Submission to: AGPC Commissioners re the Review of the National School Reform Agreement

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Date: 16 June 2022

The AGPC Task

The Commission has been asked to make recommendations to inform the design of the next intergovernmental school reform agreement and to improve the Measurement Framework.

Purpose

The purpose of this submission is to provide input and recommendations for the AGPC review of the National School Reform Agreement, principally derived from my Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education report for the Australian Government (2017/18).

Part A is some contributions on standpoint, national and global contexts and dimensions pertaining to regional, rural and remote education and communities and by implication, the challenges and the opportunities flowing from them for ensuring all students have access to high quality education and post school pathways and opportunities.

Part B comprises three proposals which would see gains being made by the students (and their communities) who are currently way over represented at the lower attainment levels of all of the current national achievement measures.

While my primary focus is students and families located in regional, rural and remote locations of Australia of whom many are Indigenous, there are also urban locations throughout Australia where student under-achievement continues to be a major issue.

The 3 proposals are:

1. The development of a fourth Reform Direction with associated NPIs which addresses community embedded factors that impact on student achievements
2. Significantly increasing teacher and principal supply, preparation, quality and availability for RRR schools and communities
3. Curriculum and assessment enhancements- flexibility, rationalisation of workloads and administration, more time for teaching and relationships building, and a greater focus on entrepreneurial education.

Part A

Standpoint

Access to high quality education is essential so young people can acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to enjoy life and successfully transition to further study, employment and enterprise.

Education is central to them being able to participate fully in a dynamic and increasingly complex world; it is critical for developing and nurturing human agency.

The key challenge for regional, rural and remote education is ensuring, regardless of location or circumstances, that every young person has access to high quality schooling and opportunities.

Five convictions about the importance of regional, rural and remote communities, learning and ways and means of driving improvements played a significant role in my review of rural, regional and remote education in Australia in 2017/18 for the Australian Government.

There relevance and currency continue viz:

1. vibrant and productive rural communities are integral to Australia's sustainability and prosperity—socially, economically and environmentally
2. focussing on ideas and options for re-thinking and reframing education in regional, rural and remote areas is likely to be more productive than simply concentrating on 'the problems'
3. student achievements and beyond-school opportunities are shaped by a diverse blend of in-school and community and home factors, as well as interactions between them—context and relationships are *always* important
4. government and departmental/sector policy settings are very significant in developing possibilities for change together with the work of parents and communities
5. **improvement in education is achieved by exploring how existing resources can be used more effectively, not just by allocating more of them (IRRRRE pp. 9&10).**

Global and national contextual realities impacting on education/schooling challenges and opportunities

The review of the National School Reform Agreement of necessity has to be undertaken not only in terms of the rights of each child to the best education possible but also cognizant of many complex global and national realities both existing and continuously evolving. The realities include:

1. world population growth to 9-10 billion by 2050; Australia's will grow to around 35 million by this time; currently less than 5 million Australians live in just under two thirds of the land mass (namely WA, NT & SA); density ranges from around 0.2 persons per square km in the NT to over 14,000 in Melbourne
2. increasing urbanisation versus regionalisation and rural (estimated 2/3:1/3 by 2050) and the concomitant consequences for food production and distribution, energy, territorial security, physical and social mobility
3. climate change
4. pressures on the natural environment and especially species extinctions and the ripple effect on all of life plus reduction of bio-diversity caused by relentless drives to explore and exploit natural resources for commercial gain
5. the growth and spread of Artificial Intelligence- a digitally saturated world- and perhaps the extinction of 'aloneness' via hyper connectivity- the pollution of the instant, the collapse of the value of the journey (see Virilio P., *Open Sky*, 1997, Verso and dromospheric pollution)
6. tensions (and opportunities) between world religions and the ways these shape culture(s), societies and nurture 'unshakable' views of others
7. massive disparities in individual wealth and overall wealth distribution

8. intensification of competition and marketisation in all major spheres of human endeavour
9. dispute resolution from diplomacy to minor conflicts to war and the reach and impact of mega enterprises on nations and alliances
10. ensuring universal access to basics for living including- energy, water, food, clean air, healthy built environment, nature, shelter
11. the growing possibility of a 100 year life for a significant proportion of the population
12. expanding opportunities for Indigenous people and locating their cultures, history and being in the centre of national life
13. sustaining and valuing cultural diversity
14. achieving an 'enabling for all' balance and blend of equity and excellence
15. values that build and nurture social cohesion and also foster social and economic entrepreneurship
16. geo-political location and alliances and national security

Diversity, distance, demographics

In my experience of more than 50 years working in the field of education from teacher through to principal to senior bureaucrat to ministerial chief of staff to academic, one of the enduring issues has been the overall paucity of dimensional knowledge about Australia held by many in key policy and decision making positions and the implications following from this, hence this section from my report.

The extensive travelling I did during the IRRRRE highlighted the vast diversity, distances and demographics of the RRR contexts that must be understood and taken into account fully when deciding what needs to be done to create and sustain improvements. A way to appreciate aspects of these distinguishing characteristics is through reflecting on a selection of geographic and population 'facts and figures'.

The landmass of Australia is 7.692 million km2 (sixth largest in the world) and it has a population of almost 24.6 million. (The Australian Continent) Just over 4.5 million people live in 63% of the country comprising Western Australia (2.580m), South Australia (1.723m) and the Northern Territory which has a population of around a quarter of a million. (Australian Demographic Statistics) Further, while the overall population density is 3 per km2, nationally it varies from 14,100 per km2 in inner city Melbourne to 0.2 per km2 in the Northern Territory. As well, there are only 18 population centres in Australia with 100,000 or more people, and this figure includes all of the capital cities.

Another perspective on the huge variability in the population density can be appreciated through a political lens—6 members of the 150-seat Australian Parliament represent people living in about 78 per cent of the country.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics uses five mainland remoteness categories based on road distances between locations and five different sized service centres, namely Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote Areas and Very Remote Areas. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2016 there were 3,786,000 full time equivalent (FTE) students overall. Whilst most FTE students are enrolled in schools in major cities, those in other areas account for 29.3 per cent or 1,108,000 FTE students.

Australia's schooling system has three sectors: state and territory owned and run government public schools, Catholic schools, and independent schools. Together these sectors educate students in over 9,000 schools. In 2016, 65 per cent of students attended government schools, 20 per cent attended Catholic schools, and 14 per cent attended independent schools. The Australian Government Department of Education and Training data at the time of the Review listed over 4,400 non-metropolitan schools, accounting for 47 per cent of all schools in Australia. As well, there are over 2,100 schools in Australia with an enrolment of less than 100 and over 1700 of these schools are in RRR locations. Government schools in very remote areas make up 84 per cent of all schools (IRRRRE, p.25).

Optimising learning

There is a diversity of factors, relationships and resources required for a student to learn, successfully complete school and commence a pathway beyond school which is personally rewarding and also makes a contribution to the wider society.

And, in practice, the contexts, factors, relationships and resources that impact on learning and opportunities don't exist as discrete entities. Their interactions influence the learning, growth and nurturing of students from their early years through to school graduation and beyond (IRRRRE, pp. 13).

School and community

Families and communities play an enormous role in the lives of young people because they are such a potentially rich source of nurturing, encouragement and role modelling for students, which in turn contributes to how they value themselves and grow to understand who they are and can become.

Families and communities also play a vital role in building the culture of a school principally through the way they express how they value their school.

For students, a very important aspect of a school's culture is the messages they 'pick up' directly and indirectly about their worth and their ability to learn and be successful. Saying and doing things which create a sense of hopefulness in students is very important.

Hopefulness is at the heart of building and nurturing students' aspirations and expectations.

Central to building and maintaining a supportive school culture is trust. Trust between and among those associated with a school takes time to build (and just moments to destroy) and needs to be constantly attended to. This is especially the case in small population centres 'where everyone knows everyone else' and there can be a strong sense of 'who is an insider, who is an outsider', or who is a 'local' and who is a 'blow in'.

As already stated student achievements and beyond school opportunities are shaped by a diverse blend of in-school and community and home factors, as well as interactions between them and knowledge of opportunities and what is happening in the wider world.

Common sense and research show that children who grow up in a family where they are loved unconditionally, are safe, healthy and well fed, and are encouraged to explore ideas and possibilities, are more likely than not to be successful.

For some children and students, there are home and community factors which impact negatively on their success. Included here are poor health and a lack of regular nutritious food. It is very hard, or perhaps impossible, for students to concentrate on learning if they always feel hungry and are frequently unwell or 'out of sorts'. These factors are compounded if their home life is very stressful, there is a long history of unemployment and

underemployment, and there is always a looming sense of another problem being just around the corner (IRRRRE, pp 18&19).

Section B

PROPOSAL 1- Introduce a fourth Reform Direction- *Community Capacity Building for Improved Learning (CCBIL)-* **to engage and deal with community embedded factors that impede students from optimising their learning and post-school opportunities.**

Rationale

The current *National School Reform Agreement National Policy Initiatives* has 3 Reform Directions namely:

1. Supporting students, student learning and student achievement
2. Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement
3. Enhancing the national evidence base.

Each of the National Policy Initiatives essentially focus on factors and variables 'inside the school fence' (or inside the conventionally accepted domains of educational policy) that shape and impact student learning and student achievements and opportunities.

For the students who are the most underachieving and disadvantaged which includes a sizeable number attending rural, regional and remote schools, the contexts and circumstances of their lives 'outside the school fence' have a disproportionately large impact on their learning outcomes and opportunities vis a vis what happens in school.

I highlighted this in my *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education Report (2018)* on numerous occasions and particularly in the sections on *curriculum and assessment* (pp. 31-37), *schools and community* (pp. 50-56), and *transitions* (pp. 56-64).

I also foregrounded the significance of the inside-outside school and community interface in the set of five convictions as above.

At the heart of RRR education is a critical question about its purpose, and as a student might ask*, 'am I learning so I can leave my community, am I learning so I can stay locally, or am I learning so I have a real choice about what I do?'*

The most recent *Dropping Off The Edge Persistent and multilayered disadvantage in Australia* report (2021) is a rigorous and highly relevant source of data and discussion relating to contexts, characteristics and circumstances that reside in communities and which have profound effects on student achievements and post school pathway and opportunities.

From the Executive Summary of the report:

> The indexes created in 2015 and 2021 are not directly comparable due to the addition of new indicators and the introduction of domains. However the consistent identification of many of the same locations as disadvantaged in multiple reports, notwithstanding these changes, *shows that disadvantage is persistent.*
> For example, all of the top ten most disadvantaged Victorian locations in 2021, and nine of the top ten in New South Wales, were also highly disadvantaged in 2015. Eight of the top ten in Queensland and 19 of the top 20 in South Australia were also highly disadvantaged in 2015. (2021, p.9, emphasis added).

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The vast majority of the disadvantaged locations are rural, regional and remote and as highlighted, have persisted overtime.

Bernstein (1971) declared that "formal educational knowledge can be considered to be realized through three message systems: curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation" (p.47) Allowing for some movement and modifications over the ensuing fifty plus years, the current Reform Directions essentially mirror these message systems.

In short, the message systems have proved to be very enduring and definite improvements in achievement and opportunities (eg year 12 completion rates) have been made from individual through to societal levels.

Concurrent with these improvements however, the overall inequality gap across Australian society has widened and become very entrenched.

To close various gaps- literacy, numeracy, ICT, STEM, workforce shortages, disruptive societal problems and the like- there has been a concerted intensification of schooling underpinned by competition across all levels and sectors of the national education enterprise to energise and drive improvements.

The review of the National School Reform Agreement is a strategic opportunity to move beyond the school fence and formally engage with the challenges and issues located there as means of raising achievements and improving opportunities nationally.

How might this be done in the context of the development of a new National School Reform Agreement, bearing in mind the complexities of federal-state/territory responsibilities and sensitivities?

Essentially, I envisage the *Community Capacity Building for Improved Learning* (CCBIL) Reform Direction I have briefly argued for being focussed on building the capacities of RRR communities to overcome, or at least reduce, the negative impact on student learning and opportunities flowing from disadvantages outside the school fence as per the *Dropping off the Edge Report* (2021) and many other sources.

In my IRRRRE report I flagged that in many RRR locations schools are an example of an anchor organisation namely:

> Schools in RRR communities, and especially small communities as already stated, are central to there *being* a community. This belief has been reinforced many times over during visits to RRR communities and in discussions with parents, community leaders, businesses, students, teachers and principals. The belief holds true independent of school size, type and location and there were instances of very small schools (say less than twenty enrolments) exhibiting the greatest intensity about it.

> While school closures and consolidations have been a dominant feature of RRR education for many decades, there is a tenacious commitment to do whatever is needed to maintain schools in communities. Part of this tenacity comes from experiencing the withdrawal of services like banking, post offices, local health, regional works depots and the like and the profound impact these have had on the viability of a town or region. As well, this tenacity is buoyed by examples of small schools embracing ICT successfully to enrich students' learning like the Snow Gums

Learning Alliance (Snow Gums Learning Alliance) and reducing the limitations of low enrolments on an educational program.

In 2004 the Civil Renewal Unit in the United Kingdom's Home Office Communities Group published a report titled *Firm Foundations: The Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building.* The report introduced the concept of anchor organisations and how vital they are for community capacity building and, over time, helping to turn around decline and stagnation. Anchor organisations are what their name implies—something solid and grounded, 'here for the long haul' with sufficient presence, respect, and openness to working in partnership with others to grow and sustain worthwhile futures for individuals and communities.

In many locations throughout RRR Australia, the concept of anchor organisations could be explored as a way to create new and sustainable opportunities. The range of anchor type organisations in RRR locations is still quite extensive as already signalled: schools, regional universities and hubs, TAFE and other registered training organisations, regional development bodies, local businesses and industries, citizen interest groups, health services, philanthropy and others (IRRRRE, p.50).

Substantial funding will be required over an extended period to implement a genuine *Community Capacity Building for Improved Learning* Reform Direction as outlined but there would be offsets accrued overtime as improvements at a local level are realised in say employment, reduced crime/incarceration, health, local optimism and wellbeing, and so forth. As I wrote in my report:

> Given how much debate continues to swirl around funding for education, it is instructive to consider *some outcomes relating to the cost of inaction,* of not working to bridge the divide between rural, regional and remote educational opportunities and achievements and those in urban centres.
>
> Firstly, research shows that people not in full-time work or study by age 24 and who continue in this way over a 40-year period, produce a cost impact on society of around $412,000 per person. The total fiscal and social cost of a lifetime of disengagement is $69.3 billion, using 2014 figures of 45,700 people (Lamb and Huo, 2017). This amount represents about 15% of all of the Australian Government budgeted expenditure for 2016/17 (budget.gov.au).
>
> In a similar vein, it is well documented that one consequence of young people becoming disengaged from education before they complete their schooling is a greater propensity for them to drift into crime and then becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. The financial costs associated with this far exceed those of providing a 'top quality' education and there are major social implications and costs as well (Halsey & Deegan, 2015).
>
> If for no other reason, education which fully engages young people and nurtures and builds their capacities throughout their formative years is a very sound investment; one which is repaid many times over during a lifetime (IRRRRE, pp. 24-25, emphasis added).

It will be very important in developing the *Community Capacity Building for Improved Learning* Reform Direction to ensure there is flexibility to respond to a wide diversity of contexts and circumstances- definitely not one size fits all!

As well, it will be critically important to ensure that the design of the CCBIL and its implementation includes a team/group/forum/etc linked to each school or cluster of schools that comprises a productive spectrum/mix of expertise in addition to educationists such as from health services, employment, justice/policing, parents and residents from the local area and further afield as required.

Recommendation

That a fourth National Reform Direction- *Community Capacity Building for Improved Learning (CCBIL)-* **be developed which focuses on engaging and dealing with community embedded factors and characteristics that impede students from optimising their learning and post-school opportunities.**

PROPOSAL 2: Teacher and Principal Quality and Availability are Critical Drivers of Student Outcomes

Rationale

In schools, teachers have the most impact on students and their learning and achievements followed by principals.

In short, the impact of teachers is direct given their frontline pedagogical and pastoral roles.

The impact of principals is of a more mediated kind in relation to individual students but is nevertheless critical in shaping and sustaining a school culture that nurtures learning and motivates and values academic, vocational and social-community achievements.

Attracting and then retaining quality teachers and leaders continues to be the *major* issue for regional, rural and remote schools (and in asserting such it is acknowledged there are some locations where this is not the case).

Of the 233 online submissions the IRRRRE received (out of a total of 340 submissions), 192 rated teachers and teaching at a 6 or 7 on the 0 to 7 importance scale, and teachers and teaching was the highest rated on the importance scale of all the themes presented in the Discussion Paper (IRRRRE, p.38).

Ensuring that students regardless of their location or circumstances are taught by highly skilled teachers and attend schools that are led effectively is absolutely essential to improving the achievements and opportunities for RRR students.

While state and territory departments in various ways have acknowledged this and also have policies and programs to try and deal with the problem, the challenge of attracting and retaining sufficient high quality teachers and school leaders for the most demanding/isolated/underachieving schools remains.

Clearly, more needs to be done.

Traditionally, incentives have been used such as location allowances, housing, travel concessions, promotions, permanency of appointment, to fill RRR vacancies. In earlier times, bonding was also used to ensure RRR schools were fully staffed- in short, in return for the cost of initial training, teachers agreed to teach anywhere in a state/territory for a specified time- 2,3,4 years- before becoming eligible for a transfer.

It also needs to be recognised there are teachers and leaders who choose to live and work in RRR schools and communities. Research conducted while at Flinders University (Halsey &Drummond, 2014) shows this to be the case as well as IRRRRE interviews and submissions.

There needs to be a major overhaul of the pipeline of policies, processes and funding for the overall supply of RRR staff. In particular the overhaul needs to include identification and selection and, initial preparation and professional formation programs.

Linked with this there needs to be some boldness by state/territory departments of education and sectors to implement bespoke RRR staffing to address long term/apparently intractable problems experienced by many RRR schools. I have highlighted some below in red.

As well, concerted action is needed, ideally in partnership with other essential human services like health, social work policing and justice, to enhance the standing and esteem of being an RRR teacher or principal.

Given the challenges that health services (and others) have in staffing many RRR locations, there is significant merit in setting up a National RRR Workforce Strategy.

Recommendations

First, *Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement* **must continue as a National Reform Direction.**

Second, the recommendations from the IRRRRE and associated specific actions about addressing the on-going problem of attracting and retaining sufficient well qualified and competent teachers and leaders for RRR schools and communities be used as the basis for developing additional and/or strengthening National Policy Initiatives, namely:

> **Recommendation re teachers and teaching**
> Ensure RRR contexts, challenges and opportunities are explicitly included in the selection and pre-service education of teachers, initial appointment processes and their on-going professional support.
>
> **Actions to progress this recommendation:**
> - ensure that the challenges and opportunities of RRR schools and contexts are explicitly included in the selection processes for teacher education degrees/programs
> - ensure that a candidate's academic and personal requirements for admission to a teaching degree/program are commensurate with developing the skills, knowledge and attributes to be a successful teacher
> - provide funding and opportunities for initial teacher education students to undertake high quality extended professional experience placements in RRR schools and communities

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- introduce a topic (suggest that it is weighted at the equivalent of a semester in size) into teacher education degrees on teaching and living in RRR schools and communities that students complete successfully as part of graduation requirements
- increase the number and diversity of experienced teachers appointed for extended periods to RRR schools by using targeted salary and conditions packages which include an absolute guarantee to return to their originating/preferred school or workplace at the end of a fixed term appointment
- improve the availability and diversity of in-school/locally based professional development for teachers in RRR schools and communities including by using visiting curriculum and pedagogy specialists
- implement up to a ½ term handover and induction period for teacher transfers to foster continuity of students' learning in RRR schools where there is a history of frequent teacher turn-over and substantial student under achievement
- continue to improve the availability of quality accommodation, cost of living allowances, access to essential human services, and partner employment where applicable to attract and retain high quality teachers for RRR schools (IRRRRE, p.45).

Recommendation re leaders and leadership
Ensure RRR contexts, challenges and opportunities are explicitly included in the selection, preparation, appointment and on-going professional support of educational leaders

Actions to progress this recommendation:
- continue improving how educational leaders for RRR schools and communities are identified, prepared and supported
- increase the number and diversity of experienced educational leaders in RRR schools by using targeted salary and conditions packages which include an absolute guarantee to return to their originating/preferred school or workplace at the end of a fixed term appointment
- implement up to ½ a term handover and induction period for leaders to foster continuity of students' learning in RRR schools where there is a history of frequent leadership turn-over and substantial student underachievement
- substantially expand mentoring and coaching by experienced principals for inexperienced educational leaders as a key strategy to building RRR leadership capabilities and capacities
- investigate the appointment of 'turn around teams' (such as a principal, a curriculum leader and a business manager) to schools with a persistent long term record of underachievement
- develop nationally consistent initial and renewal teacher registration requirements which fully recognise the diversity of RRR contexts and conditions
- continue improving the availability of quality accommodation, cost of living allowances, access to essential human services, and partner employment where applicable to attract and retain high quality leaders for RRR schools.

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PROPOSAL 3: Curriculum and Assessment

Curriculum is a critically important and an intensely contested aspect of education. There are many reasons for this but chief among them is that curriculum plays a defining role about what is taught and learnt in schools. A curriculum is selected from an almost infinite array of knowledge, skills and experiences. Many decisions have to be made about what to include, what to exclude and what to make optional.

Guiding these decisions are beliefs and values about the fundamental purpose of education and what constitutes worthwhile knowledge for a given society.

Assessment focuses primarily on finding out whether students have learnt what it is intended they learn. Like curriculum, assessment plays a very crucial role in the lives of students and a society more broadly because it identifies and rewards successful learning.

Bringing curriculum to life in ways that deeply engage students together with authentic, valid and reliable assessment is a major challenge for education in RRR contexts. (IRRRRE, p.15).

Flexibility

The need for greater flexibility in the application of the Australian Curriculum to ensure relevance for contemporary RRR students and communities was highlighted in submissions and consultations around this theme. Constructing learning opportunities focussing on the interests, indeed passions, and abilities of RRR students as well as the use of real world and place-based approaches to learning were strongly advocated. So too was raising the profile and importance of RRR history, contexts and contributions to Australia as a whole (IRRRRE, p. 31).

RRR relevance, RRR voice and valued 'other' knowledge and skills

Various submissions highlighted the merits and benefits of current national testing and assessment processes for RRR students (e.g. NAPLAN/ATARs), while other submissions expressed reservations and some negative views about them. Included was the view that NAPLAN testing is 'metro-centric' and does not provide sufficient connection to the in-and out-of-school lives of RRR students. An example was provided of a question asking what you could see at the busy train station—of which many RRR students have no experience and therefore no concepts to be able to respond accurately.

The example also raises another very important question: do RRR students (and others) have knowledge and skills which they value and find useful but which are not measured and therefore not valued more widely? For example, improvisation—the ability to solve a problem using what is at hand and not what you would ideally like to have. Another is spatial awareness and ability to 'mud map' complex relationships and networks between landmarks and people who live and work in a particular area.

Submissions and consultations pointed to the value of increasing the direct participation of RRR educators, students, parents/families, employers, relevant associations and regional development and governance bodies in the development of curriculum and assessments for the Australian Curriculum and NAPLAN. Consideration should also be given to increasing opportunities for RRR teachers to participate in state-wide and national assessment and moderation processes, for example by requiring that at least a quarter of participating

teachers for year 11 and 12 assessment/examination panels and moderation processes be teachers from RRR schools (IRRRRE, p. 33).

Overload

As well as advocating for changes in curriculum emphasis, priorities and flexibility, concern was also raised about schools, particularly smaller ones, being overloaded by the breadth and depth of curriculum. This is neither a new concern nor one that has been dismissed by departments and agencies.

Nevertheless, the message that schools were overloaded came through very consistently across all sectors of education and in all states and territories. In addition to curriculum load pressures, administration, reporting and accountability, and meeting complex compliance requirements were named as other causes of excessive workloads (IRRRRE, p. 35).

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial education was affirmed in numerous submissions and consultation sessions as an important contribution to raising RRR student achievements and improving their transitions from schooling into high quality pathways. One contributor to the Review said that "entrepreneurship needs to be a foundation on which sustainable regional communities are built". A number of submissions, including from the Australian Council of State School Organisations and a State Council, supported this view.

For entrepreneurialism to become a significant aspect of RRR education, the importance and relevance of strong linkages between schools, business, industry, the community in general and the tertiary sectors was consistently emphasised for two main reasons.

Firstly, to develop and leverage opportunities, expand knowledge to encourage aspirations, and provide mentors and hands on experiences to challenge learning. Secondly, to encourage young people to stay with or return to their communities, which is essential for the economic viability of RRR Australia, and also for expanding the social capital available to help sustain existing enterprises and initiate and progress innovative opportunities (IRRRRE, p. 66).

A common thread of submissions and discussions during visits to communities and with others was that critical to the successful learning about entrepreneurship and 'having a go at it' are motivated, creative teachers who are not burdened by overly bureaucratic constraints.

In part this means genuine professional autonomy to use the Australian Curriculum to design and deliver learning that develops the behaviours, attitudes and skills for entrepreneurship. As well, for students to gain tangible benefits from engagement with entrepreneurship they need to learn and work with successful entrepreneurs. This in turn requires schools to be flexible about how time is allocated for this field of learning; typically extended 'chunks' of time rather than discrete 40-45 minute lessons are essential.

Time is a resource all schools share in common and there is very substantial scope to explore how it can be used to create more effective and efficient learning opportunities for students (IRRRRE, p. 68).

Further, schooling needs to move away from the dominant model of one teacher, one class, one subject, one year level, one classroom to a more flexible approach that allows students to generate ideas, work in teams, take risks, make mistakes and try again. This is a way of thinking about engaging children in education that does not lend itself readily to regulation and objective oversight—"necessary qualities for the bureaucrat but stifling for the creative, innovative and entrepreneurial mindset" as one contributor declared (IRRRRE, p. 69).

Recommendations

That the review of the National School Reform Agreement makes curriculum and assessment enhancements to create more flexibility and reduce preparation and administration workloads a key priority, so that teachers and leaders have more time for teaching and building student-teacher relationships.

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