

EDITORIAL

The second issue of the Australian and International Journal of Rural Education for 2013 commences with an article written by Jillian Marchant from James Cook University. She initially discusses the demise of social networks in rural communities, and acknowledges the impact of globalisation on these networks. Jillian's premise is that literacy education can result in positive outcomes in terms of self-realisation and social achievement, and she suggests how future research from adult rural literacy students might benefit individuals and community networks.

The impact of the presence of higher education facilities in regional towns is explored by Aaron Drummond, Matthew Palmer and John Halsey, all of whom are from Flinders University. Researching metropolitan undergraduate students, the authors discovered a willingness to live in regional towns if a university campus is readily accessible. They suggest that the presence of a university infers a higher quality of life, which might be considered in policies to retain people in regional areas.

In our third article, Natalie Downs from the University of Canberra discusses distance education for primary school students. Natalie focusses on the role of parent supervisors of students who live in New South Wales. Using semi-structured interviews, she provides details of parent supervisors' tasks, including the challenges they encounter.

Sue Trinidad and her colleagues from Western Australia continue to provide us with the most recent information on their research into teacher attraction and retention in rural, regional and remote schools. Gathering data from pre-service and graduate teachers on regional resilience, the researchers discuss the impact of positive attitudes to regional Western Australia on their participation in a regional practicum. They conclude by emphasising the desirability of pre-service teachers having positive non-metropolitan experiences early in their courses.

Rural networks receive attention from the University of New England's Janice Franklin. Commenting that the networks between rural places have been weakened by social and physical disconnections, Janice argues the importance of realigning and interconnecting such networks. She emphasises the need to develop a critical rural education paradigm and the necessity of political commitment to build effective networks.

Robyn Henderson and Karen Noble from the University of Southern Queensland discuss their project concerning first year teacher education students in a regional university. Robyn and Karen use critical discourse analysis to describe and analyse data obtained from a small group of such students about their transition to university. Their data suggest the desirability of providing both social and academic support in assisting pre-service teachers who feel dislocated as the result of commencing university studies.

Set against a background of falling participation levels in Mathematics and Physical Sciences in Australian schools, and lower levels of both mathematical and scientific literacy among students in rural and remote school, Sue Wilson (Australian Catholic University), Terry Lyons and Frances Quin (both from the University of New England) report on responses to of first year science, technology, engineering and mathematics students attending Australian universities to two questions concerned with their intention to complete their course, and, whether and if so why they had considered withdrawing from their course. While nearly 20% of the rural respondents had considered withdrawing from their course, at the end of first year the rural students were neither more nor less likely than their peers, from more highly populated towns and cities, to consider withdrawing from their course. The authors suggest two areas that require further investigation: factors that have a positive impact on rural and remote student intent and achievement in mathematics and science, and the influence on remote students' decisions to study science in senior school and post-school institutions.

Philip Roberts, from the University of Canberra, interviewed both newly appointed and experienced rural teachers, together with experts who had systemic responsibilities or quality education experience. Data analysis revealed two viewpoints: rural schools are different, with implications for

teacher awareness of this phenomenon, and that all schools are the same. Philip concludes that place awareness, as evidenced in the first group identified above, results in teachers being better placed to meet student educational requirements and self-professional goals.

In our final article, educating for sustainable rural futures is discussed by Pam Bartholomaeus from Flinders University. She comments on the limited opportunities for rural students to relate their own experiences to their learning, together with gaps in their background knowledge, which impact on their learning opportunities. Pam argues the case for place-based learning, and illustrates how such an approach can both promote learning and provide benefits for the wider community.