

EDITORIAL

On behalf of the editorial team I should like to welcome our readers to the first issue in 2009 of *Education in Rural Australia*. As a team we are looking forward to our work with this journal, keeping you informed of the most recent research in rural education. We also wish to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of Will Letts and Tracey Simpson from Charles Sturt University, who set an extremely high standard in their editorial work.

The importance of this journal in promoting rural education in Australia cannot be overstated. By providing a forum to showcase quality research being undertaken to improve the educational outcomes for students of all ages in rural and regional Australia, this journal actively contributes to overcoming the deficit viewpoint of living and working outside metropolitan areas.

In this first issue, three of the feature articles discuss the role of technologies in providing educational opportunities for rural and regional students, while the fourth article comments on the provision of summer school classes in Law and Statistics for both local and metropolitan based students on a regional university campus.

Anne-Louise Lonie and Trish Andrews, from the University of Queensland, explored the use of virtual classroom technology in providing a rich learning environment for students in remote geographic locations. By specifically examining the capacity of this technology to provide a collaborative, interactive and synchronous learning environment, they found that, provided the course coordinator is prepared for the challenges of a virtual classroom, a rich learning experience can be provided.

In our second feature article, Nina Evans and Janet Sawyer, from the University of South Australia, investigated the use of Internet and e-commerce usage by small businesses in the Whyalla region of South Australia. Finding that few of the surveyed businesses made optimal use of the Internet, the authors suggested that opportunities exist for metropolitan-based computer and information science students to work with both the regional campus and small businesses to optimise the use of the Internet for commercial purposes.

Also in South Australia, Bronwyn Ellis and Janet Sawyer from the Centre for Rural Health and Community Development at the University of South Australia evaluated the effectiveness of summer school programs at a regional campus, for both local and metropolitan-based students. While acknowledging that summer schools are an established part of university teaching programmes, the authors commented that the effectiveness of regional summer programmes had never been formally evaluated. From their investigation Bronwyn and Nina concluded that students viewed their learning experiences in a positive manner and suggested that this type of research be extended to other summer school locations.

In our final article, Calvin Taylor, from Monash University, researched the communication challenges faced by young people using mobile technologies in a rural location. Among his findings were that the young people he interviewed had chosen their preferred "provider" due to practical demands of their location and cost considerations. He also commented that mobile phones are seen by this group of

young people as being important for maintaining social contact among their network of friends. Calvin concludes by suggesting that in considering the educational potential of using mobile technologies, constraints in their use should be recognised.