



# Rural and Remote Education Strategy

(2021–2024)

Every student, every school, everywhere

# Minister's foreword

I was born and raised in regional NSW, educated in regional NSW, and now as a mother of two daughters being educated in Gunnedah where we live, I am extremely passionate about education in our regional, rural and remote communities.

In particular, I want to make sure we do everything we can to close the educational divide between rural students and their metropolitan counterparts.

It is no secret that students in rural and remote parts of the state don't have the same success stories in education when compared to their city peers, and, despite many inroads being made as a result of the *Rural and Remote Education – a blueprint for action 2013* paper, it is clear there is still more to be done. As Minister, I know we have to be stronger and more courageous in our approach to lifting outcomes and aspirations for our country kids.

This *Rural and Remote Education Strategy* has been developed as a result of extensive consultation with parents, teachers, principals, school communities and education experts from right across the State, and it identifies a number of areas for further support and attention.

When I think about a successful education system for students in rural and remote NSW, I think about cohorts of students who have transitioned well from early childhood education to school, have had an enriched, inclusive and stimulating experience throughout their time in primary and high school, have not felt restricted in any way when choosing extra-curricular activities and who have been supported and inspired to pursue a career in whichever field they choose to after finishing school. I want the quality of rural and remote education to be a key driver for families to move to regional NSW, and not for it to be a deterrent.

I want to lift outcomes in our rural and remote schools to help bring NSW to the top of the list of internationally acclaimed education systems.

I want to make sure every child can learn to the best of their ability whilst at school - no matter where they are from or what their background is. No child should miss out on any opportunity because of where they live.

Outlined in this Strategy are priority areas which will shape the way rural and remote education policies are developed and implemented from 2021 onwards. This Strategy will act as a framework or guide for schools - a Strategy for our school leaders to refer back to when making important decisions and which will support them in their everyday work.

We will continue to build on our already unprecedented investment in regional education. We are proud of the progress we have made in this space so far, including a record spend in infrastructure, a huge upgrade of the technology our rural and remote students are using, the significant focus we're putting on mental health and wellbeing and of course a very important revamp of the curriculum.

I sincerely thank everyone who has been involved in the development of this Strategy. This is the first step in a renewed focus on regional, rural and remote education from the NSW Government and I look forward to continuing this collaborative work well into the future.



**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell, MLC**  
Minister for Education and  
Early Childhood Learning

# Our vision

**Every child in regional NSW has access to the same quality of education as their metropolitan peers.**

We aim to achieve this by:

- improving staff recruitment, retention and planned professional learning to ensure high quality curriculum delivery
- providing regional students with more curriculum choices and learning opportunities
- supplying state-of-the-art technology to support flexible curriculum implementation
- enabling stronger partnerships with higher education providers, vocational education suppliers and local industry.

We are committed to making a difference to the lives of students in rural and remote communities. We want to build on the already great work happening in these schools with further investment of over \$1bn planned over the next three years. Bringing this planned investment and associated initiatives together in one strategy makes it clear where we are headed together and how each element supports this important work.





# The case for change



**Total enrolments of 3 year olds in preschool in regional areas has shown decline<sup>1</sup>.**



**There remains a gap in regional educational results between regional students and their metropolitan counterparts<sup>2</sup>.**



**The number of students successfully completing year 12 in major cities was 78% and 43% in very remote areas<sup>3</sup>.**



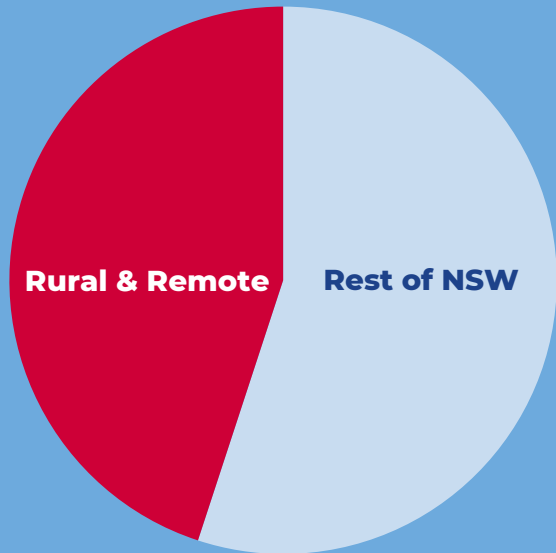
**Student attendance rates by remoteness**  
*Major cities: 92.1%*  
*Regional: 89.4%*  
*Remote/Very Remote: 83.9%<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Evaluation of the Rural and Remote Education Blueprint - Final Report, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2020, p.40

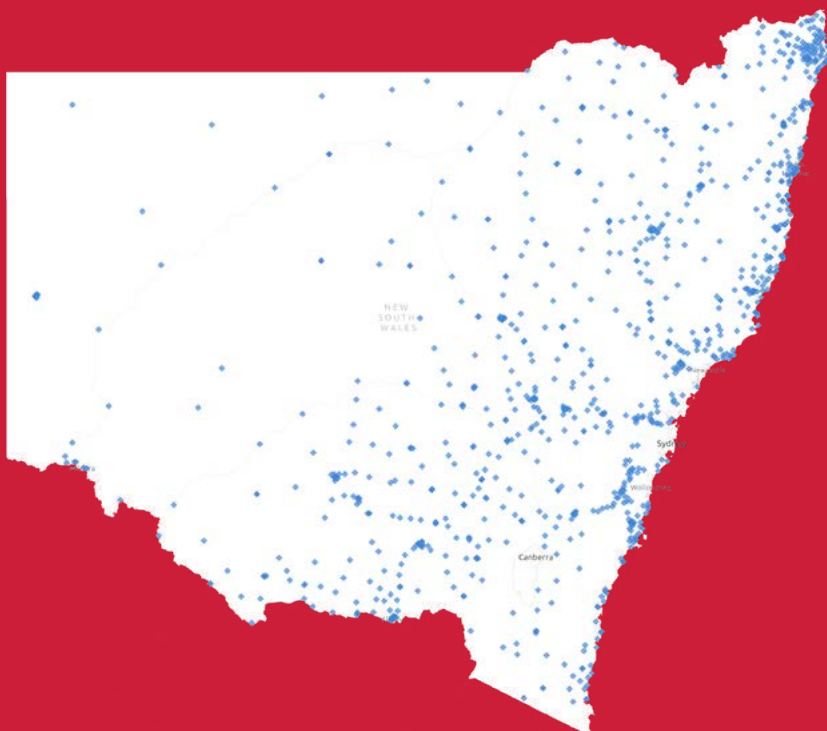
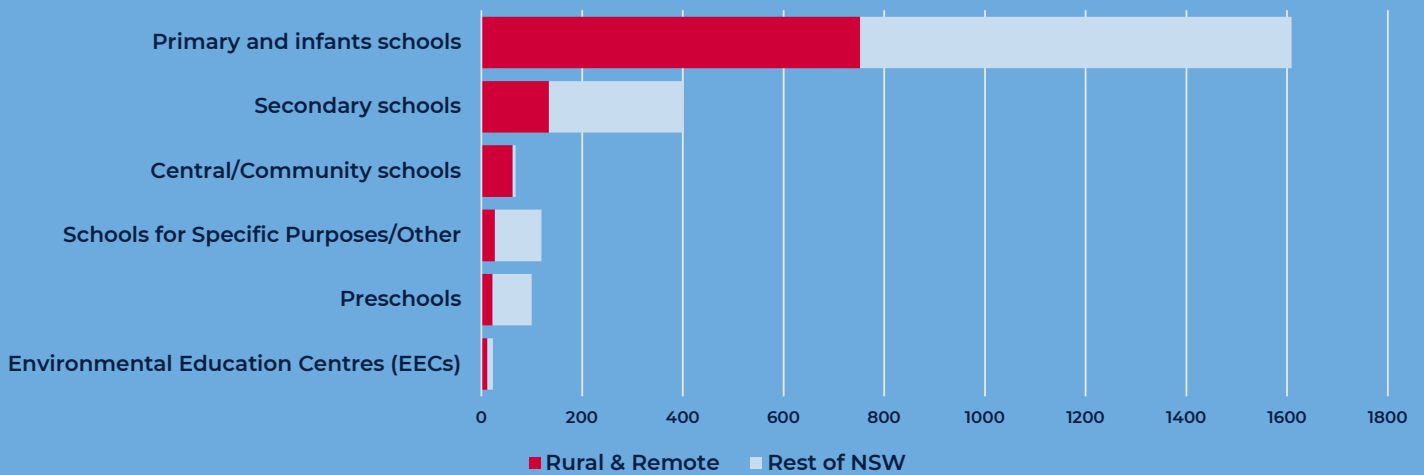
<sup>2</sup>Evaluation of the Rural and Remote Education Blueprint - Final Report, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2020, p.41

<sup>3</sup>Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education Final Report, 2018, p.15

<sup>4</sup>Government school student attendance 2018 (semester 1), Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, p.2



**43.5%**  
of all NSW  
**schools**  
are rural and remote



**This is**  
**1009**  
**schools**  
**across**  
**NSW**

\*Australian Statistical Geography Standard data

# We heard

2293

consultations

519

online surveys

Provision of technology is a matter of equity. Improved internet connections and quality of hardware for online learning.

Lack of access to support services and additional wellbeing support for students and families.

Accessible preschool education in remote and very remote communities.

Initiatives to support leaders and beginning teachers.

Learning design to support the context.

Invest and build leadership of Aboriginal staff and students.

Increased opportunities for students to be involved in local community projects that are linked to career pathways.

More exposure to university options...to make subject choices.

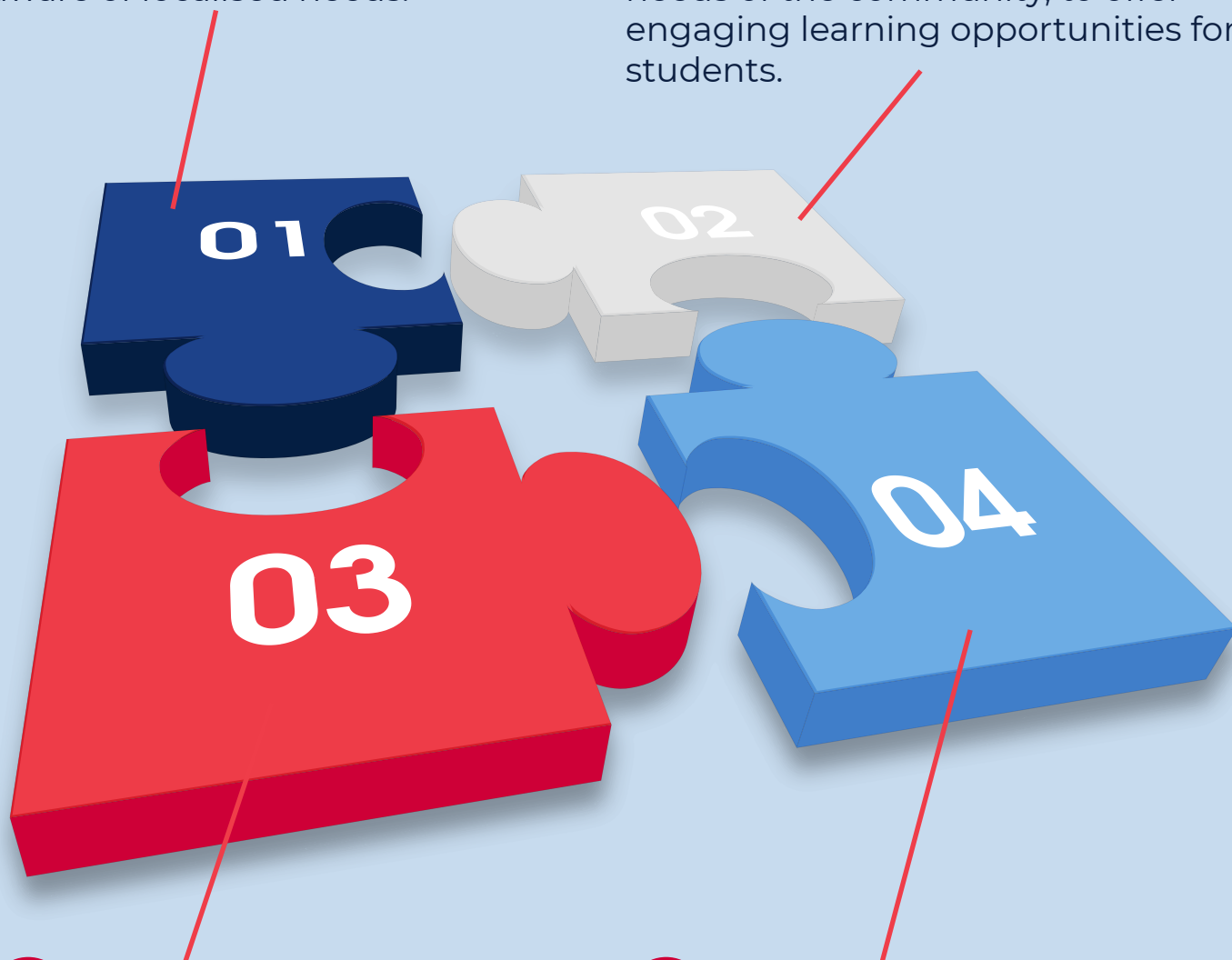
# Four key areas

## **People**

Supply students in rural and remote communities with more high quality educators who are aware of localised needs.

## **Practice**

Better equip and develop rural and remote teachers to deliver a broader curriculum, contextualised to the needs of the community, to offer engaging learning opportunities for students.



## **Participation**

Ensure staff and students in rural and remote schools are more empowered to address wellbeing needs through stronger connections with their communities.

## **Partnerships**

Leverage more productive partnerships with higher education providers, vocational education providers and local industry to increase rural and remote student achievement, ambition and access to post-school opportunities.



Key Area 1 – People

# Investing in and valuing our people

## Goal 1

Supply students in rural and remote communities with more high quality educators who are aware of localised needs.

## Aims

- 1.1 Schools in rural and remote communities have a full complement of staff with the right skills to deliver the curriculum with a demonstrable impact on student achievement.
- 1.2 Teaching graduates complete their degree with practical experience and understanding of rural and remote community needs and context, and are actively encouraged to teach in rural and remote communities.
- 1.3 Teachers in rural and remote schools have access to the right learning and development, both face-to-face and online, to develop their professional skills based on their students' needs.
- 1.4 All educators in rural and remote schools have access to suitable career progression opportunities throughout their careers.



“Leadership and staff retention issues impact our students.”

—John, Central School Principal



## What we will do

## What this means

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Expand partnerships with universities to increase the numbers of pre-service teachers undertaking their final professional experience placements in rural and remote schools.</p>   | <p>More new graduate teachers seeking employment in rural and remote schools to support the delivery of high quality teaching in those schools.</p>   |
| <p>Develop additional resources to support, induct and build understanding of rural and remote contexts for pre-service teachers.</p>  | <p>Newly appointed and pre-service teachers have a better understanding of the rural and remote context to support a more positive placement experience, and be set up for success to meet the needs of their students and communities.</p> |
| <p>Increase opportunities for experienced teachers in rural and remote schools to retrain in high demand subject areas or specialist teaching areas.</p>   | <p>Increased retention of experienced teachers in rural and remote schools, particularly in areas of workforce need.</p>  |
| <p>Increase the number of teaching placements through the Rural Experience Program to provide experienced teachers with opportunities to apply for a 'taste of rural teaching' rural posting for up to four terms.</p>   | <p>Increased number of experienced teachers from metropolitan schools making the decision to transition to working in a rural or remote setting.</p>  |
| <p>Engage with Teach for Australia to design a new entry pathway for career changers to teach in NSW public schools. The pathway will focus on high achievers and specific subject areas (Maths, Science and Technologies) and rural and remote locations.</p> | <p>A more diverse teaching workforce bringing in transferrable industry knowledge and skills to support high demand subject areas and rural and remote locations.</p>   |
| <p>Develop current and future leaders through the provision of quality induction and leadership development programs unique to the variety and complexity of rural and remote settings.</p>  | <p>Leaders in our rural and remote schools at all levels are equipped with the capabilities to lead with confidence, influence and impact.</p>  |



## Key Area 2 – Practice

# Quality teaching and learning

## Goal 2

Better equip and develop rural and remote teachers to deliver a broader curriculum, contextualised to the needs of the community, to offer engaging learning opportunities for students.

## Aims

- 2.1 Academic achievement of students in rural and remote primary and secondary schools is increased to match the rest of the NSW education system.
- 2.2 Rural and remote educators have access to the best evidence based learning, support and resources relevant to their students' and communities' needs and context.
- 2.3 Students in rural and remote schools have increased curriculum choices equivalent to students in metropolitan schools.
- 2.4 Teachers and students have awareness of opportunities and successful transition to post-school pathways through tailored careers education programs.





## What we will do

## What this means

Develop new professional learning and resources to improve the capability of rural and remote teachers in raising academic standards and meeting their students' needs.

Teachers follow the best international evidence and practice to provide contextually relevant learning and improve student learning achievement.

Develop new communities of practice for rural and remote teachers, sharing and showcasing best practice in adopting and adapting their teaching practice relevant to their community context.

Teachers and leaders share a deep understanding of best practice in their teaching methods to meet their community context in order to improve academic outcomes.

Invest in additional educational leadership roles in rural and remote geographies to enhance the support for teachers and principals, including in-school coaching by expert and experienced teachers.

Teachers and principals in rural and remote schools have greater access to and support from educational leaders and expert teachers from across NSW and beyond.

Increase the range of curriculum subject choices for students through investment in the rural and remote teaching workforce.

Students are more engaged and achieve more through the ability to access their choice of curriculum subjects.

Increased student access to quality, tailored careers education programs in rural and remote schools.

Students have an improved awareness of their career options and choices beyond school which is not limited by their location.

**“We need more subject options and teachers to teach us face-to-face.”**

**—Secondary student**





## Key Area 3 – Participation

# Enabling learners and learning

### Goal 3

Ensure staff and students in rural and remote schools are more empowered to address wellbeing needs through stronger connections with their communities.

### Aims

- 3.1 All students in rural and remote communities have access to quality preschool education in the year before school, no matter where they live or their circumstances.
- 3.2 All students in rural and remote communities have early access to and engage with wellbeing support services.
- 3.3 Aboriginal students in rural and remote communities have access to coordinated services that support their wellbeing.
- 3.4 Schools in rural and remote areas connect with students, parents, cultural and community groups to enhance their school profile and include student voice in learning and decision making.
- 3.5 Cultural awareness and Aboriginal education is an integral part of professional learning in rural and remote schools.
- 3.6 Rural and remote schools have equity of access to digital devices and networks to enable flexible delivery of the curriculum and to build digital skills in the student population and community.



**“The Aboriginal Education Consultative Group recommends mandatory cultural awareness and competency professional learning for all graduate staff and leaders.”**

—AECG



## What we will do

## What this means

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Increase capacity of wrap-around student wellbeing services to rural and remote schools through partnerships, government and non-government agencies.</p>   | <p>Student wellbeing and learning needs in rural and remote schools are met through increased access to appropriate support.</p>  |
| <p>Work with the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations NSW to deliver Aboriginal Wellbeing Coordinators in rural and remote locations to support the coordination of services for Aboriginal students and families.</p> | <p>Aboriginal students have access to wellbeing support delivered by Aboriginal community organisations working in partnerships with rural and remote schools. Students will be empowered to form better connections with their community and Aboriginal culture.</p> |
| <p>Invest in increased capacity and a public awareness campaign to encourage enrolments in early education and work with preschool providers in rural and remote communities to smooth the transition to schools.</p>        | <p>All rural and remote students have access to early childhood education to improve their emotional, cognitive and social awareness in the years before school.</p>  |
| <p>Improve resources and professional learning for leaders in rural and remote schools in how to best engage students, parents and community in decision making.</p>   | <p>Student and community voice is valued in all aspects of school decision making.</p>  |
| <p>Create the opportunity for all staff in rural and remote communities to participate in cultural awareness and Aboriginal training.</p>  | <p>School staff are aware of Aboriginal culture and embed this knowledge into their teaching and classroom practice.</p>  |
| <p>Equip all rural and remote schools with reliable and consistent technology to facilitate curriculum delivery with the support of the Rural Access Gap Direct Intervention Package.</p>                                    | <p>Rural and remote schools have access to the necessary ICT infrastructure to support full delivery of the curriculum and to meet student needs.</p>   |



## Key Area 4 – Partnerships

# Building productive partnerships

### Goal 4

Leverage more productive partnerships with higher education providers, vocational education providers and local industry to increase rural and remote student achievement, ambition and access to post-school opportunities.

### Aims

- 4.1 Rural and remote students' post-school options and ambitions are not limited due to their location.
- 4.2 Rural and remote community stakeholders and businesses are actively engaged in shaping community education and in creating vocational, career or further educational opportunities for school leavers.
- 4.3 Partnerships between schools, universities, training providers and TAFE offer a breadth of opportunities aligned with the aspirations of rural and remote students.





## What we will do

## What this means

Invest in and sustain formal educational partnerships with quality training providers to increase choices for rural and remote students.

Students are empowered to fulfil their potential and ambition irrespective of location.

Support school leaders to invest in partnerships with local and community employers, stakeholders and businesses to shape curriculum delivery in school, inform students' ambitions and understand their options from school.

Students engage with and understand the breadth of post-school options available to them within their community and feel confident in how to achieve them. Community businesses and stakeholders feel engaged in shaping and contextualising local education.

Increase capacity and access to higher and vocational education opportunities for rural and remote school leavers delivered by universities and TAFE.

Students are confident and aware of their post-school options and have access to their choice of pathway from school.



**“Community partnerships that bring local business and industry into the schools have been absolutely vital in assisting students in finishing their education, finding apprenticeships and keeping young people in their regional town.”**

**—Jennifer, Teacher**

# Future directions

**The NSW Department of Education is committed to ensuring all rural and remote students have equitable access to educational opportunities.**

We will join with education, community and professional stakeholders to ensure students' academic, social, emotional, health and wellbeing needs are at the centre of our decision making.

As a Department, we will grow our presence across Regional NSW, enabling us to better connect with communities and to employ more people in the regions. In partnership with local communities, we commit to ensuring education is relevant to every student, every school, everywhere.

Our whole systems approach means we are all responsible for improving student learning and wellbeing outcomes in our rural and remote schools.

Regular updates on the successes of the Rural and Remote Education Strategy (2021–2024) will be made available on our website.

Together, we will recognise and celebrate our student achievements as we build on the strengths of rural and remote education.



Visit our [website](#) for details about specific initiatives, regular progress updates and case studies.

Contact us on [RRREP@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:RRREP@det.nsw.edu.au)

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