

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second issue of the *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education* for 2012. In this issue we present nine papers from national and international authors. The importance of rural and remote issues in the school sector, the university sector, professional practice and community are raised by a wide range of esteemed authors.

Lauren Balcastro and Helen Boon from James Cook University discuss results from their research into student perceptions of standardised testing. Data were collected one week prior to and one week after the NAPLAN testing in 2011, in order to offer a greater understanding of how students think about these high stakes tests, and how motivational goals influence their participation. The paper discusses implications for all students, including a focus on rural areas.

In the second paper, Terry Lyons and Frances Quinn from the University of New England report findings from an Australian survey of large sample of Year 10 students. The quality of science education in rural and remote areas is questioned and implications for policy and research are discussed.

In *The effectiveness of a university mentoring project in peri-rural Australia*, Aaron Drummond, John Halsey, Mike Lawson and Marja van Breda explore a youth mentoring project. The paper presents preliminary data to increase the possibility of developing interest in year nine students attending university after high school graduation.

A project to develop and track design thinking skills in late primary and early secondary students is presented in a paper by Neil Anderson from James Cook University. The paper explains how this research aims to develop a model for design thinking in school based education in order to foster students' creative skills.

In the fifth paper, Shirley Richards from the University of the Sunshine Coast provides a model of a rural practicum for pre-service teachers. The *Coast to Country* initiative provides a five day "try before you buy" experience where pre-service teachers are better informed about working and living in rural communities.

The impact of loneliness on school leaders working in remote schools is considered by Graeme Lock, Fiona Budgen, Grace Oakley and Ralph Lunay in our sixth paper. After providing a brief overview of the research, this paper presents three broad themes within which the issue of loneliness were identified from research conducted with eight principals working in remote schools. A set of five recommendations are further presented for consideration in order to alleviate some issues encountered by their research participants.

Susan Robinson from University of South Australia poses some creative ways in which small university campuses in rural areas might engage with local communities. The seventh paper on *Freedom, aspiration and informed choice in rural higher education* argues that rural campuses need to demonstrate critical self-awareness as they model higher education and its benefits to local populations, including low SES students.

The next paper, authored by Paula Jervis-Tracey, Lesley Chenoweth, Donna McAuliffe, Barrie O'Connor and Daniela Stehlik explores the management of tensions in work-life balances for professionals working in rural and remote communities. This paper delivers findings from a large study of 900 professionals that provides valuable insights into practitioners' views about their roles, preparation for roles, tensions in juggling work and community and strategies employed to address these.

Finally, Myron Eighmy and Thomas Hall from North Dakota University provide insights into the *Role of the Extension Service in Rural/Frontier Disasters*. After discussing the study's background and research method the paper delivers some recommendations to ensure community members involved in natural disaster response are better prepared.