

Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn
CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE

**RURAL AND REMOTE EDUCATION INQUIRY
HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION**

30 September 1999

1.0 AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF BOTH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLING IN THE ARCHDIOCESE

1.1 The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn provides Catholic primary and secondary education opportunities for rural and remote communities in a variety of schooling arrangements. These arrangements reflect the existence of Primary (Years K-6), Central (Years K-10) and Secondary (Years 7-10 and Years 7-12) Catholic schools in particular communities in the Archdiocese.

1.2 The locations of these Catholic schools are:

Primary
(Years K-6)

Adelong
Batehaven
Batlow
Bega
Bombala
Boorowa
Braidwood
Crookwell
Eden
Goulburn
Goulburn North
Grenfell
Gundagai
Lake Cargelligo
Murrumburrah
Moruya
Queanbeyan
Taralga

Central
(Years K-10)

Cooma
Cootamundra
Temora
Tumut
West Wyalong
Yass

Secondary
(Years 7-10)

Young (NB: for 1999 only – from 2000 Year 11 and 12 will be introduced).

Secondary
(Years 7-12)

Broulee
Goulburn (NB: the two Congregational Colleges in Goulburn are amalgamating in 1999 to form a new Diocesan College to open in 2000).

1.3 The Catholic Education system for the Archdiocese provides high quality, affordable and viable Catholic education. The Catholic schools in the Archdiocese meet all the statutory and educational requirements and accountabilities of the NSW and Commonwealth governments in terms of schooling and educational program provisions.

- 1.4 Teachers and support staff employed in Catholic schools are appropriately qualified for their roles and work within the System's policies and procedures, in light of local policy setting, decision making and accountability processes.
- 1.5 Ongoing professional development of school staff is a System priority.
- 1.6 Relevant demographic data are incorporated in the following tables.
 - 1.6.1 NSW Student Enrolments (listed by Schools and disaggregated into Year levels and Gender).
 - 1.6.2 NSW Student Information (listed by Schools and disaggregated into Aboriginality, Students with Disabilities [S.W.D.] and Non-English Speaking Background [NESB]).

NB: Data for one of the Goulburn Congregational Secondary Colleges (St Patrick's College) was not available at the time of compilation of these tables.
 - 1.6.3 NSW Diocesan School Enrolments (Indigenous Students) (listed by Year levels and disaggregated into Gender, Indigenous and Disability).
 - 1.6.4 NSW Congregational Enrolments (Indigenous Students) (listed by Year levels and disaggregated into Gender, Indigenous and Disability).
 - 1.6.5 School Attendance (listed by NSW Primary/Secondary and disaggregated into Non Indigenous and Indigenous).
 - 1.6.6 Retention Rates (Indigenous) (listed by Years 10-12).

2.0 QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

- 2.1 The educational services provided by Catholic schools in the Archdiocese are of high quality and support children in their educational, personal, physical and religious development through their primary and secondary years of schooling.
- 2.2 Educational programs and curriculum resources are in accordance with NSW Board of Studies syllabuses and Key Learning area requirements, as well as meeting the curriculum, teaching and learning policies of the Catholic Education Office for the Archdiocese.
- 2.3 Catholic schools in the System are staffed according to a system formula which takes into account student enrolments, the formation of classes and learning groupings, students with particular and special needs, support staff needs and available resourcing from Commonwealth, NSW and Catholic System sources. Depending on the size and particular needs of individual schools, staffing allocated to promotions positions and specialist support roles are subject to System guidelines and industrial agreements.

- 2.4 Learning supports for Students with Special Education Needs and Students with Disabilities (SWDs) are provided through the Commonwealth's Special Learning Needs Program (Special Education – School support element).
- 2.4.1 The funding formulae are determined by the Archdiocesan Special Education Committee and based on established student need and Commonwealth criteria.
- 2.4.2 1999 Commonwealth funding for Students with Disabilities in NSW schools was \$157,829 which included funds for capital support (eg equipment resources).
- 2.4.3 No home-school transport arrangements were available for NSW students.
- 2.5 Additional staffing support to address the learning needs of special needs students in Catholic schools is provided from Catholic System funds.
- 2.6 Learning supports for Indigenous students are provided through System funds and Commonwealth Indigenous Education funding.
- 2.6.1 The placement of Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs) in a school is determined by a combination of the following factors:
- significant numbers of Indigenous students enrolled;
 - educational needs of the Indigenous students enrolled; and
 - locality of the school/isolation factors.
- 2.6.2 The terms and conditions of the AEWs employed are outlined in the Schools Support Staff (Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn) Certified Agreement, 1997.
- 2.6.3 Career Structure for Aboriginal Education Workers:
- A structure for progressing through the levels is outlined in the above stated Award (2.6.2).
 - The CEO encourages AEWs to complete some form of formal training each year.
 - Annual Development Appraisals monitor staff performance and contribute information/recommendations to movement through the identified levels outlined in the Award.
- 2.7 Professional Development Programs for Rural and Remote Teaching and Support Staff.
- 2.7.1 The Catholic Education Office allocates an amount of money annually to Catholic schools in the Archdiocese for use on school determined professional development initiatives.
- 2.7.2 These initiatives are determined at school level and can be used for whole staff professional development or individual staff member professional development.

- 2.7.3 The particular amount allocated to each school is based on the total staffing of the school and applied according to an agreed System formula.
- 2.7.4 The funded pool for the Archdiocese is divided between the NSW and ACT sectors on a 55% - 45% basis, in recognition of various disadvantaging factors facing staffs of the rural and remote NSW schools.
- 2.8 Commonwealth Targeted Programs funding, which have a particular dimension appropriate to professional development of school staff in support of the System's and the Commonwealth's priority learning agendas, encompass specific programs such as the Special Education – School Support Element, the Country Areas Program, National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Program and Indigenous Education.
- 2.9 1999 Special Education – Schools Support Element professional development initiatives include:
- 2.9.1 Managing Student Behaviour course in 3 country regions (3 x 2 day programs including teacher relief costs).
- 2.9.2 Speech and Language – Assessment and Programming course in 3 country regions (ie 3 x 2 day programs including teacher relief costs).
- 2.9.3 Provision of system funds for staff to attend courses relating to the Special Needs issues of Autism, Hearing Impairment and Visual Impairment.
- 2.9.4 A series of literacy courses targeting Special Needs students (eg the Secondary Literacy Initiatives Program tutors' course).
- 2.9.5 A range of school based professional development provided by Special Needs Education Services (eg the system Inclusion program).
- 2.10 1999 Country Areas Program professional development initiatives include a multiplicity of school and district-based programs to address problems experienced in rural schools:
- addressing the issues of boys in education;
 - community evening study groups;
 - IT networking between schools;
 - creative arts and literacy workshops with visiting artists and writers;
 - 'Journey into Education' seminars and workshops for over 1000 staff in the Batemans Bay and Deniliquin districts.
- 2.11 1999 National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Program professional development initiatives include:
- 2.11.1 Expanding opportunities for teachers and students to create "Asia literate schools" through curriculum support.

- 2.11.2 Providing teachers with support to learn about Asian languages and culture through participation in Teacher In-country Fellowship Awards and Language Immersion Courses off-shore.
 - 2.11.3 Facilitating expansion of knowledge and teaching strategies through teacher involvement in Access Asia networks (Asia Education Foundation sponsored).
 - 2.11.4 Providing teachers with teaching and learning resources.
 - 2.11.5 Providing funding to support teachers to access undergraduate and graduate courses in targeted languages and studies of Asia.
- 2.12 1999 Indigenous Education Team professional development programs for teachers of Indigenous students and whole school staffs, through general staff meetings and through developed courses, include:
- 2.12.1 ‘Teaching Aboriginal Students’ – a 3 day program on teaching and learning for Aboriginal students. The course contains a large Indigenous cultural component and focus on commonalities among Indigenous students so as to increase teacher understanding, skills and teaching methodology for the students.
 - 2.12.2 ‘Teaching the Teachers’ – a 14 module staff meeting program to assist teachers to increase their knowledge base concerning Indigenous cultures, histories and issues and to provide strategies for teachers to incorporate this new learning into their classroom programs.
 - 2.12.3 Assist schools in developing an inclusive curriculum which includes Indigenous Studies and Perspectives across all Key Learning Areas, K-12. Funding for Indigenous teaching and learning resources and materials is available to schools through this initiative.
- 2.13 Some examples of successful local programs in recent years are:
- 2.13.1 Distance Education:
 - From 1990 the CEO supported and trialled the linking of rural schools through electronic media which, in its later form, resulted in National Country Areas Program and NSW Country Areas Program funding support for the provision of an expanded curriculum via distance education telematics mode.
 - Staff were involved in professional development, curriculum development and new teaching techniques.
 - Between 1994 and 1998, when Indonesian language was the mainstay of the program, 8 NSW rural and isolated teachers were assisted financially to undertake the study of LOTE to support the on-line, off-line program.
 - The program concluded when essential support funds from Commonwealth and State sources ceased and available System funds were not sufficient to maintain this initiative.

2.13.2 During 1998 a one year pilot program was conducted which aimed to increase student literacy achievement through the use of two new software programs in association with the purchase of sophisticated computer equipment.

- At Catholic schools in Batehaven, Eden and Lake Cargelligo the program was conducted with the guidance of a teacher and a teacher assistant at each site. As well as daily exposure to the computer technology and software, students took part in explicit literacy activities making the pilot project a new and radical part of the school's whole literacy strategy.
- For 35% of the students the program was responsible, in part, for a sharp increase in whole literacy achievement and reading ability as measured by either a Neale Analysis or the Waddington Reading Test. A further 30% of students improved their literacy achievement through participation in the program.

3.0 HUMAN RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS: CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING

3.1 The universal norms which apply to the rights of Catholic parents and Catholic children to access Catholic schooling in NSW are stated in the:

3.1.1 "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" – Articles 18 and 26 (1)-(3).

3.1.2 "Declaration of the Rights of the Child" – Principle 7.

3.1.3 "Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief" – Article 5 (1)-(2).

3.1.4 "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" – Articles 18 (1)-(4) and 23.

3.2 The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission paper on "The Human Rights of Rural Australians" (1996) highlighted that the full enjoyment by rural Australians of their human rights can be problematic due to a number of factors and reasons. Geographical remoteness, distance from larger urban and regional centres, and the extremes of climatic and seasonal weather patterns, all have significant impacts on fragile rural economies. The tendency for inequalities to occur in the availability and priority provisions for goods, services, employment and educational opportunities, due to the concentration of population in major urban centres, exacerbates further the disadvantage experienced by rural and remote communities.

3.3 Parents make a significant private contribution to their children's Catholic schooling in light of existing Commonwealth and State government funding arrangements for the Catholic schooling sector.

- 3.4 The fundamental right of Catholic families to choose Catholic schooling for their children is limited by many of the above factors evident in the rural NSW sector of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

4.0 CONSULTATIONS WITH NSW REGIONAL AND LOCAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITIES IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN

- 4.1 Consultations with the regional and local rural Catholic school communities in the Archdiocese have identified the following issues of disadvantage and inequality experience by families served by their local Catholic schools.

- Unreliable availability of relief staff.
- Levels of teaching resources and school generated funds.
- Difficulties in attracting new staff (teaching and support staff).
- Cost of travel to excursions, sporting venues, cultural centres.
- Distance to resources, library, arts, sporting, cultural events. Time for travel is prohibitive.
- Legal implications of the new NSW Ombudsman legislative arrangements for child protection.
- Attracting volunteers to school based programs/activities in light of Child Protection issues.
- Resource Teacher and/or Teacher Librarian support are essential to address the specific needs of individual rural schools.
- Access to specialist facilities, eg for Special Education needs students.
- Appropriate staff room amenities and physical upkeep of the buildings in rural communities.
- Availability of regular levels of student counselling service and follow-up in critical incident situations.
- Staff professional development is problematic due to distance, travel and low levels of information technology accessibility.
- Time release for principals with many duties and roles and class teaching responsibilities.
- Beginning teachers require additional assistance and collegial/System back-up.
- Need to be able to share professional issues, frustrations, etc with peers (school leaders and teachers).
- Sense of fragility over enrolment numbers, as a small change in numbers can mean staff loss.
- Sense of teachers and the school being public property in rural communities, therefore carrying others' expectations of what should and can be done - especially difficult for female principals and teachers in rural and remote communities.
- Sense of being "burnt out" in a short space of time can develop due to many of the above factors.
- Particular problems faced by rural boys, especially in their secondary schooling years.
- Secondary students have limited Work Experience and Vocational Education and Training opportunities.

- The unavailability of bus services to and from primary and high school due to small numbers of children using these services.
- High cost of sending children to nearest boarding school even though an allowance is given to assist with boarding and education.
- The high cost of IT assistance as local experts are not available, therefore an inability to upgrade/maintain services already developed.
- Curriculum choice in high schools is difficult in that expertise in specific areas is not always available.
- In some communities government and non-government schools tend not to work collaboratively together thus causing a reduction in resources available locally from the community.
- Difficulty in attracting teachers to stay for more than 2 years due to social and community opportunities.
- Job selection criteria may need to be different for teachers working and living in small communities.
- There needs to be a greater understanding between the person being employed in relation to the culture in which they may need to work.
- Children enrolled in non-government schools in remote areas need more IT and distance education support from Commonwealth/State Governments.

5.0 PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION TO ADDRESS THE INEQUALITIES AND DISADVANTAGES FACING RURAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE

- 5.1 Critical importance of access to student transport subsidies, including subsidised private transport.
- 5.2 Lack of equitable telecommunications access, particularly in respect of:
 - Internet access (for schools and students).
 - Satellite technology.
- 5.3 Staffing problems:
 - Lack of suitable applicants.
 - Lack of mobility amongst existing staff.
 - Lack of relief teachers.
 - Teacher housing problems.
 - Lack of specialist teachers, eg, LOTE, Technology.
- 5.4 Junior secondary school problems in implementing new curriculum models, eg: School Certificate Reform. Adverse impact of compulsory History/Geography on the ability to deliver relevant electives such as Agriculture. Lack of access to Joint School TAFE Programs for Years 9 and 10.
- 5.5 Occupational Health and Safety issues associated with aging buildings.
- 5.6 Supplementation of per capita funding. Government funding allocations should reflect needs.

- 5.7 Integration support for Students with Disabilities, eg relevant health services for student assessments (speech pathology).
- 5.8 Increase assistance for Indigenous student issues.
- 5.9 Establish programs for rural boys.
- 5.10 Establish teacher exchange and secondment programs with city schools.
- 5.11 Allow rural secondary schools curriculum flexibility so that relevant subject offerings can be maintained/developed.
- 5.12 Provide assistance to parents who have to transport students for hundreds of kilometres for diagnostic or remedial help.
- 5.13 Promote effective cross-sectoral co-operation between Catholic and Government schools (when and as possible).
- 5.14 Refocus and better resource the Commonwealth's Country Areas Program.

6.0 CONCLUSION

It is strongly recommended that the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission recommend to the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments that proactive initiatives be taken to ensure that the choices of schooling opportunities and educational provisions for Australia's rural and remote communities be resourced, over an appropriate time period, to more closely resemble those available to urban and more densely populated communities in Australia.