

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second 2010 issue of *Education in Rural Australia*. The articles published in this issue discuss a range of investigations relating to different levels of education in rural Australia. Rural disadvantage is the topic of the first article by Janice Franklin from Charles Sturt University, who tests the validity of this construct through a study of a school, which appears to satisfy all the measures of social and economic disadvantage. The focus of her study was the school's "transition to employment and further education program". Using document analysis, staff and Year 11 student interviews, she identified a disconnect between program intent and student opinion about its impact on the choice to complete Year 12 or other further education and employment options. The article sets the challenge for future research to attend to the connection between reality and rhetoric in rural educational opportunities.

In the second article Bronwyn Ellis, Julie Watkinson and Janet Sawyer, from the Centre for Rural Health and Community Development at the University of South Australia, discuss the final stage of a longitudinal research project, which investigated the impact of a new university presence in a South Australian regional city. In particular, they focus on the individual stories of three students who were members of the first student cohort when the project commenced. In bringing their article to a conclusion, the authors indicate that the final stage of this study confirmed findings from the project's earlier stages, particularly in terms of contributing to the region's employment needs, and assisting in the retention of current and potential professionals.

An investigation into building mathematics and science capacity in a New South Wales' (NSW) rural non-government school system is the subject of this issue's third article. The study by Vince Connor, Billinda Auld, Patricia Eakin, Kerry Morris and Michael Tilston from the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Bathurst, NSW, was motivated by concern for student participation and achievement rates in senior mathematics and science. The paper discusses action research undertaken by four teacher leaders, from four different schools, who formed a taskforce to address the rate of participation and achievement levels in maths and science in their respective schools. In essence, their study found that, while there had been improvements in collegiality, confidence and motivation of staff in addressing their concerns, more work is required to achieve significant improvements.

In the fourth article Fiona McLean and Roselyn Dixon, from the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, discuss the experiences of four teachers in two NSW rural isolated schools, who teach students with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). They report that the teacher participants, who they interviewed, had limited access to support, experienced high levels of stress and that as graduate teachers, they felt underprepared for teaching students with ODD. The authors frame five recommendations designed to overcome the challenges identified by the teachers who were interviewed.

The final article in this issue, by Tania Broadley from Curtin University, is focussed on rural teacher access to ICT professional learning. Using analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, the author presents a thorough account of principal and teacher perceptions about access to professional development and

professional learning communities in rural schools. Her data showed that principals and teachers preferred a blended approach of face-to-face and online professional development, rather than using ICT in isolation.

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