

## **Inquiry into Academic Standards of School Education**

The purpose of this submission is to refer the committee to a recently published report from the National Centre of Science, ICT and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR, Australia) at the University of New England, Armidale. SiMERR aims to support rural and regional teachers, students and communities in improving educational outcomes in science, ICT and mathematics. The report documents the SiMERR National Survey carried out in 2005 that generated 100 findings that provided information about the circumstances and needs of Australian teachers ([Lyons, Cooksey, Panizzon, Parnell & Pegg, 2006](#)). Some of the more significant findings were:

- Supply and demand of teachers;
- Attracting and retaining teachers for rural and regional schools;
- Teacher qualifications and preparedness for teaching in rural and regional schools;
- Professional connectedness and Isolation;
- Material resources and support personnel;
- Student learning experiences;
- Parent/Caregiver perspectives.

The report contains a Principal and two related Recommendations along with twenty other recommendations that form the basis of a National Rural Education Strategy. The areas covered by the recommendations are:

- Staffing concerns:
  - Attraction and retention of teachers for rural schools;*
  - Support for rural teachers;*
- Pre-service preparation for rural teaching;
- Professional Isolation:
  - Induction/orientation of teachers new to a rural area;*
  - Continuing professional development;*
  - Professional engagement;*
- Access to resources and Support:
  - Provision of compensatory ICT resources;*
  - Access to ICT support personnel;*
  - Access to curriculum resources;*
  - Access to learning support personnel;*
  - Resource funding formulae;*
- Improving student learning outcomes;
- Parent/Caregiver concerns.

The SiMERR National centre comprises a national office at the University of New England and a network of Hubs in each of the States and Territories with a current activity focus of approximately one hundred projects.