



SPERA

Society for the Provision of
Education in Rural Australia



34th NATIONAL SPERA CONFERENCE

ACCESS FOR ALL EQUITY MATTERS

28-30 NOVEMBER 2018

CURTIN UNIVERSITY | PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:
THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR STUDENT EQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (NCSEHE)

#SPERA_18



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NCSEHE | National Centre for Student
Equity in Higher Education



Curtin University

Welcome



The Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA) promotes a positive view of education and training in rural and remote Australia. Our organisation achieves this goal by linking people with a diverse range of interests who are united by a common mission: to develop innovative practices to overcome the inequities created by the tyranny of distance. An underlying principle which guides our organisation's activities is the provision of equality of educational opportunity. This year's conference theme is quite pertinent—"Access for All: Equity Matters".

This conference will provide us with an opportunity to develop actions and strategies as well as develop a communique to the government regarding the Independent Review into Rural, Remote and Regional Education, chaired by Professor John Halsey. This is a real opportunity for everyone present at this conference to be involved in these discussions which have a real possibility of making a real difference and to enact change. Be involved. This is your opportunity to be active in developing strategies to provide access for all, because equity matters.

In August, I had the privilege of attending the 'International Symposium for Innovation in Rural Education (ISFIRE)' at the Montana State University which was coordinated by SPERA Executive member Dr Jayne Downey. The conference provided me with the opportunity to network and to form a number of significant alliances. We are keen to work closely together to develop cooperative projects for the mutual benefit of our respective associations. Two of the organisations we will partner with are the National Rural Education Association and the Institute for the Advancement of Research, Innovation and Practice in Rural Education.

This conference has been effectively organised by a small team, ably led by Professor Sue Trinidad of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE). For as long as I can remember, SPERA has benefited from the generous support of Sue Trinidad and the NCSEHE and I sincerely thank Sue for this.

Thank you to all members of the executive for the work you have done throughout the year and especially to the members of the Conference organising committee.

On behalf of the 2018 SPERA National Executive, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to officially welcome you to the 2018 SPERA Conference. Have fun, make new friends and be involved in discussions.

Brian O'Neill
 President, SPERA

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Conference Program

WEDNESDAY 28 NOVEMBER

12:30-8:00 PM	Optional: World Access to Higher Education Day
6:30-8:00 PM	Social reception and SPERA Conference welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCSEHE Research Grants Program report — <i>People seeking asylum in Australia: Access and support in higher education</i>. Dr Lisa Hartley and Associate Professor Caroline Fleay, introduced by Professor John Phillimore • Welcome to 34th National SPERA Conference: Mr Brian O'Neill Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre Foyer (Building 213)

THURSDAY 29 NOVEMBER

8:30 AM	Delegate Registration and Coffee/Tea Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre Foyer (Building 213)
9:00 AM	Opening Ceremony Mr Brian O'Neill, President SPERA Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre (213-104)
9:30 AM	Keynote Address: The National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy Emeritus Professor Andrew Taggart, Murdoch University Chair: Mr Brian O'Neill Location: Tim Winton Theatre (213-104)
10:30 AM	Morning tea Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre Foyer (Building 213)
11:00 AM	PARALLEL SESSION 1
12:30 PM	Lunch Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre Foyer (Building 213)
1:15 PM	Keynote Address: Rural Education from an International Perspective Keynote speaker: Dr Jayne Downey Chair: Dr Christine Reading Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre Foyer (Building 213)
2:15 PM	PARALLEL SESSION 2
3:15 PM	Afternoon Tea including AREA Award Presentations Chair: Mr Brian O'Neill Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre Foyer (Building 213)
3:45 PM	PARALLEL SESSION 3
5:00 PM	SPERA Annual General Meeting Mr Brian O'Neill, President SPERA Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre Foyer (Building 213)

Parallel Sessions

PARALLEL SESSION 1

ROOM	Tim Winton Theatre (213.104)	Tim Winton Theatre (213.101)	Elizabeth Jolley Theatre (210.104)
THEMES	Technology	Leadership & Transition	Culture & Place Based Initiative
11:00-11:30	Developing and Implementing Digital Literacy Professional Learning Workshops for Teachers in Regional and Remote High Schools Ms Sonal Sing, Widening Participation Unit, Macquarie University	Swimming upstream: The dilemmas faced by regional, rural and remote students who decide to go to university Associate Professor Maria Raciti, University of the Sunshine Coast	Mogo and Mudji Book Project Ms Jamie Facchin and Mr Adam Gowen, University of Wollongong
11:30-12:00	The Relational Nature of being a rural P-12 Principal Mr Brian O'Neill, Calen DSC	Equity and curriculum for rural students: Another look at place based education Dr Pam Bartholomaeus, Flinders University	'Life beyond the school gate': Young people's digital story narratives about post-schooling options and realities Associate Professor Sarah O'Shea, University of Wollongong Associate Professor Erica Southgate, University of Newcastle Dr Ann Jardine, University of New South Wales Dr Shamus Smith Dr Janine Delahunty
12:00-12:30	Flexibility within online education — equal or equitable? Dr Cathy Stone, University of Newcastle	On the road with ASPIRE-widening participation outreach activities in regional NSW Ms Jaqui Pyke, University of New South Wales	School is home, home as school: Yalgu 'on country' and 'through country' place-based education from Gawa homeland Mr Ben van Gelderen and Mrs Kathy Guthadjaka, Charles Darwin University

PARALLEL SESSION 2

ROOM	Tim Winton Theatre (213.104)	Tim Winton Theatre (213.101)	Elizabeth Jolley Theatre (210.104)
THEMES	Technology & Leadership	Transition	Place Based Initiative
2:15-2:45	Supporting mathematics pathways to STEM careers for regional students in high schools Dr Lynette Vernon, NCSEHE	Student Academic Support Services (SASS) Programs: Reach and Impact for Regional Multi-Campus Victorian Students Associate Professor Nina Fotinatos, Federation University	Rural teaching everywhere: Best practices of rural teachers around the world Dr Robert Mitchell, University of Colorado
2:45-3:15	Schools, Universities and Industry working together: Strong partnerships supporting regional student access and participation in Higher Education Ms Elisa McGowan, University of Western Australia	"Having a yarn" From one rural student to another: practical in-school programs demystifying university and enabling student progression Ms Sam Aivalita and Ms Brittany Brown, University of Wollongong	Belonging in Boarding School: How interior design can increase a sense of belonging for female Aboriginal and Torres Strait students living in Western Australian boarding schools Ms Emma Whettingsteel, Curtin University

PARALLEL SESSION 3

ROOM	Tim Winton Theatre (213.104)	Tim Winton Theatre (213.101)	Elizabeth Jolley Theatre (210.104)
THEMES		Transition	Place Based Initiative
3:45-4:15	'Improving the beaten track': Investigating alternative pathways to increase higher education participation for mature-aged low socio-economic status students in regional and remote Australia. Dr Bronwyn Reff, University of Newcastle	Demystifying Higher Education for LSES regional schools through an engagement framework partnership — a practical approach Mr John McDonald, La Trobe University	Nowanup Bush University: Idea for a breathing space. Professor Simon Forrest, Associate Professor Khoa Do, Ms Emma Whettingsteel, Mr James Russell, Curtin University
4:15-4:45	AJIRE Journal Dr Sue Ledger, Murdoch University	The importance of highly engaged school-university partnerships in rural widening participation outreach Mr Geoffrey Mitchell, QLD Department of Education Dr Nadine Zacharias, NCSEHE	Attracting new student audiences to the agricultural industry Ms Alysia Kerpert, Department of Education

Conference Program Cont.

FRIDAY 30 NOVEMBER

7:30 AM	Meeting of the new SPERA Executive Location: Aroma Café, Building 200
8:30 AM	Delegate Registration and Coffee/Tea Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre Foyer (Building 213)
9:00 AM	Welcome and Overview of the Day Mr Brian O'Neill and Dr Sue Ledger, SPERA Location: Tim Winton Theatre (213:104)
12:30 PM	Real Life Literacy Panel Panel Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emeritus Professor John Halsey (IRRRRE) • Ms Denyse Ritchie (THRASS) • Ms Kate Reitzenstein (AISWA) • Ms Sabine Winton MLA (Member for Wanneroo) Chair: Sue Ledger Location: Tim Winton Theatre (213:104)
10:30 AM	Morning tea Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre Foyer (Building 213)
1:15 PM	Symposium Session: Future Focused Regional, Rural, Remote Strategy Dr Sue Ledger (SPERA); Mr Phil Brown (CEP); Emeritus Professor John Halsey (IRRRRE), and Professor Sue Trinidad (NCSEHE) Keynote: John Halsey Regional Education Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview The Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (IRRRRE) government response. Overview of Symposium Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose to drive the endorsement of the communique/future-focused RRR Strategy Location: Tim Winton Theatre (213:104) Symposium Open Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore Key Area highlighted within IRRRRE report • Workforce capacity (teachers and education leadership); • Equity and curriculum breath (rural schools and their significant role in community/economic development; Improving learning access and breadth, and the use of technology); • Transitions and Rural Youth Aspirations. Location: Tim Winton Theatre (213:104) & (213:104) & Elizabeth Jolley (210:104) Symposium Open Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share key actions and proposals. Location: Tim Winton Theatre (213:104)
5:00 PM	SPERA Annual General Meeting Mr Brian O'Neill, President, SPERA Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre Foyer (Building 213)
12:30 PM	Lunch Location: Tim Winton Lecture Theatre Foyer (Building 213)

Panel Overview

Regional, Rural, Remote Case Studies from Across the Sector

Drawing from personal experience in rural, regional and remote contexts- a range of success case studies are presented by respected educators across the sectors including:

- Emeritus Professor John Halsey (IRRRRE)
- Ms Denyse Ritchie (THRASS)
- Ms Kate Reitzenstein (AISWA)
- Ms Sabine Winton MLA (Member for Wanneroo)



Emeritus Professor John Halsey (IRRRRE)

John is an Emeritus Professor at Flinders University. In 2017 he conducted the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education for the Australian Government. John's experience also includes being a teacher, a principal of two R-12 schools in South Australia (one rural and one metropolitan), the Associate Director of the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia, an Executive Director in the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services and a Chief of Staff to a State Minister for Education and Children's Services. John's work and commitment to rural education and communities is framed and grounded by the challenge of vibrant, productive rural communities being integral to Australia's (and the world's) sustainability.



Denise Ritchie (THRASS)

Denise Ritchie is the co-author and developer of THRASS, a specific pedagogy for the teaching of literacy skills. Denise has been a teacher, university lecturer, teacher trainer and author. Her specific focus is currently in teacher training. She, along with her team of professional trainers, works in many remote indigenous communities, mainstream schools, special educational settings and international schools. She has actively contributed to studies in Macau and Indonesia on the direct effects of teacher subject knowledge of English linguistics and phonetics on student outcomes. In Macau she has won an award for her work in teaching ESL.



Kate Reitzenstein (AISWA)

Kate Reitzenstein is Languages Consultant of the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA). She organises professional development activities and provides advice to schools and teachers on policy, curriculum and resources related to language learning. Prior to this role, Kate worked as an Indonesian language teacher for fifteen years at three secondary schools, with experience using the Curriculum Framework and the International Baccalaureate. Kate now works with schools to implement the Australian and WA Curriculum: Languages, promoting flexibility to suit individual and local contexts.



Ms Sabine Winton MLA (Member for Wanneroo)

A Member of State Parliament Sabine is the elected Labour Member for Wanneroo having herself attended the local Wanneroo Secondary College. Prior to being elected in 2017 Sabine was a primary school teacher for 27 years, most recently coordinating and teaching the Primary Extension and Challenge (PEAC) classes in the North Metropolitan Area. Sabine was also a City of Wanneroo Councillor between 2013 and 2017.

Keynote Speakers and Presentations



Emeritus Professor Andrew Taggart

Emeritus Professor Andrew Taggart received his PhD from the Ohio State University and had an extensive research career in teacher education. Whilst at Murdoch University (Acting Vice Chancellor, Provost, Pro Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Dean/PVC of Arts, Education and Social Sciences) he provided senior level support for domestic student recruitment and led local and regional engagement including the federally funded MAP4U Project focused on improving educational outcomes and university entry for regional, rural and remote students. Emeritus Professor Taggart has led the recruitment of 'Low SES/First in Family' students to attend university and the development of partnerships with all schools in the region with special focus on the Perth's Southern Corridor. He currently serves on the Board of the Peel Development Commission, the Australia Data Institute and Chairs the Educational Advisory Committee for the WA Cricket Association. His most cherished Board position is at Coodanup College (2012-ongoing) 70kms from Perth a school that has undergone a transformation of great significance.

Regional Rural Remote Education Strategy - Australian Government Regional Education Package

On 13 November 2018 Minister Tehan announced a new package of regional higher education initiatives to increase the Australian Government's investment in rural and regional Australia to provide more choice and access to regional students pursuing higher education. The Government announced \$134.8 million over four years to provide students from rural and regional Australia with greater choice in, and access to higher education. This presentation will cover the basic elements of the announced package and the benefits for regional Australia given that equity matters, providing both an update national on the local regional situation of Western Australia as we prepare to provide feedback on the what should be the Regional Rural Remote Education Strategy to Government (Day 2 of SPERA).



Dr Jayne Downey

Dr. Jayne Downey is an Associate Professor in the Department of Education and the Director of the Center for Research on Rural Education at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana, USA. Her academic background is in the domain of Educational Psychology with a focus on the nature of learning and learners, the characteristics of effective teaching, and the contextual factors that influence the teaching and learning process. She has worked in the field of educator preparation for 20 years and her research agenda has been designed to strengthen the preparation of prospective teachers and improve the outcomes of P-20 education across rural contexts. She has used her research findings to inform her undergraduate and graduate courses as well as to help address tangible needs of rural students, teachers, and teacher educators at state, national, and international levels.

The Important Role of Place and Partnerships in U.S. Rural Education

One of the complex equity issues faced by the rural education community around the world is the need to increase students' access to teachers who are fully prepared to teach, live, and thrive in rural communities. In the American context, this is a particularly salient issue as enrollment in university-based preparation programs has been dropping and the shortage of rural teachers has been increasing. In this presentation, we will examine ways in which the U.S. rural education community is working to infuse new understandings of preparation for place and preparation partnerships across the teacher education pathway, thereby strengthening the preparation and retention of new teachers for rural contexts. We will also explore future directions for action, practice, and research to leverage place and partnerships to increase rural students' access to fully prepared teachers.

Parallel Sessions — Abstracts

PARALLEL SESSION 1

11:00-11:30 — Location: 213:104

Developing and Implementing Digital Literacy Professional Learning Workshops for Teachers in Regional and Remote High Schools

Ms Sonal Sing
Widening Participation Unit, Macquarie University

Digital divide among communities as having two components – 1) access and connection to technology and 2) knowledge and skills to use it in a meaningful way. Macquarie University's Widening Participation Unit was awarded a National Priorities Pool (NPP) grant to design a digital literacy program to enhance the digital literacy skills of teachers and students in regional and remote schools in New South Wales. The presentation will highlight the design, development and implementation of the digital literacy workshops it will also explore the challenges and opportunities faced while developing a program that considers both levels of the divide

11:00-11:30 — Location: 213:101

Swimming upstream: The dilemmas faced by regional, rural and remote students who decide to go to university

Associate Professor Maria Raciti
National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education & USC

Students from regional, rural and remote (RRR) areas who are considering going to university face a range of dilemmas different to that of their urban student counterparts. Attending to the Halsey Review's (2018) call for fresh thinking to arrest the inverse relationship between university qualifications and remoteness, this paper identifies and unpacks four key dilemmas—fleshing out the interplay between competing opinions, opportunities and contextual factors to shed new light on RRR students' decision dynamics. Via interviews and focus groups, qualitative data were collected from 46 students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds at six Queensland universities. Analysing data from urban (45.6%) and RRR (54.4%) participants revealed four differential dilemmas. RRR participants who went on to university shared their stories of a journey akin to swimming upstream against a current of apathy, low expectations and structural barriers. While their stories revealed character traits such as risk-seeking, defiance, non-conformity and grit, they often experienced social isolation and an uncomfortable sense of being an outlier (Dilemma #1). RRR students were often subject to mixed messages from significant others about going to university (Dilemma #2) with available, local employment opportunities conulating their decision (Dilemma #3). Furthermore, unlike their urban counterparts, a greater proportion of RRR students made the decision to go to university in primary school thereupon influencing the efficacy of high school university outreach practices (Dilemma #4). These differential dilemma insights make important contributions and are translated into suggested low-cost enhancements to RRR university outreach in this paper.

11:00-11:30 — Location: 210:104

Mogo and Mudji Book Project

Ms Jamie Facchin and Mr Adam Gowen
University of Wollongong

Pride in culture plays a vital role in shaping people's ambitions and choices and the Mogo and Mudji Project was designed to build further connections between the local Aboriginal Community and UOW Batemans Bay. In 2017, UOW Batemans Bay partnered with Mogo Public School, which has 90% Aboriginal student enrolment, and Mogo Local Aboriginal Land Council in a series of educational activities including field trips to significant sites, educational workshops, and cultural awareness activities. By continuing to develop and encourage aspirations

and awareness of local Indigenous culture, the project aimed to keep the Walbanya heritage alive by passing on Indigenous knowledges from one generation to another. These knowledges took the form of speaking and teaching language, respect of environmental and cultural materials and story, and artistic forms and practice. The process of teaching and learning these knowledges anchors the cultural value kin-based relationships in the land. Building this social capital also has the potential to enhance the environmental values of the local area through fostering greater respect for local places significant to the Aboriginal community which in turn promotes a stewardship ethic toward respect for, and preservation of the environment. The project produced two resources (story books) which have now been distributed to schools, local libraries, information centres, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and National Parks. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) have contacted UOW seeking permission to make the books into an interactive online resource, which can be used by students Australia-wide.

11:30-12:00 — Location: 213:104

The Relational Nature of being a rural P-12 Principal

Mr Brian O'Neill
Calen District State College

Surveys undertaken by the Queensland State P-10/12 School Administrators' Association for the Independent Review into Rural, Remote and Regional Education, and the Promotional Positions Classification Review revealed that there are complexities involved in leading a dual sector school and that those complexities are multiplied when the school is in a rural context. Panel discussion when selecting a new principal for a rural dual sector school, reveal that the community expectations of the role are much broader than that of being a curriculum leader. These experiences have prompted the presenter to consider the need for research into this complex arena and to undertake this as the topic for his Doctor of Philosophy degree.

As this research is still very much in its infancy, this workshop presentation will consider the need for such research, the methodology and how the research findings can be used to attract, select, support and retain principals in rural dual sector schools.

11:30-12:00 — Location: 213:101

Equity and curriculum for rural students: another look at place based education

Dr Pam Bartholomaeus,
Flinders University

It is difficult to decide what constitutes equitable access for rural students. This is particularly so if the ideas that equity is achieved through equity in resource inputs or through striving for equal educational outcomes are rejected. This presentation will begin with discussion about ways of viewing equity and access in rural education, and outlining the complex task that exists for rural education that can serve to support sustainability for the local community. Place-based innovations and pedagogy will then be explored. Place-based education will be presented as both a means to engage students and build connections between learning and their lives beyond the school, and a way to assist students to understand more deeply the physical place and the social community where they live. Halsey includes in the 2018 Independent Review on Rural, Regional and Remote Education the warning that place-based education can potentially reduce opportunities for students to observe and understand wider perspectives beyond their rural community. Some principles to guide quality place-based education will be presented along with suggestions for identifying and accessing local resources that could be utilised for this pedagogical approach.

11:30-12:00 — Location: 210:104

'Life beyond the school gate': Young people's digital story narratives about post-schooling options and realities

Associate Professor Sarah O'Shea, University of Wollongong
Associate Professor Erica Southgate, University of Newcastle
Dr Ann Jardine, Dr Shamus Smith & Dr Janine Delahunty, University of New South Wales

This presentation considers the aspirations and desires of both university and high school students from rural areas across New South Wales. Adopting a digital story methodology, this study worked with young people to

12:00-12:30 — Location: 210:104

School is home, home as school: Yolgu 'on country' and 'through country' place-based education from Gawa homeland

Mr Ben van Gelderen, & Mrs Kathy Guthadjaka,
Charles Darwin University

In the recent review of rural, regional and remote education, Halsey noted the old conundrum of how traditional culture, ceremonial life and western knowledge (as represented in mainstream curriculum) might be synthesised in remote, Indigenous schooling contexts. One suggestion supplied by Elders was for 'greater opportunity in the curriculum for learning about and valuing home and Homelands knowledge and life skills' (Halsey, 2018, p. 32). But what does this look like in practice? At the Warramiri Yolgu homeland of Gawa, at the northern tip of Elcho Island, a profound philosophy of education has developed to encompass this place-based, homeland priority. Community research from Gawa will be outlined to elucidate a localised Indigenous pedagogy with 'on country' (situating learning on appropriate ancestral estates) and 'through country' (focusing curriculum on land and connected knowledges) both canvassed. A practical demonstration of the philosophy in terms of adaptation of mainstream curriculum to incorporate a Warramiri 'turning' seasonal cycle will also be outlined.

PARALLEL SESSION 2

2:15-2:45 — Location: 213:104

Supporting mathematics pathways to STEM careers for regional students in high schools

Dr Lynette Vernon
National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education

Students from regional and remote backgrounds face complex, multidimensional issues when studying and attaining high grades, particularly in high-level mathematics courses to gain entry to STEM courses in university. They are more likely to encounter career counselling which focuses on enrolling students into Nursing, Education, Commerce, and Society & Culture, rather than Law, Medicine, Science, or Engineering. Consequently, the number of students studying higher-level Mathematics has declined, especially in regional WA.

The Pathways to STEM program provided mathematics support to Year 12 regional students in Western Australia, by combining technology-enabled tutorial sessions after school twice a week, with individual access to tutors to address specialised questions and intensive on-campus ATAR preparation sessions. The program provided 85 Year 12 students from 14 regional schools with ATAR Mathematics Specialist and Mathematics Methods tutoring, and 64 students attended the specialised ATAR preparation week held at the University with residential university accommodation for 30 students. For government schools participating in the Pathways to STEM program able to report a median ATAR, the median ATAR ranking increased from 66.71 in 2016 to 72.09 in 2017.

The project facilitated students' learning, encouraged the development of critical thinking skills and provided a pathway from secondary to tertiary education. Students reported improved engagement in mathematics; increased knowledge of the university campus through the firsthand experience of "university life", alongside being able to meet their tutors and build mathematical capacity during ATAR revision week. As well there was increased community interest in the project outcomes.

2:15-2:45 — Location: 213:101

Student Academic Support Services (SASS) Programs: Reach and Impact for Regional Multi Campus Victorian Students

Associate Professor Nina Fotinatos
Federation University

The Student Academic Support Services (SASS) team within the Centre for Learning, Innovation and Professional Practice (CLIPP), is a leader in the provision of unique interlinked academic programs that primarily supports

create multimodal, digital texts that explored two separate but complementary themes. Year 11 students from a selection of high schools across far west NSW were invited to create a short digital narrative that reflected upon their post-school aspirations and the types of obstacles they considered as impacting upon the realisation of these ambitions. Concurrently, university students from rural/remote communities were invited to reflect (via visual and online contributions) on the spatial and embodied shift they undertook when commencing a degree at a regional university campus.

This presentation contributes to the theme of Asset driven place-based innovations (international, national, local) in two ways. The presentation will not only foreground the specific educational contexts of 'being rural' but also, showcase an 'asset-based' approach to data collection that enables participants to be 'self-empowered social change agents through the documentation of their stories.' (Smalkoski, 2015, para 2) Utilising this participant-centred approach to data collection assisted in unpacking the cognitive, affective and embodied nature of both anticipated movements and those that had already occurred. Drawing on the work of Reay (2013), the presentation will also consider the complex nature of such 'mobility journeys' for these young people, who in interviews and blogs further reflected upon the range of shifts and sacrifices required in order to achieve personal and community goals.

12:00-12:30 — Location: 213:104

Flexibility within online education - equal or equitable?

Dr Cathy Stone
University of Newcastle

Higher education students from regional, rural and remote areas of Australia are more likely to be studying as external, online students than are their metropolitan counterparts. Indeed, a recent report demonstrates that close to 50% of university students from remote areas are enrolled in this mode (Pollard, 2018). Providing technology improvements have led to a significant growth in the availability of online learning. This provides an essential alternative for the many students who are unable to attend on-campus study, due not only to physical remoteness, but also, for many, the need for flexibility, to enable them to combine study with other responsibilities in their lives, such as work and family. However, the relationship between flexibility and equity is a complex one, with particular implications for online students. An equitable student experience will not necessarily be achieved if universities treat students 'equally' regardless of their location, background circumstances and mode of study. This paper examines the experiences of a group of Education students living in regional and rural areas of Australia, who have chosen to study online specifically because of the flexibility that they believed it would offer. Their experiences demonstrate that the concept of flexibility needs to be further examined, to ensure that online learning provides 'more than IT solutions', and can provide instead, a truly 'equitable' experience for those studying online.

12:00-12:30 — Location: 213:101

On the road with ASPIRE- widening participation outreach activities in regional NSW.

Ms Jaqui Pyke
University of New South Wales

This presentation will outline the work of the ASPIRE regional program, which works in regional NSW but is based at UNSW Sydney. From a practitioner perspective, program successes and challenges will be shared, and some results of the program's longitudinal engagement with students at partner schools will be discussed. The regional program is a key component of ASPIRE, which operates to enable access to university for all.

ASPIRE is an award-winning Widening Participation outreach program that was established in 2007 and commenced partnerships with regional and rural schools in 2010. There are currently 25 ASPIRE regional partner schools that engage in a range of activities designed to enable students to access Higher Education. ASPIRE's mission is to empower young people to access the education they deserve, regardless of their circumstances or background. The ASPIRE program aims to address the underrepresentation of some parts of our Australian society in higher education by helping students from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve their academic goals. ASPIRE does this by delivering annual in-school workshops for all students in Kindergarten to Year 12, on-campus or regionally-based events for selected students in Years 7 to 11, mentoring programs, online resources, and other tailored support.

regional higher education students in their transition into and gradually through university. The SASS programs focus on positive outcomes linked to participation through diverse activities and a range of university-wide partnerships. The SASS programs are underpinned by strong values of inclusion, social justice and growth in peer leadership with a particular focus of building employability skills for student academic leaders involved in the program initiatives. The SASS programs include the following: FedReady (FedReady Online), Mentoring, Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS), ASK (Academic Skills and Knowledge) Triage service, Writing Space, Learning Skills Advisor Support, Studiosity and Integrated CLIPP School Service Model. The SASS programs are closely aligned with Federation University school structures, library support systems and other student central services such as Student Connect.

2:15-2:45 — Location: 210:104

Rural teaching everywhere: Best practices of rural teachers around the world.

Dr Robert Mitchell
University of Colorado

Rural schools exist in nearly every country on the planet. And in these rural schools, we often see some of the best teaching and learning in these (oftentimes) remote regions.

To examine the best practices of rural teaching and learning, research has been conducted in the nations of Brunei, Saudi Arabia, England, the United States and the United Arab Emirates in order to highlight the commonalities found in rural classrooms and traits found within rural teachers. Through a series of interviews and school observations, a greater understanding of the commonalities found in rural teaching has been developed. Further, efforts have been made to understand the distinctive culture that rural schools have around the world. The impact of location, religion, socio-economic levels and a myriad of other factors have been examined to provide a greater understanding of the best teaching practices used by rural teachers in five countries in North America, Europe and Asia. This study also touches upon teacher-student interactions, the role of the school within a rural community, how teachers function within multi-grade classrooms, and how educators in locations that are far from urban/suburban centres help promote a global perspective in their individual classrooms. While it is not comprehensive, the findings from this study provide insight into the ways great rural teachers help support their students and the different ways rural schools are ingrained within their local context and community.

2:45-3:15 — Location: 213:104

Schools, Universities and Industry working together: Strong partnerships supporting regional student access and participation in Higher Education

Ms Elisa McGowan
University of Western Australia

Founded on a community partnership model, Aspire UWA develops rich, ongoing relationships with schools across Western Australia to raise aspirations, build academic capacity and create meaningful opportunities for success and lifelong learning through higher education.

Corporate philanthropic support is a key factor in delivering the Aspire program in regional Western Australia. In addition to financial support, corporate engagement is a key aspect of highlighting the career opportunities available in regional areas for students that continue onto higher education. With philanthropic support from the Alcoa Foundation, Aspire UWA began working with schools in the Peel region in 2016, due to the region's particularly low university participation rates (11.3% compared to a state average of 20.7%).

In the past two years, Aspire UWA has built robust relationships with rural secondary schools in the region, evidenced by strong demand for the program, with much higher student engagement numbers than anticipated. Alcoa staff have supported the program, volunteering with Aspire in the classroom and on campus, highlighting the benefits of a degree. Peel students participating in Aspire UWA program activities in 2017 consistently reported higher awareness of the benefits of higher education (85%), a greater motivation to work harder at school (65%), and an increased motivation to attend university (79%). Key findings, lessons learnt, and the national relevance of the project will be shared, with the opportunity for participants to reflect on the adaptation of project approach and resources into other contexts.

2:45-3:15 — Location: 213:101

"Having a yarn" From one rural student to another, practical in-school programs demystifying university and enabling student progression.Ms Sam Auitaia and Ms Brittany Brown
University of Wollongong

"It's hugely important, you making those connections are really, really important in a rural environment" (Rural principal, 2017). In the Bega Valley on the east coast of Australia, 15% of people gain a University qualification as opposed to 42% in major cities. (Regional Universities Network 2017). The University of Wollongong (UOW), Outreach & Pathways unit, is very proud to be recognised as the Australian award winner for 'Programs that Enhance Learning, category of Widening Participation 2017 Australian Awards for University Teaching'. Since 2011 UOW Outreach has been working with rural communities, and in 2017 the UOW Bega regional campus received a Federal grant to extend their successful outreach model to schools in further remote locations. Gale and Parker (2015) suggest that the realisation of student aspirations requires a navigational proficiency that draws upon "map more than tour knowledge" (p. 149) for direction. The UOW Outreach model places rural schools and students at the centre of tailored, practical programs that have rural university mentors engaging with students to demystify higher education and begin mapping a pathway to future educational and career choices. Contextualising The Design and Evaluation Matrix for Outreach (DEMO) framework (Gale et al., 2010), UOW has developed a program that enables rural university students to "pay it forward". We wish to share our story of developing contextualised rural education partnerships that work with rather than for students to foster progression and access to higher education.

2:45-3:15 — Location: 210:104

Belonging in Boarding School: How interior design can increase a sense of belonging for female Aboriginal and Torres Strait students living in Western Australian boarding schools.Ms Emma Whettingsteel
Curtin University

The established premise that kin and country are essential to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing conflicts with the reality that in many remote Australian locations a secondary education is not available. This presents a dilemma for students that wish to pursue education opportunities without sacrificing identity and culture, with experiences of dislocation, loneliness, and 'not fitting in' widely identified as barriers to retention. In addition to geographic challenges, gendered experiences such as those associated with domestic responsibility, marriage, pregnancy, sport and supervision by parents or siblings often present extra obstacles for school attendance of young women (Smith, 2014; Cuervo et al., 2015). The social function of the built environment and the potential of its design to contribute positively to outcomes for occupants is well established, but so far has not been examined in this context. This presentation outlines ongoing PhD research into how interior design can be used to increase a sense of belonging for female Aboriginal and Torres Strait students in Western Australian boarding schools, using a Participant Action Research (PAR) methodology. This will include why a sense of belonging is important in the first place, what the potential role of interior design is in increasing it, and how PAR allows for student voices to be heard. It will also be made clear how findings at this local level can have wider relevance for student housing at a national and international scale.

PARALLEL SESSION 3

3:45-4:15 — Location: 213:104

'Improving the beaten track': investigating alternative pathways to increase higher education participation for mature-aged low socio-economic status students in regional and remote Australia.Dr Bronwyn Reif
University of Newcastle

This paper presents key findings and recommendations from an Australian Government Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program funded study aimed at better understanding the opportunities and

4:15-4:45 — Location: 213:104

AJIRE Journal - Historical Past, Present Context and Future OpportunitiesDr Sue Ledger
Murdoch University

This session provides participants with a collegial environment to generate future research collaboration between researchers and educators in response to issues pertaining to living, working and education in Rural, Regional and Remote contexts.

- Meet the 2019 AJIRE Editorial Team
- Introduction to the historical past and the present context
- Explore and discuss future opportunities and direction of the journal
- Develop ideas for articles and special editions

If you are interested in meeting RRR researchers and if you want to publish in the AJIRE journal this is the session for you to attend.

4:15-4:45 — Location: 213:101

The importance of highly engaged school-university partnerships in rural widening participation outreachMr Geoffrey Mitchell, Queensland Dept. of Education
Dr Nadine Zacharias, National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education

National approaches to widening participation in higher education in Australia are beginning to bear fruit with improvements in participation for several under-represented cohorts. However, participation levels for regional and remote students have remained flat in recent years.

This presentation draws on research undertaken by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education and the Queensland Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium to investigate differences in interest for university study between low SES background students in urban, rural and remote schools. The research used a mixed methods approach including quantitative analysis of student application data and qualitative interviews and focus groups with university project managers, enrolled university students, school staff, students and parents. The research found that while widening participation programs had a statistically significant impact in highly engaged schools, a confluence of factors mitigated against the success of these programs in many rural and remote locations. To enable informed and confident decision making for students from low SES backgrounds, widening participation programs need to provide regular and planned engagement with the idea of university as well as reliable sources of information about university life. The research found that in comparison to urban students, rural and remote students were less likely to have experienced sustained exposure to university experiences and reliable information sources, and were more likely to face greater financial, social and practical risks associated with the need to relocate to study which, in some cases, acted as hard barriers to participation.

4:15-4:45 — Location: 210:104

Attracting new student audiences to the agricultural industryMs Alysia Kerpert
Department of Education Western Australia

With the world's population predicted to reach nine billion by 2050 and with no Planet B, current and future generations will be faced with problem-solving many issues around food production and supply. We can survive without a lot of things in our daily life, but not without food! It is vital that as educators we use natural opportunities to integrate food and fibre themes in the delivery of Western Australian Curriculum across learning areas to promote this importance. In addition, adequately preparing students for future careers relies on looking at growth industries, and currently, there is unprecedented demand for graduates in agriculture and food industries. The problem is there is a massive perception problem of what the industry involves, and teachers play a crucial role in identifying "touch points" where exploration of careers in agriculture should be encouraged and accurately guided.

challenges for participation in higher education for mature-aged people from low socio-economic backgrounds living in regional and remote areas of Australia. It also explores the place of low stakes, open access tertiary preparation programs for mature-aged people from regional and remote communities when entering higher education.

Over the past 25 years in Australia, there has been little increase in the number of students from low socio-economic regional and remote areas who participate in higher education. Although 41% of all university enrolments in Australia are mature-aged, a persistent gap remains in the number of low socio-economic background mature-aged students from regional and remote areas participating in higher education showing a decreasing trend with increasing remoteness (Halsey, 2018). This project was a consortium between three Australian universities with a strong regional and remote focus on providing access to higher education. Using a mixed methods research design it explored (i) factors contributing to the persistent gap in participation rates for these students and (ii) the place of low stakes, open access tertiary preparation programs for mature-aged people from regional and remote communities when entering higher education. Mature-aged people, key stakeholders and current university students from regional and remote backgrounds articulated their higher education access needs to establish an evidence-based set of principles for equity of access to higher education for adults in regional and remote areas.

3:45-4:15 — Location: 213:101

Demystifying Higher Education for LSES regional schools through an engagement framework partnership - a practical approachMr John McDonald
La Trobe University

Operational since 2010 and featuring in the recent NCE SHE "Seven Years of HEPPP" the La Trobe University's School Partnerships has built strong relationships with schools in a genuine model of engagement. The program currently engages with 35 identified schools in disadvantaged areas of Victoria including 22 regional schools. These regional schools are diverse and require different approaches to meet their needs and enter a genuine partnership of collaborative engagement. This session will showcase our practical, hands-on approach to inform aspirations and demystify Higher Education utilising a sequential engagement framework with each partner school. Working closely with senior management within the schools initially then cascading down to practical collaboration with staff across the school has proven to be effective and impactful. An Activity Plan for the year is developed to provide value-add touchpoints from Year 7 through to Year 12. The session will reference some of the issues faced by regional students in connecting with HE and understanding its value. In addition, the session will identify the success criteria required to ensure effective School-University partnerships. These include Critical to the success is to have the touch points integrated into the school curriculum with pre and post touch point engagement by the school.

3:45-4:15 — Location: 210:104

Nowanup Bush University: Idea for a breathing space.Professor Simon Forrest, Associate Professor Khoa Do, Ms Emma Whettingsteel, and Mr James Russell
Curtin University

The Nowanup Bush University is an innovative learning concept that combines education with Indigenous culture and history and importantly is a concept conceived by Aboriginal people. The aspiration of Bush University aligns with a transformational education that is non-linear, student experience centred approach and principled by Place Pedagogy.

The higher education sector is continually seeking diversity of equity in scholarship in order to shift from traditional hierarchies towards experience-based learning with real-world stakeholders. In partnership with Curtin University, Noanagar community, Gondwana Link and Greening Australia an ideas competition was held for architecture students to provide creative envisioning and ideation for the project and test this Place Pedagogy model of learning first-hand. The winning team will present their design proposal, Breathing Space, outlining what a breathing space is, how Nowanup already is a place that breathes, and what the role of architecture is in further facilitating this in an education context. The team will also discuss their design research process, how it has been influenced by broader trends in education, and reflect on how ideas raised through the competition will implicate the future of university learning at a local and international scale.

Symposium Session

Future Focused Regional, Rural, Remote Strategy

The Government announced on 13 November 2018 that it is proposing to develop a National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy. To build on the Government's response to the Halsey Review, Minister Tehan is establishing an Expert Regional Education Advisory Group to drive the strategy and advise Government on the ongoing education and training needs of regional communities.

The Expert Advisory Group, to be chaired by the Hon Denis Napthine, will also prepare a *National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Report* to Government on priority recommendations for action, including advice on the merits of establishing a Rural Education Commissioner to oversee implementation of the strategy. The Expert Advisory Group will work with a Department based secretariat to ensure community engagement in the development of the Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy.

Details of the consultation process of the Expert Advisory Group will be provided in the near future and the Minister encourages us to put forward ideas on issues impacting education in regional Australia, and most importantly what strategies we could collectively develop across the Commonwealth and in partnership with States and Territories to make a lasting and real difference for regional, rural and remote communities.

Professor John Halsey (IRRRRE), Phil Brown (CEP), Sue Ledger (SPERA) and Sue Trinidad (NCSEHE) will jointly be preparing a communique based on the discussions gathered from the collective wisdom of those participating in the symposium held at the 2018 SPERA Conference. This communique is an important step forward on where we feel we need to go next in providing a more equitable education in our regions given the Minister's announcement. This communique will contribute to a collective response to the regional, rural and remote education strategy as a major outcome from the 2018 SPERA conference.

The Symposium will be led by:

Emeritus Professor John Halsey (IRRRRE)



Mr Phil Brown (CEP)



Dr Sue Ledger (SPERA)



Professor Sue Trinidad (NCSEHE)

www.spera.asn.au



About SPERA

The Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA) consists of people who share a common concern and commitment to the maintenance and development of appropriate educational opportunities for rural communities in Australia.

SPERA began in 1983 and has members in all Australian states and territories. The society holds an annual conference each year and produces Australian and International Journal of Rural Education for its members.

SPERA has as its goals the advancement of education opportunities in rural Australia by:

- serving as a national advocate for rural education
- promoting delivery systems that bring about efficient and effective learning
- collating and disseminating information on the provision of education in rural Australia.

Mission

SPERA links people with a diverse range of interests in education and training to promote the development of rural Australia by:

- advocating for and supporting the provision of quality education and training in rural contexts
- promoting a positive view of education in rural areas and encouraging innovation and initiative in the provision of rural education services
- providing a forum for the sharing of concerns, issues and experiences relating to education and training in rural areas
- collaborating with universities to support the recruitment and retention of educators for careers in rural education contexts.

Goals

SPERA advances the education and training opportunities for all people in rural Australia by:

- promoting state and regional delivery systems which bring about efficient and effective education and training for people in rural areas
- encouraging both the collection and sharing of relevant information on the provision of education and training in rural areas
- conducting an annual national conference to exchange ideas and information about education and training in rural education
- servicing as a national advocate representing rural education and training
- sponsoring the annual Australian Rural Education Award.

Membership

Your 2018 conference fee has given you automatic SPERA membership for the 2019 calendar year. SPERA members are people interested in education and training in rural Australia. They come from early childhood settings, schools, colleges, TAFE's and universities, parent, community groups and education and training authorities. The diverse membership is one of the society's strengths.

As members you receive:

- access to the online Australian and International Journal of Rural Education (AIJRE), which disseminates and promotes innovative ideas, actions, programs and policies in rural education and training
- opportunities to contribute to rural education networks
- opportunities to provide input into policy and policy advice at a national level
- opportunities to participate in the annual SPERA conference on rural education and training
- discounted 2019 conference attendance rates.

In joining SPERA, members support and encourage rural communities and educators to work towards the development of quality education and training in rural areas in Australia.

With thanks to our sponsors

Thank you for attending the 34th National SPERA Conference, we hope you enjoy it. The continued success of SPERA conferences relies heavily on the generous support of our sponsors.

This year we are proud to be supported by:

- National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education
- Aspire, University of Western Australia
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