

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first issue of the *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, formerly *Education in Rural Australia*. The executive of SPERA regarded the name change as desirable to reflect the growing international backgrounds of the papers being accepted for publication.

In our first article, Colin Boylan (a life member of SPERA) traces the history of this organisation since its foundation in 1985. Colin describes the contributions of key individuals, together with the establishment of an annual conference and this journal (the only journal in Australia specifically concerned with rural education).

Louise Bostock and Helen Boon discuss the results of their research, which involved pre-service teachers' confidence regarding English literacy. Using a survey instrument the paper is built around pre-service teachers' responses to questions about their confidence in relation to their personal literacy, as well as the teaching and assessment of literacy. Data were also gathered about how opportunities were provided about literacy development in their Bachelor of Education courses.

In our third article, Sue Trinidad and her colleagues, report on initial findings from their ALTC research grant that explored issues around attracting and retaining teachers in non-metropolitan Western Australian schools. Their paper is followed by one from Josephine Ryan, Melitta Jones and Caroline Walta, who examine strategies to improve the management of rural teaching practice. They also provide commentary on pre-service teacher perceptions about the support they receive from universities.

In our fifth article, Joy Penman and Mary Oliver discuss the Research Ready Program initiative in Whyalla, South Australia. The researchers investigate the impact of this program in their discussion about the responses from teachers and university academic staff members about the program.

Tania Broadley investigates the equitable access to professional development for teachers within the context of three initiatives: the Digital Education Revolution, the Australian Curriculum and the National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching. From her findings, Tania proposes that professional development and accessibility should be reconsidered.

Our final article, from Milena Barbagallo and Helen Boon, discusses the data gathered on young people's perceptions about Sexuality and Relationships Education. Participants from State, Catholic and Independent schools located in a regional Queensland city, anonymously completed a survey. The results showed that, while respondents suggested that the program was appropriate, a majority considered improvements are required. The authors recommend that, with the

implementation of the National Curriculum, an opportunity exists to improve the content and delivery of Sexuality and Relationships Education.