

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION**

**INQUIRY INTO RURAL
AND REMOTE SCHOOL
EDUCATION IN
AUSTRALIA**

Submission prepared by:

**NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND
TRAINING
35 BRIDGE STREET
SYDNEY**

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SYNOPSIS

The Department of Education and Training is committed to providing high quality education for students in New South Wales no matter where in the state they reside and regardless of sex, race, religion, socio-economic circumstances or physical and intellectual ability.

This submission

- explains the structure in which schools operate
- outlines the ways in which education is made available and accessible to all students
- describes the range of programs operating in rural and remote schools and how they are adapted to the needs of targeted groups
- considers the support provided by technology in delivering quality education to students across the state, and particularly to those in the most isolated localities.
- provides information on some programs operating in rural areas.

INFORMATION REQUESTED BY THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

Subject	Location of Information in Submission
Demographic Data	
• List of schools covered	Submission page 2 and Attachment 1
• Student population breakdown	Attachment 1. Figures on breakdown by sex not available in this context
• Primary and secondary attendance	Attachment 5
• Retention rates	Attachment 14
Staffing Issues	
• Staffing formulae	See page 8 for material included in the submission
• Formula for the provision of Aboriginal Education Workers	See page 39 for material included in the submission
• Terms and conditions of employment for Aboriginal Education Workers	See Attachment 8
• Career Structure for Aboriginal Education Workers	See Attachment 8
• Professional development programs and funding for rural and remote teaching staff and support staff	See page 26 for material included in the submission. As the training and development program is available to personnel across the state, separate funding figures for rural areas are not established for every program. Some examples of the participation of rural teachers are included in Section 5 program details
• Rural and remote staffing incentives	See page 9 of the submission and Attachment 3
Learning and Support	
• Funding formulae and actual program provision for support/resources for children with disabilities	See Section 4 of the submission, pages 34-37

Subject	Location of Information in Submission
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information technology plans and challenges	Considered throughout the document, including pages 11-13, 23-29 and in some programs in Section 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Income support and subsidies for students	See page 10 of submission
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Home school transport arrangements, including those for children with disabilities	See page 14, page 36 and Attachment 11
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Details of specific programs	See Section 5 and some attachments

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

Organisation of the Submission from the NSW Department of Education and Training

This submission to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's inquiry into rural and remote education will indicate the ways in which the policy of the NSW Government is put into practice by the Department of Education and Training (DET) and, in particular, the ways in which this policy is applied to ensure equity for students in the rural and remote areas of the state.

Consistent with the definitions used in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's *Rural and Remote Education Issues Paper* and the structure of the Department of Education and Training, and for the purposes of this submission, 'rural and remote' areas are considered to be those outside the metropolitan districts in Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle. Particular examples will be drawn from some of the 20 rural districts covering 1 057 schools providing education for 264 737 students. Details of these districts and their student population are provided in Attachment 1 (not included in this electronic version).

In responding to the inquiry's terms of reference, the submission will focus on the general provisions for education in New South Wales, the particular issues faced by students, their families and their schools in rural and remote areas, and the general planning and resourcing of the Department of Education and Training to ensure that all students in the state have access to a high quality education. Consideration will be given to particular examples of programs which operate across the state and ways in which they are delivered at the local level, with special attention being given to the quality of technological support and to training and development support.

Throughout this submission and in Section 4, special attention is given to the provisions for students with special needs in line with the commitment of the department as outlined in the *NSW Department of Education and Training Annual Report 1998*.

'The department has a strong commitment to creating a fairer and more equitable education and training system for the people of NSW. This involves ensuring the equitable distribution of resources and meeting the specific needs of learners in target groups. These groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, women, people with disabilities, people in rural and isolated areas, people who are socio-economically disadvantaged, youth, and unemployed people.'

Section 5 will outline examples of local school and district initiatives in rural areas and examples of state programs applied at the local level. The Moree and Dubbo districts are a particular focus because of their high proportion of Aboriginal students and the remoteness of many of the communities. The final section will consider the department's rural education plan for the period 1998-2000, the extent to which the plan has become reality and the vision for the future.

Legislative Framework

The Department of Education and Training operates under a number of Acts of Parliament and is responsible to the Minister for Education and Training for the provision of public education to students in government schools. In the *NSW Charter of Principles for Equity in Education and Training (1997)*, the Government has acknowledged the entitlement of all young people to school education to Year 12 or a vocational education equivalent.

The legislative and policy framework of the Department of Education and Training acknowledges particular responsibilities relating to equity. The *Education Act 1990* requires education and training authorities, amongst other things, to assist each student to achieve his or her potential; to mitigate educational disadvantage arising from geographic, economic, social, cultural, lingual and other causes; to provide a curriculum which encourages students to complete secondary education. The *Technical and Further Education Commission Act 1990* makes particular provision for access to technical and further education services for educationally or vocationally disadvantaged groups. All policy statements of the department are formulated in the light of these requirements and of those in the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1997 (NSW)* and the *Disability Services Act 1993*.

In April 1999, these responsibilities were further acknowledged in the Adelaide Declaration *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*. The goals adopted by State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education include the following:

- schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students
- students should, by the time they leave school, have attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling
- schooling should be socially just so that students' outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination and of differences arising from students' socio-economic background or geographic location.

In fulfilling these responsibilities, the department provides education in regular primary, central and secondary schools for students across NSW, but in addition it has established schools, programs and services for students with particular needs as well as facilities for vocational, adult and further education. For students remote from centres of population and for those whose personal circumstances require it, the department provides alternative access to schooling through distance education.

Statewide Structure for Planning and Delivering Educational Services

In late 1997, the former Department of School Education, the former Department of Training and Education Co-ordination, and NSW TAFE Commission were amalgamated to form the Department of Education and Training (DET). The new department provides a single management structure for the provision of pre-school and school education, vocational education and training including TAFE NSW courses, adult and community education and an adult migrant English service. This structure allows the delivery of an integrated education and training service and the creation of a smoother transition from school to further education and training. State Office has responsibility for policy implementation, planning and resource allocation, school and curriculum support services and is accountable for the education system.

For the purposes of administration, the state is divided into 40 school education districts in which district superintendents and support staff provide educational leadership and a framework for planning, co-ordination and delivery of programs and services to communities. Twenty of these districts provide for rural and remote schools.

In NSW, DET provides pre-school, primary and secondary education for 765 375 students in 2 222 schools (mid-1998 figures) which range in size from small remote primary schools with fewer than ten students, to multi-campus facilities with in excess of 1 200 primary and secondary age students, to very large secondary schools with 1 400 - 1 500 + students. For a small number of students, education is provided in schools for specific purposes, which are better able to meet their special needs than are regular schools.

New South Wales Public Schools			
	1996	1997	1998
Government Schools	2,220	2,221	2,222
Primary and Infant Schools	1,648	1,648	1,649
Central Schools	65	65	65
High Schools	389	390	391
Schools for Specific Purposes	99	98	97
Field Studies Centres	19	20	20
Students	761,037	764,173	765,375
Primary	450,465	451,560	452,565
Secondary	306,823	308,923	309,137
Schools for Specific Purposes	3,749	3,690	3,673
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	23,592	25,127	26,700
Students from non-English speaking background	152,268	164,147	171,068
Government students sitting the HSC	37,392	37,862	39,829
Student teacher ratios			
Primary	17.6	17.6	17.6
Years 7-10	13.5	13.5	12.4
Years 11-12	10.4	10.2	(Years 7-12)

Programs are provided through 19 Distance Education Centres catering for in excess of 6 500 students enrolled in full-time and single courses at pre-school, primary and secondary levels.

Education and Training Priorities

Each year, the Department of Education and Training publishes a key-planning document for the public school system *Agenda*, which identifies the strategic initiatives for the year and provides a basis for statewide planning, monitoring and reporting. The focus areas for schools have statewide application and all schools participate in their implementation. In 1999 these focus areas include:

- improving literacy and numeracy skills
- new technologies in learning, teaching, training and administration
- vocational education and training
- greater participation for students in fitness and physical activities as well as creative and performing arts
- quality teaching
- parent and community involvement in schools, including making school facilities more accessible to the community.

Support structures at state and district level assist schools in fulfilling their obligations to their communities. Further details of the contents of *Agenda 99* will be found in Attachment 2 (not included in this electronic version).

Equitable Outcomes

A major priority area in 1998 and 1999 has been the provision of a “fair go for all”. This priority recognises that in a period in which rural communities are feeling the pressure of declining populations and diminishing resources, it is vital that we progress towards the goal that no region in the state is any less likely to produce outstanding results than any other. In 1999, the specific goals in this area are to be achieved by:

- developing strategies to provide quality comprehensive education in conjunction with local communities
- involving school communities in ensuring good discipline and effective learning
- assisting positive participation by students from all backgrounds
- extending programs for students with special education and training needs
- using technology to assist students in remote and isolated parts of the State
- allocating resources to assist schools to achieve equitable outcomes for students.

The following table indicates the educational programs available for students in rural and remote government schools.

OPTIONS – Educational Programs available to Students in Rural and Remote Government Schools in NSW

Level	Regular School	Distance Education	Special Schools/Support Classes	Other
Pre-School	Limited number of DET pre-schools+ Pre-schools and transition programs in aboriginal communities #	Available where child will be enrolled for all primary school years Available for eligible students with disabilities from the age of 3.5 years	Early Intervention Services	Several pre-schools funded by Aboriginal Programs
K-6	Neighbourhood schools Government-subsidised transport	Full program available for isolated and other eligible children DE Support Unit provides programs for isolated students with disabilities	Limited number of schools for special purposes* Support classes in regular schools related to a range of disabilities Support from specialist Itinerant teachers	Support in regular schools available for students with special needs; e.g. NESB, Aboriginal, learning difficulties, reading recovery Acceleration programs
Years 7-12	Central Schools High Schools Agricultural High Schools Specialist High Schools Government-subsidised transport	Full time enrolment Single subject Languages Access program(11-12) – applicable to Central Schools and small high schools in rural and remote locations	As for K-6 Curriculum and credentialling options for School Certificate and HSC Government funded transport for eligible students P-12	As for K-6 Vocational Education and Training in schools - part-time traineeships

+ Pre-schools attached to rural schools: Hume (Albury), Narrabri West,

Pre-schools to serve rural Aboriginal communities: Alma (*Alma-Bugdlie*), Casino (*Djanenam*), Enngonia, Moama (*Cummeragunja*), Mungindi Central, Nowra East (*Wayeela Cooinda*), Walgett (Term 4, 1999)

* Schools for Special Purposes to provide education for some children with disabilities in rural areas: Albury (2), Bathurst, Cowra, Goulburn, Griffith, Gunnedah, Inverell, Leeton, Lismore, Nowra, Orange, Tamworth, Tumut, Ulladulla, Unanderra, Telarah, Wagga Wagga (2), Warilla

SECTION 2. THE AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLING IN NSW

This section includes an outline of:

- the availability of education in government schools in NSW
- the provision of school education for students in rural and remote schools in relation to
 - curriculum
 - allocation of personnel
 - incentive programs for principals and teachers in isolated schools
 - financial support
 - physical facilities
 - technology provisions
- the use of technology to make education more accessible through distance education
- the provision of financial support for families to make education more accessible for their children
- the ways in which DET informs the community about school education to improve its accessibility.

Availability of Education in Government Schools in NSW

In NSW schooling is compulsory from the age of 6 to 15 years and is available free to all student, in accordance with the department's statutory responsibilities and in keeping with the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), Article 28. Secondary education, too, is both available and accessible to every student in NSW up to the age of 18.

There are primary schools in each community in NSW where sufficient students require enrolment. There are secondary schools or central schools in the communities where a critical number of students can be efficiently brought together for schooling.

The department also operates 77 pre-schools attached to primary or central schools. Pre-schools were originally established by the Department of Education and Training in areas of disadvantage to provide for families with little or no access to pre-school education. The major responsibility for planning, regulation and the administration of funding for children's services in NSW rests with the Department of Community Services.

Special provisions are made for students with disabilities through support programs in their local community school, enrolment in special classes or enrolment in a special school (SSP).

Finally, for those students whose special circumstances do not allow them to take advantage of the provisions outlined above or for whom the program offered in

mainstream schools is not suitable, Distance Education Centres provide a full program of education from pre-school to Year 12.

To ensure that students have access to an education that is of the highest quality, the department provides schools with trained staff, physical facilities, technological and financial support. Special consideration is given to the particular needs of rural and remote schools in the allocation of staff and resources and in the application of equity programs. This is outlined below.

Provision of School Education for Students in Rural and Remote Schools

The principal objective of public schools is to offer the students of NSW high quality education that is:

- relevant to their needs and aspirations
- responsive to community expectations through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum
- effective in its implementation
- efficient in the use of available resources
- based on good discipline and effective learning.

CURRICULUM

The NSW school curriculum is organised into the key learning areas as required by the *Education Act 1990*. There are six key learning areas for primary schools and eight for secondary schools. Students receive instruction in each of these areas.

Primary school key learning areas are:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- Human Society and Its Environment including Languages (HSIE)
- Creative and Practical Arts
- Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE)

Secondary school key learning areas are:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE)
- Languages
- Technological and Applied Studies
- Creative Arts
- Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE)

In secondary schools, programs of study are organised so that students who meet requirements are eligible for the award of the School Certificate (SC) and the Higher School Certificate (HSC) in accordance with the regulations of the Board of Studies.

Particular provision is made for students with intellectual disabilities and appropriate courses will be available in the new HSC to allow them to achieve this credential.

Students in small rural or remote schools have the opportunity of widening curriculum choice by including in their educational program subjects studied by distance education. Further, such small schools have been able to make more effective use of their resources through cooperative planning and program delivery with similar schools. This has been made possible through the more advanced technological resources now available in schools.

Allocation of Personnel

- **Regular staff** including teachers and administrative staff is allocated to schools across the state according to a formula based on student enrolments. Executive staff is allocated depending on student enrolments and the classification of the school.
- In addition, support staff can be allocated to schools related to the **special needs** of their students and to the particular programs that are operating in the school; for example, Aboriginal Education Assistants, Support Teachers Learning Difficulties, Teachers Aides (Integration).
- **Special programs** operating in the school may have a staff supplement as an element of the program; for example, a Reading Recovery allocation is made to each school implementing the program; some programs designed for Aboriginal students include staffing supplements; schools which are part of the Disadvantaged Schools Program receive additional staff according to a formula. Attachment 3 lists the rural schools on this program (not included in this electronic version).
- A pool of teacher **supplementation** and flexible school administrative and support staffing is available for emergency circumstances and for unique situations applying to some schools. Issues considered in the allocation of this resource relate to the perceived educational value of a program or initiative, local circumstances and the availability of support from other sources.
- **Small Schools Supplementation**, also based on student numbers, is provided to **small secondary schools and central schools** to give them some flexibility in the provision of their curriculum. In 1997, an additional 6 000 relief days were allocated to **small rural schools** to be phased in over 4 years and to be used for teacher professional development, curriculum development, educational enhancement plans, special school projects and administrative relief.
- The DET's 20 **rural district offices** provide a wide range of support services to all government primary and secondary schools. This includes district training and development/curriculum coordinators, district literacy consultants, district Mathematics consultants, district Personal Development Health and Physical Education consultants, district creative arts consultants and district Human Society

and Its Environment consultants. These curriculum consultants are trained and supported by the Curriculum Support and the Training and Development Directorates.

Incentive Programs for Principals and Teachers in Isolated Schools

An incentive scheme has been implemented to ensure that schools in remote areas of the state are staffed with quality teachers.

The incentives scheme applies to schools attracting eight or six transfer points, and some four point schools classified as remote. These schools are listed in Attachment 3 (not included in this electronic version).

The incentives available under the scheme vary according to the location and type of school but include:

- priority for transfer to a vacancy in an agreed location or area following the required period of service;
- compassionate transfer status provided to teaching partners moving in or out of positions in six and eight point schools;
- a 20% rental subsidy for teachers in six and eight point schools occupying Teacher Housing Authority residences;
- four additional training and development days per year for teachers in six and eight point schools and one additional day for teachers in remote four point schools;
- one week's additional vacation for teachers serving in schools in the Western Division of the state; and
- locality allowances for teachers in schools in specified localities which provide compensation for additional costs incurred by living in those areas.

The incentive scheme has been successful in attracting teachers to remote areas of the state and in ensuring that schools in these areas are fully staffed with quality teachers.

In the period April 1998 to April 1999, 16 principals, 33 executive staff and 125 classroom teachers who had completed the required period of service in remote schools were appointed to positions in locations of their choice through the incentives scheme.

- The **Rural School Leadership Plan** for principals encourages good teachers to provide strong leadership in targeted small and isolated rural schools.

This plan offers principals additional incentives worth up to \$30 000. The package includes incentives such as:

- additional salary loading
- motor vehicle and rental costs
- flexible working conditions
- transfer guarantees after completion of service period at school
- financial assistance with personal training and development activities.

While this system of recruitment has worked well for schools which have previously been difficult to staff, a continuing issue is that of retaining staff in the longer term. Possible extension of the incentive scheme is under consideration. However, local communities also appreciate the benefits that can be derived from some staff turnover and greatly value the contributions made by young staff. Their positive contributions to the broader community as well as their enthusiasm and recent training in teaching pedagogy, subject matter and management systems are additional resources available to a school community.

Financial Support

In the 1999-2000 budget of the Department of Education and Training a total amount of \$238.7 million was allocated for Schools' Global Funding. Funding allocations are made based largely on student enrolment. However, special factors, such as isolation, are taken into account when determining a school's financial entitlement.

- **Core financial support** based on enrolment is provided for all schools to cover operating costs for
 - services such as electricity, gas, telephone, stores
 - minor maintenance, minor capital works
 - short term casual relief for staff for approved leave and training and development programs
 - textbooks and reading materials
 - Student Assistance Scheme to help needy students participate fully in the school program.
- An additional **special factor loading** applies to isolated schools based on enrolment and isolation. The smallest isolated schools receive an additional \$500 per annum when this factor is applied and larger isolated schools receive considerably more, depending on size. Such schools also receive an additional allocation for training and development programs. The most isolated schools in the State receive \$673 per teacher to defray the additional expenses incurred in implementing staff training and development programs in comparison with metropolitan schools which receive \$25 per teacher.
- **Equity Programs** such as the Country Areas Program (CAP) and the Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) aim at improving the educational outcomes of students in targeted areas. Disadvantaged Schools Program schools are those which serve communities with the highest concentration of families from low socio-economic backgrounds. The Country Areas Program (CAP) supports students in government and non-government schools which are educationally disadvantaged by geographical isolation. The extensive list of rural government schools in the Disadvantaged Schools Programs is included at Attachment 4 (not included in this electronic version).

- Principals are able to seek **supplementary funds** if expenditure exceeds allocation because of the special circumstances of the school; for example, the cost of telephone communication for more remote schools.

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

- **Basic building codes** are used as a guide to the provision of physical facilities in schools (for example number of classrooms, library, office accommodation, staff facilities, assembly halls) but special circumstances are also considered.
- In the 1999-2000 budget period, **capital works** valued at \$67.2 million will be undertaken to provide new and improved facilities in rural and regional areas. New primary schools are under construction or will commence at Banora Point, Callala Bay and Camden Haven. A new high school will be constructed at Tuncurry and the Evans River K-12 Community School will be completed. Stage 1 of the development of the Dubbo Secondary Multi-Campus will commence in this budget period. Rural schools which are included on the program for upgrading are primary schools at Bungendore, Dubbo South, Gloucester, Kiama, Scone, Ulladulla and Yeoval Central School and Parkes High School. A new library is being provided at Westlawn Public School. Permanent facilities will be provided at Lightning Ridge Central School. New permanent classrooms have been installed at primary schools at Jindabyne, Coolamon, Urunga and Hinton while Sanctuary Point Public School and Greta Public School have new classrooms under construction.
- **The Air-Conditioning of Schools Program:** Over the next four years, \$40 million will be spent across the state on air-conditioning more than 3 000 classrooms. Since 1995, \$13 million has been spent on cooling permanent classrooms, libraries, administration buildings and demountable classrooms across the state. In the 1999-2001 period, more than 270 additional 'hot spot' schools identified in the Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Clarence/Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Griffith, Lismore, Maitland, Orange, Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Taree, Tweed Heads and Wagga Wagga districts will have permanent spaces (such as classrooms, libraries, administration buildings, halls) air-conditioned at a cost of \$11.6 million and 320 demountable classrooms in these districts will also be cooled.
- **Access for staff and students** with a disability is provided in all new schools and in those schools where major upgrading programs are undertaken. The upgrading of school facilities is also undertaken on a needs basis so that, where a student with disabilities is enrolling, part of the plan for that student involves provision of access. As a result of this program, in the Moree District for example, four students with disabilities are now able to attend their small local schools rather than having to travel to schools elsewhere.

TECHNOLOGY PROVISIONS

The government recognises that expertise and confidence in using technology are essential for study, employment and life in the new millennium. Over the past four years the **Computers in Schools Program** has brought about changes in teaching and learning practices. The program has included the allocation of hardware to schools and the training of teachers in the use of computers in their classrooms.

- **Allocation of computer hardware:** A school's computer entitlement has been allocated on a student per capita basis, calculated to ensure that each school has a student to computer ratio of 1:11 or better. Such entitlements involve the flexibility to choose equipment best suited to the school's particular needs and schools can choose from a range of equipment including notebooks, desktops and network file servers.
- Schools providing education for **students with disabilities** are able to choose special peripheral devices particularly suited to the needs of their students. Over and above the allocation to schools, a further 2 138 computers have been distributed to meet special needs.
- All schools have been provided with a **connection to the Internet** in order to provide ready access to information from Australia and overseas and to reduce rural isolation. The department is currently in the process of upgrading these connections to provide a 64 kbps ISDN link to schools. All schools, where Telstra is able to provide an ISDN service, will be connected by the end of 1999.
- Rural schools have been provided with **digital satellite television** reception equipment which enables all non-metropolitan schools to receive ABC and SBS radio and television services. The recently completed upgrade to the digital satellite system has improved rural and remote schools' access to these important television and radio services.
- **Technology Advisers** have worked closely with district curriculum and training and development consultants to ensure that schools are provided with a comprehensive integrated approach to support the educational needs of their students.

IMPROVING ACCESS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Distance Education

Distance education is concerned with providing access and equity for students in exceptional circumstances who can demonstrate that they meet the established criteria for enrolment. Many students who are isolated or whose special circumstances prevent them from attending school on a regular basis have their whole education program delivered by distance education. Programs for isolated students with disabilities are provided through a Distance Education Support Unit. A pre-school program is provided for those isolated pre-school students who will complete their primary education through distance education. For students enrolled in secondary schools, especially small high schools and

central schools, distance education can provide opportunities for students in Years 9-12 to study a course not offered in their home school.

There are Distance Education Centres located across NSW to bring the service closer to students and their families. Some centres are autonomous (Broken Hill School of the Air, Dubbo School of Distance Education, Tibooburra, Open High School, Sydney Distance Education Primary School) while others are integrated with a primary or secondary host school in rural areas such as Ballina, Balranald, Bourke, Casino, Cobar, Hay, Port Macquarie, Queanbeyan and Walgett.

Distance education courses are delivered in traditional ways using print materials and radio but also through more advanced technology.

- **Radio Technology**
 - High frequency radio services (e.g. from Dubbo School of Distance Education to 33 student home sites).
 - Very High Frequency from six Distance Education Centres (e.g. Bourke, Broken Hill, Cobar, Hay, Tibooburra, Walgett to 122 student home sites).
- **Other electronic media** including E-mail, Electronic classroom, Internet passages are used to supplement radio lessons.
- Intense **teleconferencing** is used for secondary specialist lessons and each student is encouraged to telephone the teacher during times of need.
- Other technologies include **facsimile, audio-taped and video-taped material.**
- **A satellite trial** is currently underway at Broken Hill, which will evaluate voice, video and data transmission using interactive computer and satellite technology.
- Open Training and Education Network (OTEN-Distance Education) provides all **hardware, installation and maintenance to students** at no cost. Distance Education Centres have been allocated 700 computers as part of the Computers in Schools Program and these have been installed in centres and in some home sites. All isolated students have computers installed in their homes (over 220 sites, some with 2 or more children enrolled in a Distance Education Centre). In some instances, telephone links, facsimile machines, and printers have been allocated to isolated students where their particular program requires such additional hardware.

A major concern of the parents of isolated students is related to the social development of their children. Distance Education Centres plan mini-schools, social and sporting events to provide isolated children with increased opportunities to interact with peers, both other distance education students and students from regular schools. The Dubbo School of Distance Education, for instance, has a 32 bed hostel which is used for mini-schools. Students attending the Dubbo School of Distance Education as well as many smaller

Distance Education Centres, make use of this facility. The cost of this service is greatly subsidised by the schools and centres.

Through the provisions outlined above, Distance Education has been able to extend the accessibility of quality education to the most geographically isolated students in New South Wales.

Improving Access by Providing Financial Support for Families

Programs and subsidies are provided by the government to assist parents in gaining access for their children to the most appropriate education.

- **\$50 Back-to-School Allowance** paid to all parents for each child attending school in the state.
- **Living Away from Home Allowance** provides \$659 per annum for families whose circumstances make it necessary to board their children away from home. An additional \$225 per annum is payable to Year 11 and 12 students. Eligibility criteria include family income and distance.
- **Agricultural High School Boarder Scholarships** are designed to assist needy and isolated students who are in attendance at one of three agricultural high schools: Hurlstone (Glenfield), Farrar (Tamworth), Yanco (in the Riverina). The scholarships have a fixed value of \$1 560 per annum and are available for students in Years 7 to 12.
- The **Access Scholarships for Isolated Students Scheme** provides \$1 560 to assist students in Years 9 to 12 who wish to attend a NSW government specialist secondary school, or other government secondary school if a special reason exists.
- The **Student Assistance Scheme** assists eligible families with school-related expenses such as shoes, uniforms, excursions.
- The **School Student Transport Scheme** which is administrated by the Department of Transport provides free bus, ferry or rail travel to eligible students. Where there is no bus, train or ferry service available between home and school, or the family resides more than 1.6 kms walking distance from the nearest transport pick-up point, they may be eligible for the Private Vehicle Conveyance Subsidy.
- Free transport for eligible students with disabilities is organised by DET (See Section 4).

IMPROVING ACCESS BY INFORMING THE COMMUNITY

The department has an established priority, as expressed in *Agenda 99*, of building effective partnerships with parents and the community. To increase the community's

understanding of schools and their achievements and to provide access to information for more isolated communities, the department has:

- taken steps to increase the community's understanding of school activities, their performance and priorities through their Annual School Report
- made information available through print materials and the Internet on a wide range of issues relating to schooling
- provided important information translated in up to 38 languages and distributed these materials to schools (e.g. on the use of interpreters, school attendance, *Parents' Guide to Schools*)
- employed Community Information Officers (NESB) and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers to help disseminate information about schools and their programs
- set up Internet sites for parents and the community containing general information about schools, curriculum information and information about student welfare provisions
- made several translated documents available on the Internet so that, for example, a Tongan speaking family in Griffith would have ready access to documents such as *Parents' Guide to Schools* or *A Parent's Guide to Work Experience* in their first language
- established the Country On-Line program giving parents direct access to information on the Internet through the technology available in some schools across the state.

SECTION 3. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT SERVICES

This section demonstrates the quality of the educational services offered to students in government schools with a particular focus on their delivery in rural and remote areas. The section is organised under the following headings:

- Improving Student Learning Outcomes through Curriculum, with special consideration given to
 - Literacy
 - Numeracy
 - Specialist Programs for Gifted and Talented Students
 - Specialist Programs in the Creative Arts and Sport
 - Provision of Quality Vocational Education and Training Programs
 - Preparation of Students for the Higher School Certificate
 - Measures of Student Achievement
- Improving Quality through Technological Services to Support Teaching and Learning Programs
- Improving Quality through Distance Education Provisions
- Improving Quality through Training and Development
- Improving Quality through Student Services
- Improving Quality through Community Development Strategies.

Improving Student Learning Outcomes through Curriculum

In the State Budget for 1999-2000, the government committed resources to an expansion of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy to ensure all students achieve the skills in literacy and numeracy fundamental to successful living in the information age. The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy is a comprehensive plan to improve the quality of teaching and learning in NSW government schools.

Literacy

The NSW State Government has made a major commitment to improve literacy. The State Literacy Strategy launched in 1997 is designed to improve the literacy skills of primary and secondary students through a range of initiatives.

- **The Reading Recovery program** is an early intervention acceleration program aimed at improving literacy standards of young students so that they will become effective life-long learners. Year 1 students identified as having difficulty learning to read and write are provided with daily individual instruction to enable them to reach the average level of achievement of their classroom peers.

- Support to implement the Reading Recovery program is given to schools based on need. Between 1996 and 1999, the government phased in a total of 400 teaching positions for the implementation of the program.
 - In 1998, the Reading Recovery program was available in 596 schools across the state, 285 in rural areas.
 - Included in this 1998 figure of 285 rural schools were thirteen small school groups which implemented the program by sharing a Reading Recovery teacher across two or three small schools which are within reasonable proximity.
 - During 1998, 2 828 students from rural schools benefited from the program.
 - The total number of rural schools on the Reading Recovery program for 1999 is 372 out of an overall state figure of 760 and it is anticipated that during 1999 a further 3 700 students from rural communities will improve their reading and writing skills. Rural schools receive 48.6% of all available Reading Recovery support. In 2000, the number of rural schools will increase to 389.
- **Support Teacher Learning Difficulties (STLD)** positions are allocated to targeted schools to identify and assess students with learning difficulties. They also plan, implement, monitor and evaluate programs for these students. There are currently 463 STLD in the 20 rural districts. Learning Difficulties Co-ordinators are appointed to each district to provide professional support and training and development to STLDs.
 - **The Early Literacy Initiative** aims to improve the learning outcomes for students in disadvantaged communities. This initiative provides training and development and mentoring to assist Kindergarten-Year 3 teachers to implement more effectively the State Literacy Strategy. The initiative operated in 400 schools in 1998, including 320 in rural areas, and was found through evaluation to have had a significant impact in classrooms. In 1999, 14 full-time Early Literacy Initiative facilitators have been appointed to work in districts, with eight of these positions shared amongst the 20 rural districts. Every rural district has access to the expertise of these facilitators who are based at Port Macquarie, Broken Hill, Orange, Shellharbour, Lismore, Moree, Maitland, Albury.
 - **The Basic Skills Test (BST)** in literacy for students in Years 3 and 5, **and English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA)** for students in Year 7 are used to monitor standards, identify problems and allocate resources to schools. A new centrally funded training and development opportunity is being offered to teachers in small and isolated primary schools as part of the **Writing Assessment Program for Years 3 and 5**. Three Small Schools Country Marking Centres are being established at Young, Bathurst and Armidale where teachers from 45 schools in the surrounding areas can gain experience in how to further assist their students to improve their writing skills.
 - **The Literacy Plus** program targeted to secondary students identified by ELLA as the lowest performing group in each school, is focused on specific literacy interventions, effective classroom teaching strategies, and training and development of teachers. Of 117 schools involved in the program, 50 schools are rural and include central schools

at Goodooga, Gulargambone, Mungindi, Lightning Ridge, Boorowa, Portland, Ivanhoe, Mendooran, Tullamore, Bonalbo, Woodenbong, Quandialla, Barraba. Just under half the \$2 million budget is allocated to these schools.

- **District Literacy Teams** have been established in each district in the state to work with the school literacy teams, teachers, parents and community leaders to improve literacy planning and to assist teachers to implement the elements of the Literacy Strategy. Specialist district literacy consultants provide advice directly to schools on implementing the Strategy and are able to work with schools in remote locations.

The evidence from the Reading Recovery program and from the state assessment programs indicates that students' literacy levels are rising, with marked improvement by the lowest achieving students. Basic Skills Test results in 1998 indicated that while the performance of students across the state and within districts varied, the performance of most students in rural districts was similar to the state distribution. Overall, the quality of the State Literacy Strategy has been recognised and was highly commended in the 1998 Premier's Public Sector Awards for its contribution to social justice.

In the 1999-2000 budget, the government has allocated funds to provide:

- a new Literacy Linkage Program for students as they move from primary to secondary school
- more teacher training in Reading Recovery techniques
- a continuation of the Basic Skills Tests in Year 3 and 5, the English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) tests in Years 7 and 8, the new School Certificate English-literacy test in Year 10 and targeting additional assistance to those students identified as having poor literacy skills.

NUMERACY

The improvement of **numeracy skills** is a departmental priority and is addressed through a range of initiatives including the introduction of the **Count Me In Too** early numeracy program. The program aims to get the foundations of numeracy right in the early years. It involves teachers in assessing students' number knowledge and using this information to design teaching activities to improve the strategies that students use. Again, resources have been allocated to the local level with consultants in each district working in over 280 schools in 1998, with half of these schools located in rural areas.

In 1999, 183 rural schools are participating including Tumbarumba Public School, Walcha Central School, Broulee Public School, Wallerawang Public School, Oberon Public School, Alma Public School, Railway Town Public School, Repton Public School, Westlawn Public School, Deniliquin South Public School, Tooleybuc Public School, Louth Public School, Weilmoringle Public School, Coleambally Central School, Ungarie Central School, Coraki Public School, Pilliga Public School, Goodooga Central School, Temora Public School.

In secondary schools, the **Counting On** program targets low achieving students in Year 7. This program is currently being piloted across three rural schools: Kelso High School,

Orange High School and the Canobolas Rural Technology High School. The program operates through a team learning approach that includes the Mathematics teacher, the Head Teacher Mathematics, support teachers and Mathematics consultant. It involves video-taping students during an interview to identify their methods of solving a range of problems. The information is then analysed to provide appropriate activities to support the learning of these students.

The 1999-2000 budget will provide funds for

- an expanded **Count Me In Too** program for all students Kindergarten to Year 6
- a new statewide external numeracy test for Year 7 students
- information workshops for parents.

Other Key Learning Areas

In addition to the focus on basic skills, government schools deliver quality programs to their students in all aspects of learning. They are supported by centrally developed curriculum materials based on the key learning areas and by district training and development programs and consultancy services.

Specialist Programs for Gifted and Talented Students

The department provides a range of opportunities to cater for students who are gifted and talented and those who have special interests.

- At the primary level, **Opportunity 'C' classes** are provided for academically gifted and talented students in Years 5 and 6. Such classes operate at primary schools at Lithgow, Cudgegong Valley, Grafton, Toormina, Dubbo West, Coonabarabran, Alstonville, Goonellabah, Moree, Port Macquarie, Queanbeyan, Goulburn West, Tamworth, Tamworth South and Sturt.
- In rural districts, there are **specialist secondary schools** in agriculture (Farrer at Tamworth and Yanco in the Riverina); languages (Albury, Armidale, Kelso, Kingscliff, Lake Illawarra and Wade High School at Griffith); marine technology (Eden); rural technology (Canobolas at Orange); information technology (Batlow, Moree, Murray at Lavington, Nowra, Peel at Tamworth, Rutherford, Wagga Wagga, Westport at Port Macquarie and Young).
- **Accelerated progression** is available in all schools and may take several forms such as early entry, whole grade acceleration or content acceleration (in one or more key learning area).
- The Access Scholarship for Isolated Students Scheme provides **financial support** for students with special talents or interests in rural areas who wish to enrol in a specialist secondary government school. In addition, support is available for isolated students wishing to attend any of the three Agricultural High Schools (Hurlstone, Farrer or

Yanco) through the Agricultural High School Boarder Scholarships. (Referred to in Section 2).

- There are **Gifted and Talented Student networks** operating in the following rural districts: Batemans Bay, Bathurst, Moree, Queanbeyan, Tamworth, Taree, Tweed Heads/Ballina, Wagga Wagga.
- Each rural district receives an annual grant to support **gifted and talented initiatives**. Some examples of the projects that have been undertaken are listed below.
 - Talented literacy students at Gundagai and Tumut public schools took part in ‘The Write Way’ program, which involved writers’ workshops, training for all staff, an author-in-residence workshop, mentoring opportunities and follow-up programs for students.
 - A virtual class for mathematically talented students across ten schools in the Albury district was established to provide enrichment work for these students and an ongoing resource bank of ideas was created by the ten teachers participating in the project.
 - Coomealla High School has trialled a mentor program for gifted Aboriginal students, involving the completion of an independent research project.
 - Talented students from small schools in the Clarence/Coffs Harbour District participated in a two-day drama workshop. The workshop involved the training of a parent from each of the schools who became a resource/support person for these students on their return to school.
 - Talented writers were identified in three schools in the Griffith District and, through their participation in a video-conferencing link, produced a joint newspaper for their schools.
 - Two groups of schools in the Lismore District, eight schools in one group and four in the other, provided a program of workshops for students talented in the various key learning areas.
- **Mentor Links Program:** There are currently sixteen districts involved in the Department’s Mentor Links Program. Of these, five are rural districts: Broken Hill, Bathurst, Albury, Clarence/Coffs Harbour and Tweed Heads/Ballina.
- **Consultancy Support:** A Senior Curriculum Adviser (Gifted and Talented Students), district office personnel, district Gifted and Talented Students Network coordinators and district Mentor Links coordinators provide consultancy support.

Initiatives such as Sport and Recreation Camps and State Music Camps provide intensive training for students wishing to participate in teams or ensembles. Some rural schools have established school exchange programs to expand the experiences available for their students; for example, Walgett High School has established an exchange program with Westfields High School, a specialist secondary school for sport in Sydney.

SPECIALIST PROGRAMS IN THE CREATIVE ARTS AND SPORT

Major programs have been implemented which give rural students special opportunities at the school, district and state levels to participate in the creative arts.

- Statewide **performing ensembles** such as the All Star Stage Band audition across the state. Ensembles perform across the state for fellow students who might not otherwise experience performances of this calibre. (See Attachment 15, *Inform* journal of 25 June 1999 for a report on performances of the All Star Stage Band) (not included in this electronic version).
- Annual **dance and drama festivals** provide opportunities for students from district and inter-district festivals across the state to perform at the state level and to broaden their experience through contact with other outstanding performers.
- Through the '**Sing 2001**' program, district choirs have been established with a conductor, an accompanist and a manager for up to 150 singers from Years 5 to 12. Conductors receive on-going training and classroom-teaching resources are provided. District choirs will have the opportunity to participate in major events and a massed choir of 7000 students can be assembled. At the official launch of the program at the Opera House in November 1998, choirs from most rural districts participated.
- '**Dance 2001**' will give opportunities in inter-district dance ensembles for students from Year 6-11 to perform at district, inter-district and state events.
- The **Schools Spectacular** is a variety entertainment showcase which involves about 2500 performers and 200 staff from across the state. Each year the program features a small school from a remote part of NSW.
- The **Talent Development Project** prepares students for work in the entertainment industry by giving them the opportunity to spend time with mentors who can help them refine their talents. Of those who graduated in 1998, seven out of nine were from rural schools.
- Rural students have opportunities to participate in team **sport** through the knock-out competitions organised by primary and secondary sporting organisations. District, inter-district and state carnivals provide competition in individual and team events with particular attention to involving distance education students.

Provision of Quality Vocational Education and Training Programs (VET)

In 1998, over 46 000 senior secondary students in NSW undertook vocational courses as part of their Higher School Certificate. Of these, 24 500 students undertook their study at TAFE and 21 887 at school. This represents a dramatic growth over the last five years.

Senior secondary students undertaking a **TAFE-delivered vocational HSC course** usually attend a TAFE college for two to four hours per week and can study subjects from an extensive range of TAFE courses.

Flexible delivery strategies aim at ensuring equity of access for students in rural and remote areas. Some TAFE-delivered vocational HSC courses are available in the distance mode through the Open Training and Education Network. Others are delivered through block release of students. In addition, travel subsidies are available to students where the costs of their travel to TAFE each week exceeds five dollars. Students with a disability are encouraged and supported to participate in TAFE-delivered courses and special provisions are made for Aboriginal students.

A range of **dual accredited courses** delivered by school teachers in schools is currently available. Industry Studies has strands in Metals and Engineering, Retail and Hospitality. Seven Content-endorsed courses are also available. The courses can be offered through Distance Education Centres.

The introduction of dual accredited school-delivered courses in 1993 created an opportunity to offer students integrated packages of school and TAFE study. These integrated packages of study have also provided the ideal vehicle for students to complete the off the job component of school based **part-time traineeships**. Almost 250 part-time traineeships have been approved in the government school sector and the target for government schools for 2000 will be 400.

Preliminary figures for 1999 indicate that 710 students from Country Areas Program (CAP) schools are participating in school-delivered vocational courses and 963 in TAFE-delivered vocational courses.

The five **Access Clusters** (Northern Borders, Lachlan, Riverina, Western and Wilvande) utilise a range of innovative strategies to enable students in more remote secondary schools to access VET courses. Telematics is used to link up students in various locations with an accredited VET teacher in another location within the cluster. This enables students in areas where there is no trained school teacher or where there is no access to TAFE to undertake VET courses, sharing resources across schools.

- Schools in the Lachlan Access Cluster organise their timetables on a co-operative basis. This enables students to undertake work placement locally, in Wagga or in Sydney, without disrupting other classes. In this Access Program teachers work in teaching teams both delivering courses and supporting students in each course.
- Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) resources are used to fund a workplace co-ordinator across the West Wyalong VET Group. This group incorporates Western, Lachlan and Riverina Access Cluster schools.
- Traineeships are also offered using telematics. Students in the Lachlan Access Cluster are undertaking rural, information technology and retail traineeships using mixed mode training provisions.

- The Riverina Access Cluster uses video conferencing to link schools within the cluster and will access courses provided by Charles Sturt University in 2000.

Vocational learning **initiatives for Aboriginal students** are funded by the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) in a number of areas across the state. For example, five schools (Wilcannia Central, Bourke High, Brewarrina Central, Coomealla High, Narromine High) and one cluster of schools (the Dubbo City Mentor Project) have been funded to offer programs during 1999 which will improve the vocational learning opportunities for Aboriginal students.

The Job Placement Employment and Training Program (JPET) enables Aboriginal students, at Lake Cargelligo and Condobolin in particular, to access a number of TAFE courses delivered locally reducing the needs for students to have to travel to TAFE.

In the year 2000 a new HSC will be introduced as a result of a review commissioned by the government in 1995. The White paper, *Securing Their Future*, recommended the strengthening of VET as part of the HSC and that VET should become an integral part of the curriculum for all students regardless of their intended post-school destination.

As a result, the NSW Board of Studies has developed seven **industry curriculum frameworks**: Construction, Retail, Hospitality and Tourism, Metal and Engineering, Primary Industries, Business Services (Administration) and Information Technology. OTEN is developing support packages to facilitate the delivery of some of the frameworks by distance education.

The expansion of VET for school students is a priority for the Department of Education and Training. Twenty-one new **district vocational education consultants** have recently been appointed to co-ordinate vocational provision for school students. This brings the number of district consultants to 40, one for each school district. In addition, each TAFE institute, including OTEN, has a consultant to work closely with their district counterparts to facilitate TAFE delivery and arrange joint TAFE school activities.

In the 1999-2000 budget, the government has allocated funds to provide opportunities for young people across the state to develop workplace skills while still at school. The **Ready to Work Plan** includes a range of strategies including the expansion of the Work Education Program, the development of School-to-Work Plans for Years 9-12 students (\$14.65 million has been allocated over 4 years) and the provision of TAFE scholarships to assist young people who have completed an Australian Qualification Framework qualification as part of their HSC.

PREPARATION OF STUDENTS FOR THE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

A particular challenge for more isolated secondary schools is the preparation of students for the **Higher School Certificate**. Important issues in rural areas are the availability of a

wide range of subjects to match student interests, the availability of trained and experienced teachers, student experience and expectations, and access to information.

Initiatives aimed at minimising these problems have been designed at the State and local level.

- **Distance education enrolment** is available in single subjects. In 1999, 4 377 students are enrolled in a single course.
- **Languages education** is provided through the distance mode through the Open High School using a combination of satellite broadcasts, print and audio support materials. Thirty-nine courses are available in eleven languages with 2 262 students enrolled in 1999. In rural areas, 277 students from government secondary schools such as Inverell, Lithgow, Bellingen, Balranald, Alstonville, Kyogle, Narrabri, Orange and Scone access this service.
- The **Access Program** links rural schools in five clusters to enable students to complete their schooling at their local school. Before the introduction of this program, senior secondary schooling was not available in many of these localities. (For a list of schools and clusters participating in the program refer to Attachment 5 (not included in this electronic version).)

Each school operates as a separate entity but also belongs to a cluster using communication technologies to allow a full range of curriculum options to HSC level. Telematic teaching using telephone, computer and facsimile machines allows a teacher in one place to interact with up to six other class groups in schools separated by hundreds of kilometres. In 1998 approximately 400 students in 21 secondary schools were enrolled in the program.

An evaluation of the examination results of students participating in the 1998 HSC Access Program suggest that they were similar to and, in many cases, better than results achieved in many other schools. This is a very positive outcome given that many of these students would have left school early had they not been given opportunities to complete their secondary education through the Access Program.

- **TEACHER TRAINING IN THE MARKING PROCESS**
 - Opportunities are available for **rural teachers** (up to 300 in 1999) **to visit Sydney HSC marking centres** to be briefed on the marking process, sample mark a number of scripts and receive feedback on the marking process. Rural teachers are placed in metropolitan schools while marking HSC papers outside school hours to broaden their experience. In 1998, 37 teachers from 16 rural districts were placed in metropolitan schools. They came from schools such as Balranald High School, Coomealla High School, Barham High School, Warren Central School, Warialda High School, Collarenebri Central School, Cobar High School, West Wyalong High School. Additional funding has been allocated to continue this program in 1999.

- Further **training and development** initiatives are delivered using up-to date technology; for example, HSC Marking Workshops are available on CD ROM.
- **NSW HSC On-Line** is a joint venture between the department and Charles Sturt University and was designed to give students across NSW unprecedented access via the Internet to information to help them prepare for the HSC; for example, subject and course material, tutorial study tips, past HSC examination papers. It also provides newsgroup facilities for on-line interaction and offers advice on study methods, examination techniques and post-school options.
- **After Hours HSC Coaching Program** provides funds to selected schools to offer paid tutoring for HSC students. Schools are chosen on the basis of numbers of Aboriginal students in senior years, the socio-economic status of the school's community and the past performances of students at the school in the HSC. In 1999, this program is operating in rural high and central schools in Armidale, Ballina, Coonamble, Condoblin, Dubbo, Maclean, Moree, Narromine, Nowra, Orange, Queanbeyan, Shoalhaven Heads, Tamworth, Tweed River, Walgett, Wee Waa and Wellington. An allocation of \$407 000 will be provided for this program in 1999-2000.
- As a support to students at the time of the Higher School Certificate, an **Advice Line** has been established two weeks prior to the commencement of the examination. Students may call toll free over a period of five weeks with enquiries and are connected to an adviser who can assist them.
- **Local/district initiatives** such as teacher seminars and student study days have been planned to address the specific needs of rural teachers and their students. Some examples are:
 - Western area HSC Enrichment Seminars in 1998 for students in the Dubbo area
 - Tamworth HSC Seminars – participating schools from Armidale, Tamworth, Moree, Maitland districts.

Measures of Student Achievement

School evaluation is assisted by external statewide testing programs such as the Basic Skills Test (BST) and English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA). Students' results in the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate are further measures by which secondary schools can assess their effectiveness. Annual School Reports outline each school's activities and performance during the year, it highlights the school's strengths and set out targets for improvement in the following year. An example of this document from Bourke High School can be found at Attachment 6 (not included in this electronic version).

Through the ongoing monitoring of results in statewide assessments and in public examinations the department is able to examine the progress of targeted groups. A

summation of such monitoring is included in the department's *Annual Report 1998*, pages 77-81. (Attachment 16, not included in this electronic version.)

In general, the findings from the Basic Skills Test show that the literacy and numeracy performance of primary schools students from equity groups is similar to the state distribution with the exception of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The amount of growth in two years of schooling (between Years 3 and 5) is very similar across metropolitan and rural areas.

The English Language and Literacy Assessment targets all Year 7 students so that all secondary schools have the same assessment information about all their new students who could come from a number of different primary schools. Results from the 1999 ELLA show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students had a greater increase in average mean performance than other groups when the 1998 Year 7 group are compared with the 1999 group.

The 1998 School Certificate results in English indicate that:

- over 50% of students from Country Areas Program (CAP) schools achieved Band 4 or above (results are reported in 6 bands, Band 1 being the lowest)
- over 50% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students from Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) schools ranged between Bands 3 and 4.

In the 1998 Higher School Certificate, two students from CAP schools came first or equal first in French Z 2 Unit and Mathematics in Society 2 Unit courses; eight students from DSP schools came first or equal first in a course; and five Aboriginal students gained a place in the HSC Merit List.

IMPROVING QUALITY THROUGH TECHNOLOGICAL SERVICES TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING PROGRAMS

The Department of Education and Training continues to look at ways of providing appropriate high quality technology to all schools and students, no matter where in the State they are located.

One successful research program throughout 1997 and 1998 has resulted in the development of a **trial satellite education project** between the department and Telstra/GILAT. It has the capacity to provide complex software and hardware necessary to service isolated and rural students. The trial, carried out in Term 2 1999, used personal computers connected via satellite to link a teacher at Broken Hill School of the Air (BHSOTA) with twelve students from Years 3 and 4 spread over an area of approximately 180 000 sq kms to the north, south and east of Broken Hill. The software, developed in Israel, allows the teacher to use one-way vision, e-mail, document camera and voice facilities. Charles Sturt University's formal evaluation of this trial is still to be delivered. However, many who have been involved consider it to have been very successful. (See Outback Satellite Education Trial Kicks Off at Attachment 7 - not included in this electronic version.)

The improvement in the available technology has benefited schools in many ways as listed below.

- The government's **Computers in Schools Program** has distributed 77 000 modern multimedia computers to schools over the past three years. This increase in computer allocation to all schools gives students better access to and familiarity with computer technologies. Over the next four years government schools will receive 22 500 additional computers and new computers will be distributed to replace those provided to schools in the initial phases of the distribution.
- All NSW government schools and TAFE campuses are connected to **the department's Internet service** which provides access to the department's Intranet and Internet sites. There are specific sites for school and TAFE students and teachers, and the wider NSW community. Students can access a wide range of educational resources from anywhere in the state via these sites.
- The department is currently in the process of **upgrading Internet connections** in schools to a 64 kbps ISDN connection to all schools where Telstra is able to provide an ISDN service. This upgrade is due to be completed by the end of 1999.
- The department is an active participant in **Education Network Australia (EdNA)** which supports the use of information technology and on-line education services across Australia. The *EdNA Online* Web site <www.edna.edu.au> provides access for all students and teachers to a directory of quality assured on-line educational materials irrespective of their location, thus enhancing the learning opportunities available to isolated students and their teachers.
- **Curriculum support for the use of the Internet:** All schools have been provided with dedicated support materials to promote the use of the Internet and assist teachers to incorporate Internet-based activities into their teaching/learning programs. The publication, *connect.edu: Internet in teaching and learning* (1997), is to be updated to reflect changes in Internet services and the knowledge and skills required by students. Updates will be available on the Network for Education website.
- **Curriculum support for the use of computer-based technologies in all Key Learning Areas (KLAs):** In addition to the curriculum support documents provided to all teachers, further snapshots of successful practice will be generated in each KLA, Kindergarten to Year 12. Snapshots are being developed in a variety of rural settings, including small schools and schools with high Aboriginal enrolments. These will provide specific support, targeting issues of organisation, subject provision and support, and improved access to resources, using a range of technologies.
- **Technology in Learning and Teaching (TILT)** program provides classroom teachers with specialised training in computer technology skills, use of the Internet, the use and evaluation of software packages and ongoing support. 5 609 teachers in rural districts have completed the training at a cost of more than \$7 million. This training is also

offered through the Charles Sturt University Graduate Certificate program. The 1999-2000 budget includes a new TILT Plus course in advanced and specialised computer use. The government is providing \$16 million over the next four years to expand the TILT and TILT PLUS programs. (A more detailed outline of the program is included in Section 5.)

- A set of nine curriculum support documents (one for each secondary key learning area and one integrated primary education volume) were developed to provide relevant subject-specific assistance to teachers in **incorporating computer-based technologies into their classroom practice**. All teachers have received a document relevant to their teaching area.
- The NSW Government's **Country On-line** project provides opportunities for rural communities to use school computer facilities and Internet connections after school hours. The program will be extended to 500 schools throughout rural NSW during 1999/2000.
- Rural schools have been provided with **digital satellite television** reception equipment which enables all non-metropolitan schools to receive ABC and SBS radio and television services. The recently completed upgrade to the digital satellite system has improved rural and remote schools' access to these important television and radio services.
- **Languages programs, provided through satellite delivery**, provide students in rural and remote areas with access to specialist teaching and learning support which would not otherwise be available to the majority of them.
 - The Access to Languages via Satellite (ALS) program is a series of satellite broadcasts in Chinese and Japanese for primary schools primarily in rural and remote areas of NSW.

Through a combination of satellite broadcasts and print and audio support, the programs provide all primary students in Years 3-6 with access to quality languages programs; enable primary schools that have no other means of doing so to provide languages programs; enable schools with existing languages programs to supplement and extend their programs; support teachers in the delivery of the languages materials.

- satellite broadcasts have also been provided for Year 7 students in Chinese and Japanese since 1998. These programs build on the work that students have undertaken in the primary satellite language programs giving them the opportunity for meaningful, continuous learning of the language.
- Senior secondary satellite languages programs have been developed for French and Japanese to support HSC study of these languages, most commonly studied in rural NSW.

- The use of **teleconferencing** provides wider opportunities for students to learn another language in rural and remote areas. In 1999, for example, in the central west of NSW, 15 small rural primary schools (the Wirrimah group) use teleconferencing to participate in a language program for Indonesian. The program started in 1994 and provides language learning opportunities for an average of 150 students each year.
- **Training and Development Programs** can be delivered in new ways especially suited to teachers in more remote localities. The TILT program involves satellite broadcasts to schools with opportunities for discussions with a studio panel. 'New technologies, New Literacies' looks at the application of media, visual and critical strategies to electronic text and is delivered on CD-ROM. 'Your Say: Training and Development On Line' allows teachers to talk to colleagues about current issues and how they affect their practice.
- **Log on to Literacy: An Internet Course in Early Literacy** is a training and development course in early reading and writing designed particularly for teachers in isolated schools who find it difficult to access other training and development opportunities. The program links teachers to specific components of the teaching materials and the training and development resources already available in schools as part of the State Literacy Strategy. For isolated teachers, the course is available through supported access involving e-mail contact with an on-line mentor and with other participants.
- **Helpdesk services for schools:** The School Technology Support Unit (helpdesk) has provided technological support to school staff since July 1996. Support is provided via a 'state-of-the-art' automatic call distribution system, which allows all schools to access the unit through a toll free telephone number. Such support is vital for rural schools where the expertise may not be available in their local area.

In 1998, schools logged 39 109 requests, including 997 relating to the use of the Internet. An Internet web site for frequently asked questions was incorporated into Network of Education. Two out of every three problems were resolved on the day they were logged.

Findings of the 1998 annual school reports related to technology: The findings of a sample of 1 000 annual school reports were synthesised to produce a report on how schools have enhanced teaching and student learning practices by using technology. The findings show that technology initiatives are having a positive impact on teaching practice and student learning in primary schools. The reports show for example, that the benefits of using the Internet in teaching and learning include:

- an unlimited source of educational information
- communication with students from around the world
- involvement in special school programs available through the Internet.

(See *NSW Department of Education and Training Annual Report 1998* p.114 at Attachment 16 (not included in this electronic version).)

Improving Quality through Distance Education Provisions

One area which has been particularly enhanced by the application of advanced technology has been **Distance Education**. Open Training and Education Network - Distance Education delivers high quality education programs using a range of technologies as outlined previously in Section 2.

In 1999, 6 644 school students are enrolled in distance education courses. Of these, 2 108 are full-time with in excess of 20% being geographically isolated. The remainder (over 4 500) are part-time, single subject secondary students whose schools did not offer the subject of their choice.

An evaluation of the performance of distance education students in the 1998 Higher School Certificate compared the Distance Education Centres results with the state average in Key Learning Areas (KLA) and other courses. Results in Technological and Applied Studies, the creative arts and, to a lesser extent, Mathematics were above the state average. No KLAs and few courses were noticeably below state average. There were many students with HSC results well above state average.

In 1998 a total of 18 students came first in the state as a result of studying their subjects by distance education, including Aboriginal Studies. The results indicate that distance education is providing a high quality flexible learning model for students unable to access programs through regular school provisions.

Improving Quality through Training and Development

To ensure that teachers and support staff have the skills and understandings to provide quality programs for their students, training and development initiatives are planned each year to provide on-going training and retraining of staff.

There is a base grant allocation to all schools for relief costs with some of the more remote small schools receiving a very much higher allocation. This ranges from between \$168 and \$673 per capita depending on locality compared with \$25 per capita for metropolitan schools. Rural schools with beginning teachers receive one relief day for each beginning teacher to assist with induction activities. Particular training and development initiatives for and provision of services to rural and remote communities are listed below.

- **The Targeted Support for Prerequisite Psychology Program** targets teachers serving in or willing to serve in isolated rural districts, and supports them to undertake psychology as a prerequisite to school counsellor training. This is an ongoing initiative to increase the number of teachers in rural districts eligible for school counsellor training.
- **Certificate of Administrative Leadership (CAL)** is provided in distance mode to support school administrative and support staff in isolated settings.

- Networks are established in each rural district to support **OASIS (School Administrative System) users and school administrative collegial groups**. A pool of laptop computers are available for loan to such groups.
- **Job skills programs** for school administrative staff are mixed mode programs involving a combination of workshop delivery at local sites and workplace learning activities.
- **Learning Together** is a systemwide strategy to support school communities in planning to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities.
- **Retraining teachers in the area of languages** ensures equal access to training and networking opportunities across the state, through:
 - decentralised models of training at district sites by local experts;
 - the use of technology such as satellite broadcasts, teleconferences and the Internet;
 - a focus on working with mentors and colleagues in the workplace and on-line discussions.

Programs include:

Languages Teacher Training Initiative (LTTI)

Through LTTI, teachers receive up to three years of support to undertake tertiary courses in languages (Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and Korean). The majority of teachers sponsored through LTTI are currently employed in rural schools. Many are undertaking distance education courses. Others are attending part time courses at local universities or TAFEs. Rural teachers are encouraged to participate in study groups conducted locally by an experienced language teacher on a fortnightly basis after school.

The Japanese Tertiary Program (JTP)

JTP is a multimedia Japanese language program developed by Southern Cross University for NSW Department of Education and Training teachers. JTP is a three-semester program including residential workshops in Sydney and is followed up by a 2-week study program in Japan. 121 primary and secondary teachers across the state are currently undertaking tertiary study in languages through LTTI and JTP. Of these 87 teachers are employed in rural schools.

K-12 Languages Methodology Program (LMP)

The K-12 LMP is a 30 week program which has been developed for teachers who have competency in a language other than English but no language teaching methodology.

58 primary and secondary teachers across the state are currently participating in this program. Of these 38 teachers are in rural schools (including two teachers of Dunghutti language).

- The school based training program for **teacher-librarians** in schools across NSW is delivered using a combination of: online publication of course materials; email communication and online group discussion; conferences; school based activities; and mentoring support.

Off the shelf: a guide for libraries in small schools, is a training document distributed to all district and small schools, and available as a downloadable file on the department's web site for teacher-librarians.

- **The Part Time Special Education Training Program** has included three additional strands (sub programs) in the last three years to enable and encourage completion of postgraduate qualifications for teachers of students with disabilities in geographically isolated areas. Strands of training that can now be accessed by isolated teachers are behaviour, vision and hearing in addition to the pre-existing generalist training.

A variety of options have been made available to support and promote the participation of isolated teachers including additional financial assistance with increased travel costs; a combination of external, intensive residential and workplace learning components; provision of mentoring; internet support; establishment of regionalised study groups; on-line and telephone support as well as visits by program co-ordinators if required. Currently this training program supports 48 isolated teachers to complete accredited qualifications in special education.

- **Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Program** applies across the State but has particular application in rural and remote areas. The program includes initiatives designed to increase employment and promote career development opportunities for Aboriginal staff, Aboriginal students, and Aboriginal community members.
 - Bachelor of Education (Secondary) Indigenous Studies
 - Community Based Indigenous Teachers Education Program
 - Aboriginal Mentor Program
 - Aboriginal Teachers' Career Pathway Program
 - Aboriginal School Leadership Initiative

(For more details see Aboriginal Identified Positions in Schools and District Offices in Rural and Remote NSW at Attachment 8 (not included in this electronic version).)

Improving Quality through Student Services

School communities have developed local student welfare policies and practices within the framework of the department's Student Welfare Policy. These policies aim at making schools safe and happy places for students and teachers.

Student welfare is achieved through the total school curriculum and the way it is delivered. It incorporates effective discipline, preventative health and social skills programs. Drug Education and Child Protection are integrated within an integrated

approach to student welfare within schools. The strategies promoted stress the value of collaborative early intervention for identified problems.

In providing for the welfare of students, regular classroom programs are supplemented by programs related to the needs of groups and individuals within the school.

School counsellors complement and enhance the work of teachers by strengthening schools' student welfare provisions and providing counselling and psychological assessment of students with specific needs.

Every school in New South Wales has access to a school counselling service.

School attendance is significant in the successful participation of students in school programs. Home School Liaison Officers work with students, their families and the school to establish and maintain regular school attendance.

Home School Liaison Officers and Aboriginal Student Liaison Officers are allocated to districts on the basis of levels of absenteeism. Districts in geographically isolated areas receive an additional allocation due to the distances officers are required to travel. 36.5 (44%) of home school liaison officer positions are located in rural districts, compared to 35% of student enrolment K-9. Nine of the 12 Aboriginal Student Liaison Officers are based in rural districts. The home school liaison program in rural districts is managed by 20 student welfare consultants who provide schools with advice on the implementation of attendance action plans. 44% (or approximately 1 800 students each school term) referred to the home school liaison program are enrolled in schools in rural districts. Approximately 50% of these cases have been satisfactorily resolved within two school terms.

Seeding grants totalling \$34 000 have been provided to schools to implement innovative strategies addressing local attendance issues. The majority of these funds have been provided to schools in Albury, Bathurst, Batemans Bay, Taree, Orange, and Port Macquarie districts.

Aboriginal Programs Unit has provided five rural districts with funds totalling \$50 000 to support Aboriginal communities to establish regular patterns of school attendance among students in the early years of school (K-1). A temporary Aboriginal Student Liaison Officer position was created in Walgett from funds provided by the Behaviour and Attendance Unit. The position was created to address specific attendance issues in the district.

'Streetbeat' is a community based initiative implemented to address school attendance issues in Bourke. Coordinated by the department, the initiative involves government and non-government schools, Bourke Shire Council, the NSW Police Service and other government agencies. 'Streetbeat' has improved school attendance in Bourke by 60% and the program has been extended to schools in Armidale, Taree and Moruya. The Walgett Community of Schools Project has also resulted in improvement in school attendance. Further information on these projects can be found in Section 5. (Figures showing student

attendance by district in 1998 are to be found in Attachment 9. School retention statistics are provided in Attachment 14.) (Neither Attachment is included in this electronic version.)

Improving Quality through Community Development Strategies

- **Schools as Community Centres** at Coonamble, Kelso, Kempsey West: The program targets a range of risk and protective factors affecting communities, families and children 0-8 years to encourage resilience and positive developments in children. There is a focus on transition from home to primary school and on timely assistance to families and children from co-ordinated agency services during the period of children's most rapid growth and development (up to 8 years).
- **Parents as Teachers** program operates in the rural communities of Ballina, Moree, Orange, Wagga Wagga. It is an early learning program for parents with children up to 3 years of age. The program acknowledges the influence of parents on the learning outcomes of children and the importance of the early childhood years as a period of major development. Parenting consultants support parents by making regular home visits, holding meetings and distributing information on child development.
- **Walgett Community of Schools** project has developed new ways of co-ordinating services to cater for "at-risk" students and families in the local community to increase the involvement of the community in addressing educational needs and to provide opportunities for increased participation by young people in vocational education and training.

SECTION 4. EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Introduction

The NSW Government is providing record levels of funding to support school equity programs. In the 1999-2000 budget, recurrent funding in this area increased by 2% over the previous year to \$645 million. This figure includes \$416.6 million for special education, \$25.9 million for Aboriginal education program services and \$80.9 million for services to students from language backgrounds other than English.

In line with the Commission's terms of reference, the particular focus of this section of the submission will be on the provision of appropriate education services for children with disabilities, Indigenous children, and children from diverse cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. Information is provided under the following headings:

- Students with Disabilities
- Aboriginal Students
- Students from Language Background Other than English
- Students from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds
- Distance Education for Students with Special Needs

Students with Disabilities

Policy and Guidelines

Departmental policy and guidelines for students with disabilities reflect a commitment to the active involvement of parents/carers in all aspects of their child's education, to the earliest possible intervention to prevent learning failure, and to the provision of support to schools and teachers to assist them in delivering quality teaching and learning programs for students with disabilities.

Support for children with disabilities is provided following an assessment of eligibility and then an appraisal of the student's educational needs. Students with moderate or severe intellectual disability, physical disability, vision or hearing impairment or a diagnosed emotional disturbance are entitled to a special service and classes are formed where there are sufficient students to warrant such an establishment. Otherwise, itinerant services are provided where this is the appropriate form of support. Funds are automatically available for both these provisions. If such students are enrolled in regular classes, then resources are available through the State Integration Program.

Services for students with mild intellectual disability or significant learning or behaviour problems are provided in regular schools through a pool of resources allocated to

districts. Some isolated children for whom such school enrolment is not available will be educated at home through distance education provisions. In 1999, fifteen students with intellectual disabilities are being provided with their education through this mode of delivery.

Programs and Services

In rural areas across the State, there are classes established in regular schools to provide programs for students with disabilities. In the Moree District, for example, there are five classes for students with mild intellectual disabilities, five for those with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities, one Early Intervention class and one Support Class Reading. Further support is provided to schools by itinerant support teachers in the areas of behaviour difficulties, hearing, vision and integration (for students with disabilities). Special schools are established in those rural localities where there are sufficient students. These schools are listed in Attachment 10 (not included in this electronic version).

The range of support which is available for students with disabilities and their schools is outlined below.

- **Itinerant specialist** teachers (e.g. hearing, vision, behaviour) work across all school settings and across a range of ages (pre-school to Year 12) to provide support for families, students and school personnel. Itinerant teachers operate from a location which is central to their caseload.
- **The Resource Support Unit** is a multidisciplinary team which provides consultancy support particularly to schools in rural or remote locations. This specialist team, which includes educators and therapists, works with students with very high support needs (severe/profound levels of disability).
- **The Braille and Large Print Unit** provides support to students with vision impairment so that all required texts and course materials can be converted into Braille or large print as required. Braille centres located in Dubbo, Tamworth and Deniliquin provide classroom materials required on a day-to-day basis and have sophisticated electronic links with the main unit located at Ryde.
- **The Distance Education Support Unit** based in Sydney provides support for students with disabilities aged 3.5-18 years who are geographically isolated and who have moderate, severe or multiple disabilities. Currently 44 isolated students with disabilities enrolled in small schools who do not have ready access to trained special educators are supported through this program. Further information on this unit is given under the Distance Education heading, later in this section.
- **Regular Class Support for Individual Students** is currently provided for 11 000 students with disabilities who are enrolled in regular classes and supported under the State Integration Program. In 1998-1999, over \$28 million was provided directly to

schools for integration. In 1999, over \$12 million has been allocated to rural areas to support the integration of students with disabilities. In the Moree District, for example, 30 students have been allocated a total of \$375 557, with one student receiving funding amounting to \$23 350 which is among the highest individual allocations in the state.

- **Support Classes in Regular Schools** are provided where there are sufficient numbers of students with disabilities and where this enrolment option is the choice of the parents or carers. Support classes provide individualised learning programs for students where it is agreed that the student's educational needs cannot adequately be met in a regular class. In rural and remote areas, where the need and viability of this service can be demonstrated, classes can be established based on lower numbers than that required in metropolitan areas. In the north west of the State, primary and/or secondary support classes have been established in a number of localities such as Baradine, Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Coonabarabran, Coonamble, Dubbo, Gilgandra, Gulargambone, Moree, Narrabri, Narramine, Nyngan, Walgett, Warren, Wee Waa, Wellington and Wilcannia.
- **Special Schools** (also known as Schools for Specific Purposes or SSPs) are generally located in centres of larger population. These schools provide programs for students who require individualised programs and intensive levels of support in a more specialised setting and where this enrolment option is the choice of the parents or carers. SSPs are located in Orange, Bathurst, Griffith, Inverell, Dubbo, Gunnedah, Wagga Wagga, Leeton, Albury and Tamworth. Some students in residential settings also have access to these schools. Enrolments in SSPs are remaining reasonably constant. A list of rural SSPs and the services they provide is included in Attachment 10 (not included in this electronic version).
- **Physical Access** to school buildings is an important planning issue. All new school buildings are built to code to ensure full access for people with disabilities. Forward planning is underway wherever possible to ensure that facilities are available and ready at the time of student enrolment. Recently, Bourke High School, Walgett Primary School and Narrabri Primary School have been refurbished and disabled facilities constructed.
- **Special Transport Services** are provided for eligible students with disabilities who are unable to travel independently to and from school, and whose parents are unable to transport them or arrange for transport. These students may be enrolled in regular classes, support classes in regular schools or in SSPs. (Further details of this service are found in Attachment 11 – not included in this electronic version.)
- **The Use of Technology** is enhancing educational programs for students with a disability. For some students with a disability, access to an appropriate curriculum and participation in a range of educational activities can be facilitated through the use of specialised technology or support equipment. Students may require adaptive equipment for daily living, augmentative or alternative communication equipment, or

specific computer hardware, software or peripheral devices. Funding is available to support the individual needs of students in the area of technology and specialised equipment. In 1998-1999 approximately \$500 000 has been allocated to schools statewide for this purpose.

- **Support for Transition to Schools** are documented guidelines to support the transition of students with disabilities from early childhood settings to school. The processes described in the guidelines can be implemented regardless of location and focus on appropriate and co-operative planning by all those interested in the education of the student.
- **Transition from school to post-school settings** is an important program aimed at giving students the knowledge and skills to equip them for adult life and to enable them to access community facilities, services and resources for their current and future needs. Teachers (transition) are provided, particularly in SSPs, to implement this process. In rural areas, full or part-time allocations have been made to fourteen SSPs and two high schools and, in those particular rural areas where there is no permanent position, allocations of time are made to the district office to be used on a needs basis.

Aboriginal Students

Policy and Guidelines

The central theme of the Aboriginal Education Policy is the promotion of educational achievements by Aboriginal students in the context of educating all students about Aboriginal Australia. It reflects the views and values of Aboriginal people on education. The policy statement provides a comprehensive set of outcomes, as well as performance strategies to guide all department staff, schools, students and their communities in achieving the overall goals for Aboriginal education.

The policy has three focus areas:

- **Aboriginal Students:** Improved educational outcomes through challenging and culturally appropriate curriculum, teaching and assessment.
- **Aboriginal Communities:** Aboriginal communities and the department will become partners in the whole education process.
- **All staff – all students – all schools:** All staff and students will have knowledge and understanding of and respect for Aboriginal Australia.

The participation of Aboriginal community members in all stages of the implementation strategy and the subsequent design, writing, delivery and evaluation of Aboriginal studies and perspective programs in schools is encouraged. Aboriginal people assist training and development courses with their skills and expertise.

Programs and Services

The department has developed a strategy to provide quality education services through programs and projects for Indigenous students. The major objective is for the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students in pre-schools to Year 12 to be enhanced by improving their levels of literacy and numeracy so that they are comparable with those of the rest of the student population across the State.

- **Implementation of the Aboriginal Education Policy**

From 1997, schools have received training in the implementation of the Aboriginal Education Policy. District teams were directed by the ten Aboriginal Education Consultants and included Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, and special resources were developed including a video, *It's About Time, It's About Changes...And It's About Time*. A comprehensive reference and resource document has been distributed to schools to assist teachers gain a greater knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal history, cultures and societies.

- **Pre-schools in Aboriginal Communities at Broken Hill, Casino, Enngonia, Moama, Mungindi, Nowra**

Six pre-schools have been established in rural Aboriginal communities offering programs in literacy, numeracy and social development for the increasing numbers of children attending. A review has established that the programs being offered are effective. Evidence from the teachers in the primary schools to which the pre-schools are attached is that the students who attended pre-school were better prepared for school and attend more regularly than those who do not have access to pre-school experience. Since the establishment of these pre-schools, not only has the number of children attending increased but also the number of Aboriginal parents involved. An additional pre-school is planned to open at Walgett in Term 4, 1999.

- **School Programs**

Aboriginal Literacy Strategy aims to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of Aboriginal students so that the gap between the scores of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in state-wide tests, school assessment tasks and public examinations will narrow in the short term. The supplementary programs tailored to meet the varying needs of Aboriginal students are :

- Aboriginal Early Education Development (K-4)
- Aboriginal Middle Years Literacy
- Secondary Literacy
- Intensive Essay Enrichment

Across the State, schools plan ways in which they can achieve improvements in the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students through these initiatives. Forster Public

School is one example of a school which has integrated its programs to enhance the performance of Indigenous students and to promote attendance and engagement in schooling. (An outline of this school's program can be found at Attachment 12 – not included in this electronic version.)

A position paper *Focus on Aboriginal Literacy* will be distributed to all schools in the latter part of 1999. As a supplement to *Focus on literacy: a position paper on the teaching of literacy*, this additional document deals with the special needs of and provisions for Aboriginal students in literacy teaching and learning.

A two-day training course for primary Aboriginal Education Assistants (AEAs) on how to best support Aboriginal students from Kindergarten to Year 3 with their reading is currently being conducted at targeted sites around the State. The course evaluations to date reveal that AEAs in rural and isolated schools find this course particularly useful for their role in supporting the literacy teaching and learning of Aboriginal students.

Strategic Results Projects are funded by the Commonwealth Government and directed at Indigenous youth in rural and remote communities. They aim at demonstrating ways in which Indigenous learning outcomes can be improved in a short period of time through concerted efforts. The NSW initiatives cover the following areas:

- Transition from home to school
 - Literacy support in Years 4-6 and preparation for transition to secondary school
 - Technology and literacy support
 - Reading Recovery in Aboriginal communities
 - Support in juvenile justice institutions
 - Tracking the mobility rates of Aboriginal students to target and assist with literacy and numeracy support
 - Supporting vocational learning in secondary schools
 - Retention of "at risk" Indigenous students
- (Details of some of these programs can be found in Section 5)

Special Education Services are available to Aboriginal students in the same way as for non-Aboriginal students. One program related particularly to the needs of Aboriginal students, however, is the Otitis Media program. Itinerant Teachers (Hearing) provide advice and support to schools where there are numbers of Aboriginal students with hearing loss resulting from Otitis Media.

- **Staff Employed to Support Aboriginal Students and staff in Aboriginal Programs**

Teachers and other support staff are employed in a range of positions to support Aboriginal students. The majority are Aboriginal Education Assistants, working in schools with students and their communities. Most of the positions listed below have

Aboriginality as a criteria for employment. (Further details are available at Attachment 8 – not included in this electronic version.)

- **Aboriginal Education Resource Teachers** support individual students under the Aboriginal Early Language Development Program. There are currently 22 in rural schools and five of these are Aboriginal teachers.
- **Aboriginal Education Assistants (AEAs)** provide a range of education support and liaison activities within schools, pre-schools and juvenile justice institution schools. They are allocated on a per capita needs basis. This program was expanded in 1998-99 with an additional 82 positions established. An AEA is appointed when the school's enrolment of Aboriginal students is 30, identified for two consecutive years at the August census. When the number reaches 80, the school is entitled to two AEAs. An AEA is appointed to each juvenile justice detention centre. Where the school is isolated or where the school population is 100% Aboriginal, allocation of an AEA is made on special needs basis. There are currently 244 AEAs in rural and remote areas.
- **Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs)** develop links between schools, communities and Aboriginal students and their families. Twenty-two ACLOs work in districts servicing rural communities.
- **Aboriginal Education Consultants (AECs)** provide support and advice about education programs. Ten consultants are employed across the state and seven, all of whom are Aboriginal, are located in a district in a rural or remote area.
- **Aboriginal Student Liaison Officers** work on a range of student welfare issues as they relate to school attendance and the following up of sustained absences. Eight of the eleven positions are in rural areas.
- **District Support Leaders** were trained in August 1998 to support AECs and ACLOs in the presentation of training and development courses. Currently 67 have been trained for this important role.
- **District Aboriginal Advisory Committees** assist in the allocation process of Targeted Literacy Projects and the Attention, Retention and Intervention Program funding to schools.

- **School Annual Report Findings**

The 1998 annual school reports contained information about the ways that schools across the State had implemented the Aboriginal Education Policy. The findings show that schools are actively involved in raising awareness of Aboriginal culture and history and in involving the Aboriginal community in school community activities. There is evidence from the reports that schools are aware of the Aboriginal Education Policy and the need for policy implementation. Implementation strategies include

training and development to raise teacher awareness and skills in the area of Aboriginal education. Schools are also building up resources to support Aboriginal education programs.

The findings show that the initiatives used by schools to improve the learning outcomes of Aboriginal students included literacy programs, homework centres, Aboriginal Education Assistants to support individual students, and individual learning programs. Around half of the schools reported integrating an Aboriginal perspective across the curriculum and mentioned using Aboriginal community members as role models or guests to present aspects of Aboriginal culture and heritage such as dance, art, drama, storytelling, language and history. (See *NSW Department of Education and Training 1998 Annual Report* at Attachment 16 – not included in this electronic version.)

Students from Language Backgrounds Other than English

Policy and Guidelines

The department undertakes statewide initiatives that address the teaching and learning needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse population. Its objectives are outlined in the Multicultural Education Policy and the Anti-Racism Policy Statement which are mandatory in all NSW government schools and encourage a culturally inclusive curriculum across the whole of school.

Anti-Racism and Multicultural Education Curriculum Development are targeted projects which are currently being implemented across the State. Each district has a nominated anti-racism coordinator and all schools have a designated anti-racism contact officer. Training is provided at State and district levels for these officers.

Programs and Services

The department provides a range of programs to support the specific teaching and learning needs of students from language backgrounds other than English. Approximately 93% of such students are located in the Greater Sydney area but provisions are made for students across the State. English as a Second Language classes/teachers are located in schools on the basis of student needs and all schools with eligible students have access to these services.

- **English as a Second Language Education (ESL) Programs**

ESL New Arrivals and ESL General Support programs are provided for those students whose first language is not English and who require support for English language and literacy development. In 1998, approximately \$86 million was allocated from the ESL New Arrival and General Support budgets to provide both intensive English tuition for beginners and ongoing support for ESL programs in schools. Over 80 000 students received ESL support in 756 schools (538 primary, 208 high and ten

schools for specific purposes) from 1 200 specialist ESL teachers (876 full-time equivalent teaching positions).

A total of 6 647 newly arrived students in classes from Kindergarten to Year 12 received intensive ESL support under the New Arrivals Program.

- Newly arrived students who need initial English language assistance are entitled to ‘on-arrival’ **ESL New Arrivals Program** support. Currently there are approximately 100 schools in non-metropolitan districts where such students are receiving intensive English instruction. In schools without an established ESL program, teaching support time allocated from the New Arrivals program allows the school to employ a teacher for up to three terms to provide intensive ESL instruction; each eligible student attracts an allocation of half a day per week. In 1998, 552 students in rural areas received support through this program in localities such as Armidale, Griffith, Vincentia, Nyngan, Lismore, Narrabri and Queanbeyan.
- **Post-intensive ESL General Support** is provided for those students who have moved into mainstream classes and require on-going support to continue the development of English language and literacy skills. This support is available for four to five years. Teachers provide such support for students in rural primary schools such as Griffith, Woolgoolga and Queanbeyan South and high schools such as Orange and Nowra.
- **Kindergarten students** who speak a language other than English at home and who are beginners in English may be eligible for ESL New Arrivals Program assistance regardless of their length of time in Australia.
- **Indigenous language speaking students** who are commencing formal schooling in English and who are assessed as having no English may be eligible for support under the ESL Indigenous Language Speaking Students Program.
- **The NSW Community Languages Program aims to:**
 - maintain and develop the traditional languages of students from a language background other than English
 - provide opportunities to access and integrate community languages in the school curriculum
 - promote community languages schools as an integral part of language education
 - improve students’ awareness and understanding of the diverse culture in NSW
 - encourage all students to learn languages of other communities.

In 1999, community language programs operate in 22 primary schools in rural areas such as Broken Hill, Gol Gol, Wentworth, Buronga, Griffith, Hanwood, Yoogali, Lake Illawarra, Mount Warrigal, Primbee, Warilla (all Italian programs); Repton (Spanish); Woolgoolga (Punjabi); Griffith (Tongan); Boggabilla (Gamilaraay); Queanbeyan (Macedonian); Oak Flats (German).

In rural areas, students can study community languages in school or in an after-hours program with accredited tutors. Where the heritage language is not available in the secondary school program or through the Open High School (distance education) students can enter for the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate via study with an outside tutor supported by the Community Language Program.

- **Programs to enhance communication between non-English speaking parents and community members and schools.**
 - **Community Information Officers** are located across the State, including the following educational districts: Armidale, Clarence/Coffs Harbour, Griffith, Orange and Tweed Heads/Ballina. These officers assist the department in providing information and strengthening links between non-English speaking communities and school, district and state office levels.
 - Use of **interpreters in schools** is encouraged by the department. Where it is not possible to provide an on-site interpreter, schools and parents can use the Telephone Interpreter Service. This service is provided free-of-charge to schools and parents and is widely used by non-metropolitan schools.
 - **Translated documents:** important materials are translated into up to 38 languages and many are now available on the department's website.

Students from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds

In providing educational programs for students from diverse backgrounds, the department expects schools to be sensitive to the needs of all students. In some instances, however, particular religious communities have not been prepared to enrol their children in government schools. In larger centres of population, such groups have often been able to establish their own schools. Some parents have taken the option of Home Schooling. Distance Education programs in Years 10, 11 and 12 are provided for the children from the Brethren communities with students currently enrolled at Balranald, Dubbo, Karabar and Port Macquarie Distance Education Centres.

In government schools, accredited religious instructors can give Special Religious Education in time set aside during the school week. Students can seek leave from school to attend important religious observances. In some instances, parents request that their children be exempted from participating in some educational activities and these matters are usually negotiated at the school level.

Distance Education for Students with Special Needs

In planning program delivery in the distance education mode, particular consideration is given to students with special needs.

- **Students with Learning Difficulties**

A full time Special Needs Coordinator was established in Distance Education in 1995 to provide support in the learning difficulties areas to staff, students, parents and supervisors (on a needs basis). Support primarily involves preparation of school-based Learning Difficulties policies and implementation plan, the coordination of special projects, staff/community development opportunities, development of special resources, collection of data and the maintenance of a learning difficulties network.

Each Distance Education Centre has a Learning Difficulties Policy which is concerned with the early identification of students in need.

- **Students with disabilities**

The Distance Education Support Unit is a special educational facility servicing New South Wales. It is located in Sydney at Ashfield Boys High School. The Unit caters for isolated students between the ages of 3.5 and 18 years who have a mild, moderate or severe intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, or a hearing or visual impairment where mainstream distance education is not appropriate and an individual program is required.

Teachers work collaboratively with parents, tutors and government and community agencies to provide an individual educational program to meet the special needs of each student. The program is implemented by a tutor – the student's parent, a teacher's aide or community volunteer. In the case of integrated school students, the class teacher is responsible for supervising the tutor and the program.

Service delivery and support occur in a variety of ways – by mail, telephone, facsimile, audiotape, computer link and home/school visits. There is constant monitoring of each program to ensure quality teaching and learning. Each student's progress and placement are reviewed annually by district personnel from the department.

- **Aboriginal students**

All Distance Education Centres can enrol Aboriginal students. However, the new Open Training and Education Network directorate's first enrolment census in 1996 revealed very low Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that distance education was not being accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students because Aboriginal students generally live in towns with locally available schools. Research conducted in 1998 through Sydney Distance Education Primary School found, however, that many Aboriginal students who were eligible for enrolment were not enrolling because their families did not know about the service or considered that it would not meet their needs.

As a consequence of the research, Sydney Distance Education Primary School has undertaken major modifications to learning materials following extensive training and development of teaching staff. Steps have been taken to attract legitimate enrolments from the Aboriginal community within existing categories of Distance Education. The school's publications have been modified to show that the school is inclusive of Aboriginal people and an Aboriginal perspective has been incorporated in learning materials. Specific learning materials are being developed for Aboriginal students.

The research supports the view that Aboriginal students require special support to complete lessons satisfactorily. On enrolment, a suitable tutor needs to be identified. Distance Education Centres on the north coast of NSW, at Port Macquarie and Southern Cross, are negotiating new arrangements with Aboriginal communities, successfully leading to enrolments of students who would otherwise drop out of schooling. Amendment to the enrolment guidelines has occurred to assist travelling Aboriginal families and enable lessons to be received when they are visiting relatives, often for lengthy periods. In the case of Sydney Distance Education Primary School, an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer has been employed to help teachers better understand Aboriginal needs, and to bring management of the school's resources closer to the expressed needs of Aboriginal communities.

SECTION 5. EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND THE COMMUNITY OPERATING IN RURAL AREAS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

In the previous sections of this submission, the planning, resourcing and delivery of quality education programs in rural New South Wales has been described according to the terms of reference established by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

As requested by the Commission, details of specific educational programs operating in rural and remote areas are provided in this section. They are examples of local school programs; local initiatives involving a number of schools; collaborative community planning and implementation; district initiatives; programs developed centrally on behalf of targeted groups; training and development programs for teachers; technology training programs for teachers and parents.

Accompanying this submission are two documents which also contain information about programs operating in rural schools.

- The 25 June 1999 issue of the department's journal for schools, *Inform*, contains a number of interesting features on such initiatives as
 - the Satellite Trial (page 3)
 - the All Stars Jagg Band which includes students from rural schools (page 3)
 - Literacy Plus (page 4)
 - VET at Bega and Eden High Schools (page 11)
 - Edweb Sites (page 23)
 - Educational Broadcasts (page 27), including Access to Languages via Satellite.
- The *NSW Department of Education and Training Annual Report 1998* is a comprehensive overview of the department's performance.

❖ **Focus: Technology**

Name of Program/Project	NETWORK FOR EDUCATION WEBSITE
Location	Accessible in rural schools.
Target Group	All schools in NSW.
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To connect all schools to the Internet in order to provide access to information from within Australia and overseas. • To reduce isolation of rural schools.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools provided with Internet-capable computer, modem and phone line. • OzEmail contracted to provide a range of Internet services to all schools including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – dial up access at a local call cost to as many schools as commercially viable (581 schools receive cash subsidies which offset STD charges) – filtered access to Internet to reduce access to undesirable materials – an intranet that is accessible to DET users only – A World Wide Web <i>Network for Education</i> that provides information for schools and the wider community and contains translated materials giving information for parents about schools – A web space in which schools can publish their own information – An e-mail account for the school.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DET is working with Telstra to ensure that all schools in remote areas have access to the Internet. • The design of <i>Network for Education</i> was revised to reflect a range of access issues related to students with disabilities; there is also content specific to students with disabilities. • Internet usage in schools has more than doubled as a result of this service. • 2000+ schools are regular users and average time on line has more than doubled. • In November 1998 there were one million requests on the DET webserver. • The Internet infrastructure has undergone considerable upgrading to support the growth in services.

❖ **Focus: Technology/Community**

Name of Program/Project	COUNTRY ON-LINE
Location	Cootamundra Public School (Wagga District) (part of a state-wide program).
Target Group	School community.
Aim	To provide rural communities with access to the computer and Internet facilities at their local school.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A network of 15 computers in the school's computer room is connected to <i>DET Network</i> and is available for use by the community. • Advertised in school's newsletter. • Open Monday 7-9 pm; Friday 2-4 pm.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 6-8 parents, students, community members make use of the access time each day. • Skilled parents are rostered on duty to help users. • This is one of the initial 189 rural schools on the program which is now being extended to 500 schools. • The internet access is through <i>DET Network</i> which is a filtered system to reduce access to undesirable material.

❖ **Focus: Training and Development**

Name of Program/Project	TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING (TILT)
Location	Training delivered to teachers in rural districts in their schools via available technology.
Target Group	Teachers not currently using technology in the classroom.
Aim	To enable teachers to integrate technology in their current teaching and learning practices.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course developed by Training and Development Directorate in conjunction with Catholic Education Commission and a number of representative groups and organisations. • Two aspects of the program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 30-hour technology program for teachers K-12 comprising a one-hour video program focusing on key issues; two-hour hands on workshop using computers and computer-related technology; follow-up activities related to the practical application of skills in the classroom – one day training for one Internet Contact Person in each school.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TILT facilitator will co-ordinate follow-up activities and be available to work with participants. • Each participant receives support materials and allocation of relief (\$500) for follow-up activities. • 5 609 teachers in rural districts have completed the program. • a new TILT Plus program is being introduced in advanced and specialised computer use in school programs.

❖ **Focus: Technology/Curriculum**

Name of Program/Project	Computer-based Technologies Focus Schools Project
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based teams from ten schools across the State. Non-metropolitan schools include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Woodenbong Central School – Coolamon Central School – Drinane Public School – Eumungerie Public School – Wongarbon Public School – Tooraweenah Public School
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary and secondary schools at a range of points on the continuum in integrating the use of computer-based technologies across the curriculum. • School-based teams participating in the project involve, where possible, teacher-librarians, classroom teachers, principals and computer coordinators.
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a team approach to curriculum change in schools. • To make explicit links between computer-based technologies and other priority areas and issues (e.g. literacy, numeracy, assessment and continuity). • To design, develop, implement, evaluate and document teaching and learning programs in schools which model effective use of computer-based technologies. Programs will be published on the DET web site for access by all teachers.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project was developed in collaboration with school communities, districts, Curriculum Directorate and universities. It has a flexible design to provide support to school-based teams in undertaking curriculum change in their school. Participating schools have opportunities to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – attend workshops and curriculum planning meetings – undertake, document and share findings of an action learning project – develop collegial learning strategies to foster the development of a whole-school approach to the integration of computer-based technologies across the curriculum.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Office and State Office staff conduct school visits and work with participating schools to provide support in the development of their computer-based projects. • Schools participating in the project from remote areas are being supported to explore the use of computer-based technologies in providing students with greater curriculum choice.

❖ **Focus: Training and Development**

Name of Program/Project	PRINCIPALS INDUCTION PROGRAM
Location	Home district
Target Group	Newly appointed school principals
Aim	To provide principals with the opportunities to develop and extend their knowledge, skills, understandings relevant to their new position; to provide collegial support structures and knowledge of how to access them.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference focused on providing practical strategies related to the role of the principal. • Identification of Orientation Colleague to assist the incoming principal and to introduce him/her to district networks, professional associations, resources. • District orientation organised and implemented by District Office personnel. • Statewide conference emphasises the importance of ongoing professional development needs of principals and addresses policy and management issues.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-phased program developed as joint project with principals' associations. • 1998: 100/177 participants were from rural districts. • 1999: 77/132 participants were from rural districts.

Note:

A Beginning Teachers Induction Program is offered to every newly appointed permanent teacher. This is organised at the school level with district support using materials provided by State Office. \$80,000 is allocated across the state to provide relief within this program.

❖ **Focus: Training and Development**

Name of Program/Project	ABORIGINAL EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
Location	Offered by Training and Development Directorate to schools across the state.
Target Group	Aboriginal teachers.
Aim	To develop leadership potential in Aboriginal teachers.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – exploring leadership issues – determining needs – planning for individual development
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-day training course with a weekend component (funded centrally). • Travel and accommodation paid from central funds. • In 1997-9, the majority of participants were from rural areas. • In 1998, 23/30 participants were from rural districts.

Name of Program/Project	SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION PROGRAM
Location	Offered by Training and Development Directorate to schools across the state.
Target Group	Teachers, members of school executives, principals.
Aim	To prepare teachers/executives/principals who aspire to formal leadership responsibilities in schools.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program is based on a participant's demonstration of a core set of leadership skills and understandings. • It includes a substantial element of validated workplace application of formal learning. • Professional learning portfolios are developed.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program implemented at local level by Interdistrict School Leadership Groups. • Eight days of seminar attendance, mostly outside school hours. • Cost shared by participant and T&D – some provision for travel and accommodation subsidy for more isolated participants. • 1998-1999 – pilot program: 78/167 participants from rural districts. • 1999-2000 – 184/324 (59.88%) participants from rural districts.

❖ **Focus: Language Other than English in the Middle Years**

Name of program/project	LANGUAGES CONTINUITY INITIATIVE
Location	Primary and secondary schools.
Target Group	All schools in NSW with special provision for rural schools.
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve student learning outcomes in languages. • To achieve continuity of language learning from Years 5-8. • To assist groups of schools in the collaborative design of sequenced learning programs in Years 5-8.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating schools receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – student per capita funding support – focused and coordinated curriculum and T&D support. • Participating primary and central schools agree to offer 2 hours language learning per week to Years 5 and 6. • Participating high and central schools agree to offer 2.5 hours of language learning per week to Years 7 and 8. • A webpage has been developed to provide access to information and reduce isolation in rural and remote areas of NSW.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 20 districts covering rural and remote NSW, 14 are involved in this initiative and 59 schools are participating. • Of the 8 languages offered by schools in this initiative, one is an Indigenous language (Gamilaraay). • Participating schools have received CD-ROM and literacy learning curriculum support, specific to their language learning program.

❖ **Focus: Secondary Students of Languages Other Than English**

Name of program/project	STUDENT LANGUAGE STUDY IN OVERSEAS COUNTRIES (SLSOC)
Location	Local rural central and high schools and schools in overseas countries.
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students enrolled in Year 10, 11 or 12 in government central or high schools, studying one of the languages targeted.
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide students with opportunities to further enhance skills in languages by studying overseas. • To improve student learning outcomes in languages. • To achieve continuity of language learning from 10-12.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program supports a range of study and exchange opportunities including sister school relationships, school group study visits and group and individual student exchange. • The targeted languages are Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish. • Participating schools receive per capita student funding support, the amount depending on the nature of the study program and the circumstances of individual students. In 1999 this was approximately \$900 to \$1 200 per student. • Students in remote and rural schools receive higher levels of funding to help address travel inequities.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was piloted in 1996 with 140 students from 9 western and south-western Sydney high schools. • In 1997, of the 47 schools and 373 students funded, 112 students came from 18 schools in rural and remote areas. • In 1998, of the 65 programs funded, 24 were from rural and remote schools, involving 193 students of the total 519 funded. • In 1999, of the 91 schools involving 978 students funded, 34 schools and 339 students were from rural and remote areas. • In 1999, teachers accompanying students have also received funding support. Teachers from the 34 rural and remote schools received additional funding to help compensate for distance from international airports.

❖ **Focus: Aboriginal Literacy/Technology**

Name of Program/Project	TECHNOLOGY AND LITERACY SUPPORT
Location	30 schools in the north coast and Riverina areas.
Target Group	Aboriginal students in Years 2-8.
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To narrow the gap between the mean scores of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students on the Basic Skills Test and ELLA. • To improve the teaching and learning of Aboriginal students through technology.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous students use e.Mate computers on which they can draw and write. • They use the Internet to communicate with other students in school and at home. • e.Mate computers have been distributed to participating schools. • Continuity in the development of each students' literacy skills through a planned, whole school approach is emphasised.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes indicate marked improvement in writing, spelling and reading for those Aboriginal students involved. • An improvement in vocabulary both simple and complex was also observed. • A major growth in sentence level features was noted with nouns, action verbs, punctuation, time words and imagery being the main areas of improvement. • In general terms, the Aboriginal boys improved predominantly in spelling and writing; the Aboriginal girls improved predominantly in spelling and reading.

❖ **Focus: Aboriginal Early Childhood**

Name of Program/Project	EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION FROM HOME TO SCHOOL FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS
Location	Ashmont (Wagga), Condobolin, Dareton, Forster, Gilgandra, Griffith, Nowra, Narromine, Narrandera, Narrabri.
Target Group	Ten school communities with a high proportion of Indigenous school enrolments and limited or no access to preschool.
Aim	To increase participation and attendance of Aboriginal students in Kindergarten.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program has two components: transition to school experiences for the children; a parent awareness section. • Parents/ carers provided with an accurate assessment of the child's educational, social and cultural readiness for Kindergarten. • Strategies implemented to develop parents' knowledge of literacy and numeracy learning and health issues which impact on children when they begin school. • Strategies to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills in preparation for school are explored.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful programs have been implemented according to individual community needs. • Parenting activities have increased during implementation. • Indigenous students who enrolled in Kindergarten after completing the program are progressing more successfully than have many Indigenous students in previous years.

❖ **Focus: Aboriginal Literacy**

Name of Program/Project	UPPER PRIMARY INTENSIVE LITERACY
Location	Toomelah, Mungindi, Boggabilla, Moree East, Coonamble, Collarenebri, Lightning Ridge, Walgett, Pilliga, Goodooga.
Target Group	Aboriginal students in Years 4-6 who are experiencing difficulties in acquiring appropriate levels of literacy.
Aim	To improve the literacy levels of the Aboriginal students.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowest performing 26 students across the ten schools are given individual instruction based on the Reading Recovery program. • A further 118 students are included in group teaching experiences to enhance their comprehension skills.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participating teachers and Aboriginal Education Assistants have received training in how to use this program to improve the literacy outcomes of their students. • Students and parents are positive about the program. • This initiative is integrated in each school's whole school approach to literacy teaching and learning. • Initial review has indicated that the program is enhancing literacy learning.

❖ **Focus: Aboriginal Language/Culture**

Name of Program/Project	ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS
Location	Primary and secondary programs in rural communities such as Boggabilla, Bowraville, Brewarrina, Kempsey, Toomelah, Walgett.
Target Group	Students from local aboriginal communities.
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To foster the learning of the heritage language and cultural and historical perspectives. • To record the language. • To revive knowledge of the community language. • To develop resources to support language teaching and learning and to impart skills and knowledge to new teachers. • To value the local Aboriginal language and culture.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs exist at various levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – courses endorsed by the Board of Studies to fulfil the mandatory 100 hours of study of Languages other than English for the School Certificate at Walgett (Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay) and Bowraville CS (Gumbungirr); – courses in the local language and culture for primary students such as in Kempsey(Dunghutti) and Brewarrina (Muruwari and Ngemba).
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs are designed and run in consultation with the local community. • Community members are often involved in the delivery of courses and in the development of resources. • These programs present an opportunity to record Aboriginal languages while some of the last speakers are still alive. • Aboriginal Language programs have helped revive dying languages and interest and pride in the history and culture of the community.

❖ **Focus: Aboriginal Vocational Education & Training**

Name of Program/Project	VOCATIONAL COURSES FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS
Location	New England TAFE and Schools.
Target Group	Year 9 and 10 'at risk' Aboriginal students.
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To retain students in school programs. • To introduce students to further education or employment options/opportunities.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous students undertake programs which involve a range of accredited learning situations in a vocational setting through flexible delivery in parallel with their traditional schooling. • Classes run at 11 sites from 8 campuses of the New England Institute of TAFE; 10-15 students at each site. • Students are provided with hands-on activities that reflect the opportunities of a variety of industries.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Moree Technology High School, a course has been written based on the program and it has been endorsed by the Board of Studies for the School Certificate in 1999. • Community support for the project has been continuing. • At several sites, Aboriginal community members have contributed to the activities. • Early informal evaluation indicates students' enthusiasm and improved behaviour at school. • There are similar initiatives in the Lismore and Bega areas. • The style of teaching promotes enquiry in the community rather than using traditional face-to-face teaching methods.

❖ **Focus: Aboriginal Vocational Education & Training**

Name of Program/Project	RETAIL TRAINEESHIPS FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS
Location	New England area. Secondary schools involved: Gunnedah, Inverell, Manilla, Oxley (Tamworth), Walgett, Wee Waa.
Target Group	Indigenous students in Year 10 in schools in the area.
Aim	To provide part-time industry training.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course delivery by Smart 2000 software allowing on-line interaction between students and school sites in a 'virtual' classroom. • Local part-time work placement within the retail industry. • Students undertake Phase A of the Retail Traineeship course which has been adapted to the specific learning needs of the participating students and has been endorsed by the Board of Studies.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project officer has worked closely with TAFE staff and industry to customise the TAFE Retail curriculum. • Aboriginal Education Officers have validated all new curriculum. • Every student gains on-the-job industry training.

❖ **Focus: Aboriginal Literacy**

Name of Program/Project	MOBILITY TRACKING PROJECT
Location	Dubbo, Orange, Bathurst Districts.
Target Group	Targeted Aboriginal students in schools across the above districts.
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To trial a system of information exchange between schools which assists with transition for mobile Aboriginal students. • To target mobile Aboriginal students whose literacy levels have fallen behind and provide an intensive reading support program. • To develop strategies especially in literacy which support mobile Aboriginal students. • To enhance the literacy achievement of Aboriginal students.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A central database has been developed. • Since late 1998 the project has received information about 793 transferring Aboriginal students from 76 schools. • Mobile Student Proforma supplies information on students transferring in or out of a school, including information on achievements in literacy and numeracy at the time of transfer. • An intensive reading support program has been implemented and includes the use of computer-based literacy strategies. • Targeted teachers are trained in the use of technology in their literacy programs which is aimed specifically at the needs of Indigenous students.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four teachers and five Aboriginal Education Assistants have been employed to work in the project and with targeted classroom teachers. • A template for the electronic student portfolios has been designed and trialed in targeted schools.

❖ **Focus Special Education – Integration**

Name of Program/Project	INTEGRATION PROGRAM OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES INTO REGULAR CLASSROOMS
Location	Coonabarabran Public School.
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with disabilities in the local area seeking enrolment. • Teachers in the school are given training and development opportunities to allow them to better understand the needs of the children with disabilities and to cater for them in regular classrooms.
Aim	To provide educational programs for all local children in regular classrooms, including those with multiple disabilities.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with disabilities in a support class are integrated into regular classroom programs. • Thirteen children with intellectual, visual, physical disabilities and emotional disturbance are enrolled. • Three children (Years 2 and 3) with severe/multiple disabilities have been enrolled in the school in 1999. • Pre-planning takes place with families, school counsellor, support staff from district office and on-going support from district and state office. • The Resource Support Unit personnel provide specialist advice for staff, helping them plan programs and strategies suitable to these students. • Itinerant Support Teachers (vision) provides specialist advice.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special facilities (e.g. toilets, change room) have been installed and modifications made to buildings to allow wheel-chair access. • Teachers Aide (Special) has been allocated to assist classroom teachers. • One student has taxi transport arranged through the Transport for the Disabled Program. • Parents and teachers are very satisfied with the physical and intellectual progress of the children and the contribution that the program has made to their wellbeing. • Consideration will be given in the future to possible technological devices to support these students.

❖ **Focus: Country Areas Program/Children with Special Needs**

Name of Program/Project	CREATIVE AND EXPRESSIVE ARTS WORKSHOP
Location	Gulgong Public School.
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with disabilities (e.g. hearing, vision, moderate and severe intellectual disability). • Parents.
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To give staff ideas and techniques for teaching creative and expressive arts to students with special needs. • To show parents the value of such activities. • To give students the opportunity to experiment with activities in music, drama and art.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One day workshop attended by staff and students from seven schools in the Gulgong area. • Parents invited to attend. • Experimental workshops on a central theme. • Culminating performance where parents can see their children participating.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops run by local teachers and a Workshop Leader from NIDA. • Parent workshop run by community educators from Mudgee. • Evaluations from participants in all groups were very positive.

Note:

Other examples of Country Areas Program initiatives are included as Attachment 13 (not included in this electronic version).

❖ **Focus: Community Development Initiative**

Name of Program/Project	PARENTS AS TEACHERS PROGRAM
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 schools across the state. • Rural primary schools: Ballina PS, Bowen PS (Orange), Moree PS, Tolland PS (Wagga).
Target Group	Families in disadvantaged communities with children under 3 years of age, particularly first-time parents.
Aim	To give parents the knowledge and skills to support their children's development and learning.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A parenting consultant is located at each school. • The consultant works intensively with 35-40 families through regular home visits, meetings and the distribution of information on child development.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional 150-200 families are involved in the program through playgroups, group meetings and other activities • Key achievements of the program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improving parents' knowledge of child development and behaviour – providing practical strategies to support children's development – encouraging parents to take an ongoing role in their child's education – providing children with positive learning experiences – identifying problems that may affect children's learning including social and emotional problems.

❖ **Focus: Inter-Agency Collaboration**

Name of Program/Project	SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY CENTRES
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six schools across the state. • Rural primary schools: Coonamble, Kelso, Kempsey West.
Target Group	Families living in disadvantaged communities with children up to 5 years of age.
Aim	To prevent disadvantage at school entry for targeted children by planning and integrating services to better meet their needs.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A facilitator is located at each site. • Each centre reaches up to 80 families per week on a regular basis. • Many additional families are contacted for specific purposes.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Program is planned and jointly funded by the NSW Departments of Education and Training, Community Services, Health and Housing. • Major achievements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increased enrolments in transition to school programs – increased emergent literacy behaviour – more cooperative children at school entry – greater involvement of Aboriginal families – families making greater use of available services.

❖ **Focus: Collaborative Planning**

Name of Program/Project	THE PLANNING OF DUBBO COLLEGE
Location	Dubbo.
Target Group	Students in the Dubbo area.
Aim	To improve the opportunities for secondary and further education for students in the Dubbo area
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dubbo College will bring together the three present Dubbo high schools (Dubbo, Dubbo South, Delroy) to provide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a senior campus for Years 10-12 with the latest technologies and facilities some of which could be used in the wider community (e.g. performance space) – two junior campuses for Years 7-9 – a greatly expanded range of subjects, including course links with Charles Sturt University and Western Institute of TAFE.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planning of this initiative involved State Office, District Office, local council and community groups. There has been extensive consultation with the wider community. • Secondary education in Narromine, Gilgandra and Wellington will be supported via technology networks and outreach programs. • There will be enhanced opportunities to develop and nurture excellence in the arts and sport. • Funding for the first stage of the new college has been allocated in the 1999-2000 budget.

❖ **Focus: Community Development Project**

Name of Program/Project	WALGETT COMMUNITY OF SCHOOLS PROJECT
Location	Walgett.
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with learning and/or behavioural difficulties. • Teachers working with these students. • Government/community organisations providing services related to student welfare.
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To cater for a number of “at risk” students by providing them with individualised programs. • To facilitate improved communication between all sections of the community. • To provide on-going support for teachers to achieve improved educational outcomes for their students.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cultural and education centre was established in 1998. • The Centre’s role is to assist with the delivery of culturally appropriate programs and to provide additional assistance for students exhibiting learning or behavioural problems. • Centre staff assist teachers to develop Individual Education Programs for some students; parents are involved in the initial assessment of “at risk” students and consulted about the program. • The centre is staffed by a principal education officer with special education background and 2 classroom teachers.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DET is the lead agency for the project which is an example of collaboration between the various groups who deliver services to young people in the Walgett area. • A senior education officer works with these groups to ensure better coordination of local and State Government services. • Open meetings are held by the Management Committee. • The Management Committee is looking at strategies to attract teachers to the community who are well-prepared for their role and who understand the community they will be serving; e.g. by negotiating with teacher training institutions on the placement of trainee teachers in Walgett.

❖ **Focus: Community Development Project**

Name of Program/Project	STREETBEAT IN BOURKE
Location	Bourke township.
Target Group	Students of compulsory school age (6-15 years).
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce the number of students truanting from school. • To contribute to the improvement of the educational standards of these students. • To prevent crime.
Description	Home School Liaison officers, Aboriginal Education officers and police monitor areas of Bourke township according to an agreed plan. Any school-age child not in attendance at school is interviewed and followed up.
Special Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operative program with non-government schools, local police and Bourke Shire Council which co-ordinates the program. • Local media publicised the program to gain community support. • A Bourke local collaborative group has been reestablished to focus on student welfare issues. Community groups and government agencies are participating. • Co-ordinated support has been provided to key families. • Crime rate between the hours of 9 am and 5:30 pm has fallen. • School attendance has improved by 60%. • The program has been introduced in Armidale, Taree, Moruya.

SECTION 6. REVIEW AND CONCLUSION

In 1997, the Minister for Education and Training, Mr John Aquilina, announced Government initiatives to work towards the goal that “no region in the State is any less likely to produce outstanding results than any other.”

He highlighted the increased allocation of resources across the state and the targeting of these resources to reduce existing inequities. In considering the particular needs of students and teachers in rural schools, he highlighted Government initiatives in literacy, technology (particularly the allocation of additional computers to schools), Aboriginal education, additional relief time for small rural schools, increased opportunities for rural teachers to work in HSC marking centres and incentive packages to attract staff to rural schools.

Initiatives in rural education were planned for implementation by the Department of Education and Training over the period 1998-2000. Highlights and achievements of the department’s implementation of these strategic rural initiatives in public schooling are reported below.

NSW Government – Rural Education Initiatives 1998-2000

Planned Initiatives

Outcomes

Technology

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that rural students in the most isolated and remote parts of the State have access to the Internet by providing computers to students studying by distance education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isolated students have been provided with computers. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand the use of technology to offer rural students a greater curriculum choice by increasing the number of Central Schools on the Access Program and assisting Access Cluster schools to implement video-conferencing to provide visually interactive teaching at a distance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access Program is operating as outlined in Section 3, under HSC heading. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus the resources of the Country Areas Program to ensure greater use of satellite and video-conferencing to provide greater support (for example, HSC support) to teachers and | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achieved |

students in isolated and remote schools.

- Use the Internet to provide training and development materials for rural teachers and students; make extensive use of satellite transmission for the delivery of a wide range of training and development programs; make extensive use of technology to provide on line discussion groups to facilitate training and development networks, promote collegiality and to promote professional discourse.
- Train 800 teachers from across the state, including all rural districts, in the Teaching and Learning in Technology (TILT) Program to support their use of technology in the classroom
- Successfully implemented
- Over 5000 rural teachers have already completed this training program.

Literacy

- Additional funds committed over the 3 years to improve literacy standards in rural schools
- Reading Recovery program expanded; other initiatives introduced . See Section 3.

Higher School Certificate

- Training and development for DE teachers and teachers in rural schools to prepare them to implement the new Higher School Certificate.
- Vocational education courses specifically for isolated and remote students in DE in Retail, Office Skills, Information Technology and Rural Studies. These materials to be available to CAP and small rural schools.
- Establishment of marking centres in rural areas and Transfer of Duty scheme to give rural teachers experience of HSC marking. Visits to marking centres for briefing on standards and marking process.
- Access to NSW HSC On-Line service
- Implementation underway
- Development of materials underway
- Implemented and continuing
- Access available and to be continued. Number of subjects to be expanded.

Financial Initiatives to Assist Rural Families

- Back-to-School Allowance
- Implemented and

- Living Away from Home Allowance to be indexed
- Scholarships for isolated students

maintained as outlined in Section 2.

Properties

- Provision of new and upgraded schools in rural areas.

- Air-conditioning, access for the disabled, refurbishment projects carried out and new education facilities such as the Dubbo College planned. Stage I, of Dubbo College included in 1999-2000 budget.

Aboriginal Education

- Increase in the number of AEAs to support Aboriginal students; provision of training in literacy and numeracy programs.
- Aboriginal Program grants to support initiatives in literacy, numeracy and Aboriginal Studies.
- The establishment of one additional Aboriginal pre-school in a rural school, taking to 6 the number in rural districts.
- HSC Coaching Program

- Implemented
- Achieved and continuing
- There are now eight Aboriginal pre-schools in rural areas
- Implemented

Personnel

- Additional teacher relief days for small 1 and 2 teacher schools for training and development, planning, administrative relief.
- Incentives to be offered to principals and to encourage them to take up appointments in the traditionally hard-to-staff isolated schools

- Implemented
- Implemented and extended to teaching staff.

Distance Education

- New technologies to be introduced to improve teaching and learning outcomes – replacement of infrastructure based on radio with one based on satellite video-conferencing and use of the Internet.

- Trial satellite project completed. Independent evaluation yet to be delivered. Computer hardware

distributed to isolated
students.