

SPERA Newsletter



Contributing to the promotion of education in rural Australia

www.spera.asn.au

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Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia Inc. ABN 282 727 044 01

FROM THE PRESIDENT

SPERA has much pleasure in forwarding the August edition of our newsletter to you. We trust you are all keeping well.

The main focus of the last three months has been finalising the organisation of SUMMIT 2011. I would like to take this opportunity to remind you all our SUMMIT date which is 21 – 23 September 2011. SPERA is partnering with the Sidney Myer Chair (Prof John Halsey) Rural Education and Communities, Flinders University, to host this year’s conference.

Registration details for SUMMIT 2011 can be found at www.spera.asn.au and www.flinders.edu.au/education/rural

I hope you will be able to participate in the SUMMIT as the agenda looks extremely interesting. The SUMMIT this year is quite a departure from SPERA’s usual conference format, and we consider this to be timely, as it will enable a set of recommendations to be developed that aim to give decision makers a direction for rural, regional and remote policy development across a number of areas. In addition to forming recommendations around the 6 critical inputs, the program includes workshop presentations around these critical inputs. SPERA has 24 papers that will supplement the focused discussions. Attached with this newsletter is a copy of the SUMMIT Program.

Also included in this edition is information regarding two conference attendance scholarships that were awarded to pre-service teachers. I sincerely thank the sponsors of this scholarship – Catholic Education Office Toowoomba, Isolated country Parents Association of Western Australia and SPERA. The award recipients were: Rachel Gibson from Edith Cowan University, WA and Nathan Williams from the University of Southern Queensland. I am sure, that as you read their applications you will be impressed and concur that they are worthy recipients of these scholarships. Also of note are the two university students who won pre-service awards for excellence in their teaching courses – the recipients were Stephen Klettke and Donna McVee who received the inaugural SPERA Broadley Award (see article on page 8).

Page 5 brings to you an article on the awards evening held at the University of Notre Dame in Western Australia, where Professor Michael O’Neill (the Bernie Prindiville Chair of Education) was asked to speak on the topic of the professionalism of teachers, especially what is delivered “**above and beyond**” their official job descriptions. You will find this an interesting read.

The Third International Symposium for Innovation in Rural Education (ISFIRE) will be held in February 2013 in at the **University of Western Australia in partnership with SPERA**, in Perth Western Australia. Put a note in your diary so that you can participate in a global perspective on rural education. More information will be provided on our website.

We wish to thank all those people who have renewed their membership and of course welcome all our new members. It is noteworthy that SPERA membership continues to grow.

Continued over.....

Finally, as the AGM draws near (Thursday 22 September 2011 – to be held at Flinders University following the day's conference proceedings) I encourage you to consider nominating for SPERA Executive. You will find the work not to be too onerous but truly rewarding!

I take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed to this newsletter and to Tania Broadley for getting this edition underway.

Happy reading – SPERA Executive look forward to seeing and meeting you at the Summit.

Emmy Terry
SPERA President, August 2011

CONFERENCE 2011 Have you registered?

Flinders
UNIVERSITY
ADELAIDE • AUSTRALIA

SPERA

SUMMIT 2011

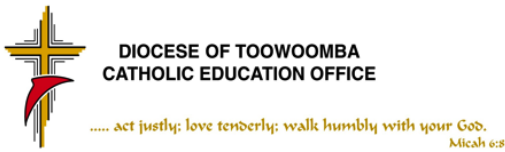
Rural Futures Matter
A Sustainable Australia

21 - 23 September 2011 Flinders University, Adelaide

For program & registration details visit

www.flinders.edu.au/education/rural/summit-2011

Conference 2011 Scholarships Awarded to Pre-service Teachers



A collaborative initiative to support two pre-service educators (one from WA and one from Queensland) was offered by SPERA, the Isolated Children's Parents Association WA and the Catholic Education Office Toowoomba to attend the 27th SPERA National Conference, which will be held in Adelaide in September.

The panel would like to officially thank the quality applicants that applied for this opportunity, however, from a very high calibre field there were only two scholarships available. These were awarded to Rachel Gibson and Nathan Williams. All applicants were asked to address criteria that provided evidence of university pre-service program, residence in a regional location, benefits of attending, interest in rural education and previous experience.

Rachel Gibson – Western Australia

Rachel lives in the regional town of Albany, on the southern coast of Western Australia. She is enrolled in her fourth year of a Bachelor of Education (Primary) course at Edith Cowan University. This point leads to my second reason. Rachel is eager to attend the Summit for the professional development it will offer. Having nearly graduated, she is eager to start teaching within a rural/regional or even remote capacity. Rachel believes "attending the Summit would provide me with a solid foundation to build my teaching skills upon me, allowing me to better serve the students I teach. In many ways then, attending this conference is an investment. While it will benefit my professional learning; it will, consequently, benefit the students I teach as I become better equipped and more qualified to deliver quality education that reaches the varied needs of my students."

Rachel hopes to commence her teaching in a rural/regional or even remote school as she has applied for the Remote Teaching Service offered in Western Australia.



Nathan Williams - Queensland



Nathan lives in South Kolan, Queensland. He is currently studying in second year of a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) at the University of Southern Queensland at the Fraser Coast Campus. However, in order to complete this degree he studies in a blended mode of face-to-face and online, including travelling two hours each way, twice a week to Bundaberg to study. It is very clear that Nathan understands the challenges facing rural educators and students in terms of accessing quality education. In Nathan's words, "I want to learn from the Summit, where Australian educators are heading and directing the trend for servicing rural and remote students and the initiatives currently being implemented or new ones to trial. Explicitly I'd like to understand how we can provide capable staff to service these areas without almost forcing them, and who my students will be and what they would be missing out on. I aim to provide affordable resources that can be provided and learn a way I can implement a strategy on a smaller scale for my local region. I believe I offer eyes and the knowledge from first-hand experience at dealing with issues surrounding difficulties with regional and rural learning. Learning is not a building I hope to learn what simple but effective solutions can be implemented to provide these students with equal access."

Labor's School Education Reforms Get OECD Tick of Approval

Article adapted with thanks from ACSSO Email Newsletter.

Peter Garrett welcomed a new report from the OECD on 18th August, 2011, which found that the education reforms introduced by the Gillard Government have established transparency and accountability as the foundation for a high-quality and fair school system. The report, OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Australia looked at the national framework for the evaluation and assessment for teachers, students and schools. "The report is a big tick of approval from an independent, internationally recognised organisation for the education reform agenda this Government has implemented since 2007, particularly our efforts to improve transparency, lift standards and introduce greater accountability through reforms such as My School," Mr Garrett said. "The OECD backs this approach in today's report. It found that a coherent framework for student assessment is in place, that accountability and transparency are well embedded in the system, and that reforms such as these are vital in improving student results. "I was also pleased to see that the OECD believes our decision to introduce teacher standards is a 'major development' and that teachers in Australia are treated as 'trusted professionals' with a high degree of autonomy."

Read more: <http://www.alp.org.au/federal-government/news/labor%E2%80%99s-school-education-reforms-get-oecd-tick-of-/>

Read OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Australia:
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/1/44/48519807.pdf>

Merit Pay for Teachers

Article adapted with thanks from ACSSO Email Newsletter (Author: Justine Ferrari)

The OECD tells Gillard government to pay teachers on merit. Teachers' skills should be linked to career structure and pay, so that advancement is based on competency rather than years spent in the job. An international report on Australia's school system, to be released today, endorses the direction of the Labor government's education revolution, including national tests, reporting of school performance on the My School website, national curriculum and "commitment to transparency". The OECD report also praises the introduction of national teaching standards, performance goals and the system's strong focus on students' results. But it urges the government to go further and identifies "a number of missing links", including that career structures for teachers are not tied to teaching standards. "This translates into a detrimental separation between the definition of skills and competencies at different stages of the career, as reflected in teaching standards, and the roles and responsibilities of teachers in schools, as reflected in career structures," it says.

Read more: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/pay-teachers-on-merit-oecd-tells-gillard-government/story-fn59niix-1226117053184>

Above and Beyond the Call of Duty



At an awards evening held at the University of Notre Dame in Western Australia, Professor Michael O'Neill (the Bernie Prindiville Chair of Education) was asked to speak on the topic of the professionalism of teachers, especially what is delivered “**above and beyond**” their official job descriptions. In regional and remote areas of Australia, the role of the teacher in the community goes far beyond the classroom or the school grounds. We hope you enjoy the read.

In order to talk about “above and beyond” the call of duty as a teacher, Professor O'Neill tells the story of Miss Abernethy.

Miss Abernethy often arrives at school at around 7.30am to help with the school breakfast club that caters for kids that simply do not get a decent feed in the morning. Miss Abernethy regularly gives up her recess or lunch time (in fact she does not know what a lunch hour is, she has never had one). It is called a lunch “time” because it is those **few** minutes a teacher grabs to ingest sustenance that will then give them indigestion for the rest of the day, because it has been eaten on the run. She will spend this time working with kids who need extra support. That support relates to anything from helping a year 1 with their reading, to support for a year 12 as he or she prepares for their physics test, or going over a maths problem from homework last night, that reduced a whole family to tears, including the parents, or opening up the art room for kids who have to get that portfolio in, or the list goes on.

In the afternoon, and sometimes evenings, she is helping with a sports team (**after** being on bus duty) and waiting for the last parent to come and pick their kids up. She is the drama teacher, or music teacher, taking rehearsals from afternoon to evening, she is the debating teacher travelling across town to another debating competition, those nights barely having time for her own tea and often picking up a few kids on the way, because they could not get a lift. She is the outdoor education teacher, taking kids away on camp weeks at a time across a whole school 24/7. She is the colleague who puts their hand up to **help** the outdoor education teacher. She will be running the year 6 disco this week or she ran the year 12 graduation dinner last week.

She is the editor of a professional journal and serves on the committee of her association, all done after hours and on weekends. She has appeared before Senate Inquiries into literacy, numeracy, science education, professional standards. She is **acutely accountable!**

She has a **Masters Degree** in Early Childhood and as she lines up her pre-primaries in their bathers to go to the pool and the bus waits for them, one of the children tells her she is not feeling well and proceeds to vomit on the classroom floor. Her Masters degree did not prepare her for this and gagging she proceeds to clean it up.

She is the special needs teacher who deals with kids with the most wide ranging disorders and we do not **remotely** have the time to describe **her** typical day. She is **also** the teacher who has those students mainstreamed.

She is the school counsellor or psychologist who takes home with her each evening an ever burgeoning case load reduced to tears by the stories she has heard.

She deals with cotton wool kids and helicopter parents although some parents are more like stealth bombers than helicopters. Thankfully and equally she has other parents who **are sublimely supportive**. Sadly some kids have never seen anything remotely like cotton wool to protect **them**.

All of the above is just accepted as **part** of the job description. Underneath that lies the context in which she teaches.

Her children come from homes where domestic violence has increased by 9% over the past 12 months reported in yesterday's West Australian. 19% of children surveyed in recent research commissioned by the Commissioner of Children and the Young, Michelle Scott, said they did not feel safe at home. 38% said they did not have anyone to talk to and kept problems to themselves.

More and more of her children are victims of abuse, emotional, physical, sexual and neglect. They are rarely victims of one subtype. In WA the most common form of abuse is neglect.

A number of her children are presenting with depression, bi-polar disorder and other mental health issues. Yet even in Today's West Professor Patrick McGorry has branded WA mental health services for adolescents as among the worst in the country.

"Many young people are dying prematurely because of suicide and other problems, so you have premature death and you have a huge level of preventable disability that extends across decades in some cases. They have not been able to get early diagnosis and comprehensive care." **Again WA Children's commissioner Michelle Scott said only 25% of children with mental illness were getting treatment.**

There are calls for the introduction of more programs related to emotional and social well-being in an already overcrowded curriculum. Increasingly calls for values education in schools is a response to a perceived lack of a moral compass. Teaching kids to count is important, but teaching what counts is gathering increasing importance too.

Against that backdrop we are inclined to say alas poor Abernethy I knew her well!

But her kids enjoy her company; she speaks to them gently, comfortingly, encouragingly. They share a laugh, it is almost as if they feel at home with her, because her classroom is a home, it is built on a foundation of love, not just technical competence; although she is, as competent as any NAPLAN test or league table can indicate. She shares her children's joys and success and shows them how to look beyond failures and sorrows. She is a significant "other" in their lives.

She gives hope.

Miss Abernethy gives of her time and herself. She is present to her children, she listens, she does not hear, she sees, she does not look. She spends many weekends and evenings deliberating over what and how to teach, hoping she may provide to her students what the poet Rainer Maria Rilke called, "The grace of great things".

They can be eagerly accepted but just as easily rejected, still she persists.

She is also there for her colleagues, sharing their joys, their sorrows offering the song lines of her experience and engaging in robust debate **about what matters.**

There is humility about her. She does not seek accolades although when they come they are balm for the soul. For her, teaching is a vocation not a job, Frederick Beuchener the Protestant theologian, described vocation as ***"the place where your deep gladness, and the world's deep hunger meet"***. It is always her deep gladness to meet that deep hunger.

On the 29th of September 2010 Ken Wyatt the first indigenous MHR (and once a teacher) gave his maiden speech, he said – quoting Nelson Mandela ***"Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine that a child of a farm worker can become the president of a great nation."***

In equally well-chosen words Ken Wyatt reflected ***"As the son of a railway ganger and a domestic worker who was a part of the Stolen Generation, I am here before you today in this chamber because of the influence of education and my year one teacher, Miss Abernethy. Her unfailing faith in my ability to succeed and serve Australian society resonated on the day of the election when she turned up to hand out how-to-vote cards for me in Maddington. This ongoing support fifty years after I was in her class has been particularly humbling."***

The real Miss Abernethy has been thanked but there are many teachers who do not get the thanks they deserve. I remind them of Robert Bolt's words in the play *A Man for All Seasons*.

Thomas Moore asks Richard Rich "Why not be a teacher – you'd be a fine teacher – perhaps a great one? Rich replies, And if I was who would know it? To which Moore responds, You, your pupils, your friends, God – not a bad public that!

Miss Abernethy is not gender specific, and **she or he** has touched many students from all backgrounds, tonight we thank that universal teacher.

Rural Focus in Whyalla in 2012

UniSA's Whyalla campus is set to become a global focal point for rural issues thanks to a winning bid by the Centre for Regional Engagement to host the Fourth International Rural Network World Forum in 2012.

Spearheaded by Whyalla-based Senior Research Development Manager Jen Cleary, the bid displayed a high level of regional support and a strong commitment to community engagement.

"Whyalla campus demonstrated an exquisite point of difference in that it really is the nexus where regional, rural and remote meet, making it unique from other universities," she said.

Run by not-for-profit association, the International Rural Network, the conference aims to give rural communities a stronger voice in policy making debates by bringing together practitioners, communities, rural organisations, policy makers and academics from around the world to discuss rural issues.

"The focus of the 2012 conference will be the reality of what it means to live in a rural and remote area in a global context," Ms Cleary said.

The conference is expected to attract between 400 and 600 delegates from up to 50 different countries, with around a third of attendees to be from developing countries.

International Symposium for Innovation Rural Education (ISFIRE 2012) in Perth

The Third ISFIRE will be held in February 2013 in at the **University of Western Australia in partnership with SPERA**, in Perth Western Australia. Put a note in your diary so that you can participate in a global perspective on rural education. More information to follow on our website.

National honour for small schools

Compton Primary School, a school of 84 students in the Limestone Coast submitted a whole school entry into the annual Commonwealth Anzac Day Schools' Awards winning not only our State Award but the National Award as well.

A replica of a trench was constructed out of 100 sandbags, barbed wire and wood. Students researched and presented information about local people who served in the wars. A Day in the life of Simpson and his Donkey was presented

A Dawn Service was held with 120 people attending. All of this was captured and highlighted on DVD as well as hard copy presentations.

The national judges noted a high level of planning and commitment to hands- on learning across all grades and engaging activities with people from the wider community. There was strong evidence of good teaching practice, quality learning and strong student participation.

MEMBERSHIP

SPERA membership covers the calendar year.

2011 Membership Fees

- **Full Membership \$110.00 (incl GST)**
- **Student (Under-graduate) Membership \$60.00 (incl GST)**
- **Overseas Membership \$155.00**
- **Pre-service Educator Membership Free (no journal supplied-journal is available at the standard subscription rate of \$25.00 per issue).**

A membership application form for 2011 is available on the SPERA website:
www.spera.asn.au



SPERA'S JOURNAL: *Education in Rural Australia*

The journal is produced twice yearly and is part of the SPERA membership package. Non-members wishing to subscribe only to the journal currently pay \$A50 (GST included). This applies to individuals and institutions. Contact person: Colin Boylan (cboylan@csu.edu.au)

SPERA Education Awards for 2011



R-L: John Borserio, Stephen Klettke and Dr. Karen Noble

University of Southern Queensland

Excellence in pre-service teaching awards held at the USQ Faculty of Education Awards on the 29th of April, 2011, saw Stephen Klettke being awarded the SPERA award. Stephen received the award for outstanding performance in coursework related to rural education and successful teaching experiences in rural settings.

SPERA committee members John Borserio and Karen Noble attended to present this outstanding student his award.



R-L: Don Boyd, Donna McVee and Dr. Tania Broadley

Curtin University

The newly sponsored Broadley SPERA award for Outstanding Regional Student (a joint award sponsored by both SPERA and the Broadley family) was presented for the first time at the recent Curtin University School of Education Awards evening. The award is to recognise excellence of a student from the Bachelor of Education degree that is enrolled in a regional centre. Donna McVee was awarded the inaugural award for 2011. Donna completed her studies in 2010, through the Geraldton Universities Centre and how now commenced teaching at Geraldton Primary School.

SPERA committee members Don Boyd and Tania Broadley were invited to attend.

SPERA The Professional Voice in Rural Education

The Provision of Education in Rural incorporated (SPERA) links people with a diverse range of interests in education and training to promote the development of rural Australia by:

- (i) promoting a positive view of education and training in rural areas and encouraging innovation and initiative in the provision of rural services(ii) supporting and encouraging rural communities and educators to work towards the provision of quality education and training; and (iii) providing a framework for the sharing of concerns, issues and experiences relating to education and training in rural areas.

Beyond Periphery Symposium a Hit with Overseas Visitors.

An article provided by the Centre for Regional Engagement at the Whyalla Campus of Uni of SA.

EXPERTS in rural and remote issues from around the world have declared the Beyond Periphery conference, held at UniSA's Whyalla campus, a success. More than 70 academics and policy makers from Austria, Canada, the United States, Norway and Australia this month flooded onto UniSA's Whyalla campus to discuss a host of issues common to remote areas world-wide.

Stephanie Martin, Professor of Economics at the University of Alaska at Anchorage, said she was surprised to learn remote areas had so many similarities. "I learned a lot about other places in the world that are similar to the Arctic that I had no idea of," she said. "Remote areas have a lot in common. We thought that the difficulties of development were because Alaska is so cold and so remote, but there are the same conditions in remote regions everywhere. "Creating jobs in rural areas is difficult, creating infrastructure and keeping it in good repair is difficult and providing health care in remote areas is difficult everywhere.

And Professor Martin was able to take time out from conference proceedings to enjoy Whyalla's spectacular environment – and dining. "We drank a lot of delicious wine. We went to the ocean, looked at super gigantic pelican, went to dinner at the Foreshore which was absolutely delicious. We went to a barbeque at the beach and saw the kangaroos at Ada Ryan Gardens," she said.

"The sky is so big here it's tremendous. In Alaska there's mountains all over – it's much, much smaller. It's wonderful!"

Launching the Symposium at a gala cocktail event, University of South Australia Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Høj told delegates remote and regional communities add significant value particularly in Australia," he said. "Our communities on the periphery and beyond give us a sense of living life in a wide, wonderful geography." And good research should promote regional innovation and sustainability, Professor Høj said.

"It's important to translate research into innovation relevant to sustainable futures in remote Australia," he said.

The Symposium's success was thanks to strong support from business, government and the community organiser and UniSA's Whyalla-based Senior Research Development Manager Jen Cleary said. "The support from Whyalla City Council; Boston Bay Wines, the Desert Voices Choir who sang for guests at the launch, the friendly welcome everyone in town gave to delegates - it really shows the world the kind of can-do spirit that makes Whyalla and other regional remote communities so special."

The Beyond Periphery Symposium was hosted by the Centre for Regional Engagement in partnership with Charles Darwin University and UniSA's Hawke Institute.

CONFERENCE REMINDERS

2011

4-6 September – TAFE Directors Australia National Conference, Sydney - <http://www.econference.com.au/TAFE-Directors-Australia-National-Conference-2011.html>

21-23 September - SPERA Flinders Summit, Flinders University, Adelaide -
<http://spera.asn.au/userfiles/files/SUMMIT%202011/Registration%20SUMMIT%202011.pdf>

2012

24-28 September 2012– Fourth World Forum of the International Rural Network, Whyalla, South Australia TBA

2013

February 2013 – International Symposium for Innovation in Rural Education (ISFIRE), Perth, Western Australia – co-hosted by SPERA and the University of Western Australia

SPERA Executive for 2010/2011:



From Left: Gary Allen, John Borserio, Vince Connor, Simone White, Michael Preece, Tania Broadley, Emmy Terry, Vince Fleming, Sue Ledger, Don Boyd, Charles Bradley
Absent: Sheila King, Karen Noble, Paula Jervis Tracey, Graeme Lock

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.spera.asn.au

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Send articles:

Short articles of what is happening in rural education may be submitted for the newsletter by emailing a word document to

t.broadley@curtin.edu.au