carnarvon, Kimberley and Port Hedland Schools of the Air are considered remote or very remote. Kalgoorlie and Meekatharra Schools of the Air are outer regional.

Some schools have multiple campuses in remote and very remote areas but are only counted once.

Figures include students in Kindergarten (school-based preschool).

Table 2: List of Remote Schools Requiring Fibre Optic Services and Estimated Cost

	Location	Estimated Cost
1	Kalumburu Remote Community School	Not economically viable
2	Burringurrah Remote Community School	Not economically viable
3	Christmas Island District High School	No fibre to the island
4	Cocos Island District High School	No fibre to the island
5	Ngaanyatjarra Lands School, Tjukurla Campus	\$3,418,000
6	Wananami Remote Community School	\$2,990,000
7	Tjuntjunjarra Remote Community School	\$2,790,000
8	Laverton School, Mulga Queen Campus	\$2,070,000
9	Gascoyne Junction Remote Community School	\$1,700,000
10	Pia Wadjarri Remote Community School	\$1,666,000
11	Laverton School, Cosmo Newberry Campus	\$1,213,000
12	Yulga Jinna Remote Community School	\$1,207,000
13	Ngaanyatjarra Lands School, Kiwirrkurra Campus	\$1,184,000
14	Ngalapita Remote Community School	\$1,026,000
15	Jungdranung Remote Community School	\$877,000
16	Djugerari Remote Community School	\$871,000
17	Jigalong Community School	\$845,000
18	Lake King Primary School	\$833,000
19	Cascade Primary School	\$582,000
20	Muludja Remote Community School	\$578,000
21	Wangkatjunka Remote Community School	\$570,000
22	Mount Margaret Remote Community School	\$466,000
23	Useless Loop Primary School	\$420,000
24	Esperance Senior High School (Farm Training School Neridup)	\$315,000