



NSWPPA

New South Wales Primary Principals' Association

www.nswppa.org.au

NSWPPA POSITION | Rural Education Equity

Background

Currently, in the Department of Education, there are 968 schools in regional, rural, and remote areas of New South Wales, served by 22,000 teachers and attended by 186,000 students.

The SBAR Location allocation is designed to support schools in addressing the challenges of remoteness and isolation. This funding consists of three key components: remoteness funding, isolation funding, and transition funding.

1. **Remoteness Measurement:** The remoteness of a school is assessed using the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+). This index quantifies how remote a location is based on geographical factors.
2. **Isolation Measurement:** Isolation is evaluated through a school's enrolments and its distance from other nearby schools. Specifically, it considers the road distance to the five closest government schools and the enrolment data from those schools.
3. **Funding Model Structure:** The location funding model includes both a fixed base loading and a marginal component. The fixed base loading ensures that all eligible schools receive a minimum level of funding. The marginal component acknowledges that larger schools can achieve economies of scale, thereby potentially reducing operational costs.
4. **Volatility in Funding:** The methodology for calculating location loading incorporates both remoteness and isolation, which results in flexible funding aimed at meeting the specific needs related to these challenges. However, this approach can lead to fluctuations in funding due to changes in enrolment numbers at surrounding schools, creating challenges for principals in terms of budget management.
5. **Remoteness Component:** Funding for remoteness is allocated to schools classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as outer regional, remote, very remote, or migratory. The remoteness funding is calculated using the following formula:
 - *Remoteness Funding = Base Remoteness Grant + (Weighted Enrolments × Remoteness Rate)*
6. **Isolation Component:** The isolation funding component is determined based on the distance from the nearest five government schools and their respective enrolment figures.
7. **Operational Nature of Location Loading:** It is important to note that the current location loading operates as a base loading within the Resource Allocation Model, rather than as an equity loading.

Rationale

Research within New South Wales, across Australia, and globally consistently underscores the unique and compounded disadvantages faced by students in rural, regional, and remote areas. Several reports on educational equity draw attention to the stark realities these students face, noting that geographic isolation exacerbates existing disadvantages. This reality is more than anecdotal; it is reflected in educational outcomes, resource availability, and the overall wellbeing of students who live outside urban centres.

The notion of "compounding disadvantage" is central to our advocacy. Consider a student who is both Aboriginal and has a disability. Under the current system, the equity loadings appropriately recognise these factors. However, if this student lives in a rural or remote community, their disadvantage is compounded by additional barriers such as limited access to specialist services, fewer extracurricular opportunities, and reduced access to higher education pathways. The absence of Rurality as a recognised factor in equity loadings means that the full extent of this student's disadvantage is not adequately addressed in the funding model. The challenges faced by rural, regional and remote schools, including teacher recruitment and retention, limited access to professional development, the provision of curriculum and extra-curricular activities, and insufficient infrastructure, are well-documented. These challenges are not isolated; they interact with other forms of disadvantage to create a deeply entrenched inequity that the current model fails to address.

Recommendations

The NSWPPA fully supports the Department of Education Regional, Rural, Remote and Unique Settings Strategic Excellence Plan in line with the Plan for Public Education. To support these directions and ensure equity across the state it is essential that:

Recommendation 1

A "Rurality" equity loading is developed, implemented and fully resourced within the SBAR.

Recommendation 2

Free transport for students in public schools for every student.

Recommendation 3

Department resources are used to provide incentives, adequate teacher housing, accessible professional learning and adequate technology to attract and retain staff.

Recommendation 4

All students have equitable access to the same opportunities as students in metropolitan schools

Action

The NSWPPA's actions will involve:

- To call on CESE to undertake research on rural and equity and work closely with DoE personnel to develop a formula that provides schools with a "Rurality" equity loading.

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