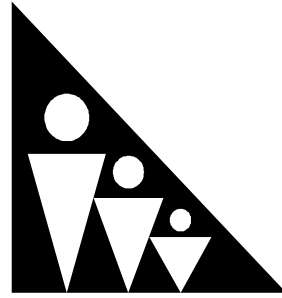


Education

Queensland



OVERCOMING EQUITY OF ACCESS AND ISOLATION

THE CONTEXT

- Primary, Secondary, Special, Distance Education provision to 465,000 students in 1307 schools
- 28,000 (6%) of school students identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 8,900 (2%) of school students have high education support needs with ascertained disabilities
- Five percent of students live in families in which a language other than English is spoken at home
- 36 District Offices provide a range of educational and administrative support services to schools
- District Directors ensure quality and accountability of schooling provision
- Differential staffing in district offices which acknowledge issues of isolation and distance
- Commitment to the provision of schooling in rural and isolated areas
 - 121 schools with enrolments of 20 or fewer
 - 87 schools with enrolments between 21 and 35
 - 235 schools with enrolments between 36 and 100
- A state wide transfer system to ensure quality staffing in all schools
- A Remote Area Incentive Scheme to recognise and remunerate teachers who work in rural and remote locations
- Subsidised teacher housing in rural and remote centres
- A Cooler Schools program to achieve internal environments in schools that are conducive to learning

SOME BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- \$114M to support key literacy and numeracy initiatives
- \$4.93M to support Vocational Education and Training in schools
- \$23.5M to support a Networked Learning Community
- \$174.3M capital program to support school growth, school renewal and schools specific purposes
- \$4.65M to support parents with students boarding at schools away from home

STRATEGIC DIRECTION OF EDUCATION QUEENSLAND

The Strategic direction of Education Queensland is being reviewed through extensive public consultation on a ten year forward plan, *Queensland State Education 2010*. Some key directions include:

- Ensuring that children achieve literacy and numeracy standards in the early years of schooling
- Providing schools with modern information technology systems
- Exploring ways in which a classroom can be located anywhere such as in the home or remote units and be accessible at all times
- Improving and expanding vocational education in schools
- Developing a comprehensive approach to support teachers to maintain and upgrade their skills and learn new skills
- Special attention to the needs of disadvantaged students

CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN STATE SCHOOLS

Within Queensland the development of curriculum is undertaken by 2 statutory authorities with implementation of the finalised syllabuses the responsibility of each jurisdiction

The Queensland School Curriculum Council develops syllabuses and coordinates approved statewide assessment of students from preschool to year 10. The Board of Senior Secondary School Studies fulfils a similar function for students in years 11 and 12.

In the development of syllabuses wide consultation is undertaken to ensure comprehensive coverage and the cultural and linguistic diversity of Queenslanders are taken account of. For example the Queensland School Curriculum Council uses a forum process to advise on particular issues that are related to curriculum and test development. Last year a forum was undertaken in special education. This year a major forum on rural and remote education was undertaken with Council members and Office staff holding forums in locations such as Longreach, Rockhampton, Mt Isa, Torres Strait Islands, Aurukun, Quilpie and Tambo.

Students in each primary school study a common curriculum adapted to local needs. Every student in years 6 and 7 studies a language other than English. Instrumental music is taught in all schools with more than 200 students, and in many smaller schools as well.

Some schools specialise in particular subjects or sports, such as instrumental music, computerised design, or gymnastics. Some offer an immersion program, in which students can take most lessons in a language other than English.

In year 9, the second year of high school, students start to choose which subjects they will study. Most students in years 11 and 12 study six subjects from the range of subjects offered by their school.

Education Queensland is currently in the process of implementing 3 major curriculum documents

- In 1998, Education Queensland distributed to all state schools the conceptual framework for preschool curriculum developed by the Queensland School Curriculum Council, the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*. By the beginning of 2001, the Guidelines will be fully implemented within the state education system
- Education Queensland has funded accredited professional development opportunities for primary principals, deputy principals and preschool teachers and the travel related expenses to one face-to-face presentation relating to the core modules.
- In addition, Education Queensland has supported schools' implementation of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* with:
 - The appointment by 35 districts in 1998 of Education Advisers (Curriculum–Preschool). In 1999, 24 districts have maintained this support;
 - Development of a resource to support schools in reflecting on their progress toward full implementation. From October 1999, the resource is available to all schools through the Centre for Teaching Excellence website.

Two syllabuses in Science and Health and Physical Education have been distributed to each state school in Semester 2 of this year. A range of support services are provided to assist schools in the implementation. \$5.052m has been provided directly to schools to

support introduction of new Years 1–10 Science and Health and Physical education syllabuses and Preschool guidelines.

Apart from the curriculum support materials, Education Queensland also developed CD ROM based self-paced training modules for teachers of Science and HPE.

Field support staff

Provision has been made for each of the 36 education districts to appoint up to four education advisers to support the implementation of a range of priority departmental initiatives in schools. Two education adviser positions in each district are allocated to support syllabus implementation and two can be deployed in areas of local need primarily to assist small schools. Decisions regarding which syllabus area will be supported, duration of education adviser is determined collectively by principals within each district. A number of districts have collaborated in providing these services and have appointed education advisers in particular learning areas to serve across more than one district.

In the post compulsory years fundamental change is occurring to senior schooling through flexible and multiple pathways. An increased focus on vocational education and training assists young people's transition from school to work and supports the provision of a range of options which accommodate the interests and abilities of all students.

There is a range of other VET-related activities, which are integral to the successful VET in Schools programs. These include structured workplace learning, vocational learning (often instituted in Years 9 and 10 as a preparation for accredited VET in Years 9 and 10 and linked with career education), and enterprise education. To be successful VET in schools should be part of a broad general education and provide a firm basis for lifelong learning.

Key VET-related pathways for post-compulsory school students supported by Education Queensland are:

- School-based apprenticeships and traineeships,
- Board-developed courses such as Study Area Specifications (SAS) which have VET qualifications embedded in them,
- Non-Board developed courses such as Training Products and Packages.

The school-based apprenticeships and traineeships program, which allows a full-time student to access, recognised training while engaging in paid work as a trainee or an apprentice. Typically students attend school 4 days a week and attend on or off the job training on the 5th day. Generally speaking, at the end of Year 12 they will have acquitted traineeship or partially completed an apprenticeship. Currently there are about 2000 apprentices or trainees across the three schooling sectors with the most popular industry areas being: Engineering, Hospitality, Business, and Retail.

Many students access VET through Board-developed courses. Five Board subjects, eg Technology Studies and Hospitality Studies and ten study area specifications eg Tourism, marine and aquatic practices, land and animal systems, English communication and Trade and Business mathematics have been developed with partial or complete qualifications from National Training Packages embedded in them. Schools can also offer the VET component of these courses as a stand-alone product which means students can acquit certain stand-alone Training Products while registered through BSSSS for an SAS.

Some schools offer non-Board-developed VET in the form of training products selected from the National Training Packages that are not currently part of SASs. Training Products

are also developed across a number of Packages. For example Education Queensland has developed three training products in Work Education to improve work readiness, literacy and numeracy and other generic work skills. Schools can register through the Board to deliver these Training Products.

Education is leading a national project which aims to develop best practice models across states. The outcomes of this project will be documented by April 2000.

In an attempt to address issues for rural and remote schools the following strategies are being implemented:

- Introducing vertical timetables in P-10 schools with students in the 8,9,10 years of schooling, in order to form a critical mass of students.
- Introducing enterprise education linked to structured work placements.
- Developing partnerships with local industry/employers in order to develop networks of support for all partners.
- Link with other government departments and agencies such as the Dept of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, the Office of Rural Communities and the Dept of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development to develop networks of support and access to information for all stakeholders eg Education Qld is working with other government departments and agencies in an attempt to streamline the flow of information into schools and to work more closely with other government agencies to provide data that may reduce the amount of time schools are involved in the collection of data for outside agencies.
- Recognise the importance of Information Technology in the delivery of VET and are in the infancy stage of introducing programs in this way to students and the wider community.

As mentioned earlier Education Queensland has a number of key priorities including Literacy and Numeracy, VET in schools, new technologies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education which will be detailed by the following speakers.

With regard to Literacy and Numeracy Education Queensland has allocated some \$114M to support key initiative in state schools

Standards are monitored through statewide literacy and numeracy assessment programs in years 3, 5 and 7

Significant initiatives that assist in the achievement of these outcomes include the

- Year 2 Diagnostic Net
- Reading Recovery,
- Support a Reader, Support a Writer and Support a Maths Learner: Number programs
- Employment of specialist support teachers: learning difficulties
- Employment of teacher aides to provide additional literacy and numeracy support

These programs are accessible to rural and remote schools. For example, in 1998 the Reading Recovery¹ program was operating in 28% of schools across Queensland. Of this

¹ Reading Recovery is an early intervention program that provides intensive, individual help to those students (aged 6.0 to 7.2) identified as the lowest literacy achievers in their school after one year of formal schooling.

number (299 schools), 111 or 38% of schools were in predominantly rural and remote communities.²

CURRICULUM SUPPORT

The use of technology to support curriculum, teaching and learning.

EQ has the largest Wide Area Network in Southern Hemisphere (Ed Net), all schools are connected to Intranet/Internet either via broadband cable or satellite at 64K or 128K bandwidth depending on school size (Total expenditure to establish and maintain in excess of \$39M to date).

EQ is supporting the rollout of school Local Area Networks with schools in rural and remote areas receiving priority treatment. (Total expenditure to date is in excess of \$32M).

EQ has provided considerable funding to all schools through *Schooling 2001* initiative to reduce student/computer ratios and to provide opportunities for all teachers to upskill to a minimum level of competence. Total funds to schools to date to support these activities exceed \$83M).

Rural and remote communities have benefited from flow-on effects of receiving access to digital exchanges ahead of Telstra scheduling. Telecommunications infrastructure into private residences is still variable in some isolated parts of the state, as is continuous mains power supply

Our Challenges

Providing user-friendly access to relevant digitised curriculum resources for all teachers, students and parents using the technology

Using the technology to deliver training solutions to all teachers, especially those in rural

and remote schools including the creation of distance free virtual learning communities

Using the technology to provide students studying in rural and remote schools with access to a broader range of subject offerings and the opportunity to form learning groups with other students with similar interests.

Providing higher level training for teachers to fully utilise the technology

Using the technology to deliver into the homes of students unable to regularly attend a state schools appropriate "real time" teaching and learning episodes.

Our Response

EQ responses to these challenges include:

- Re-focussing of EQ's Open Access Unit to become the primary purchaser, developer, and provider of access solutions to digital resources;
- The development of a Digital Resource Centre at a cost of approx \$0.5M sitting on EQ's own Curriculum Intranet which will allow "free" access to resources for all teachers and students across the State;
- Introduction from the beginning of 2000, of a virtual schooling service to expand the "subject choice" of students studying in rural and remote areas (22 schools across 17

² Includes the districts of Bundaberg, Cairns, Cape and Gulf, Chinchilla, Darling Downs, Emerald, Gladstone, Isis Burnett, Longreach, Mackay Hinterland, Mt Isa, Rockhampton, Roma, South Burnett, Torres Strait, Townsville North and West and Warwick.

districts/the vast majority of schools in rural and remote areas/ approx cost of pilot will exceed \$0.5 M;

- The planned establishment of a virtual campus for teachers and leaders providing access to information about learning and development which builds on the current Centre for Leadership and Centre for Teaching Excellence Professional Development and Training database;
- The continued provision of ACOT practicums for rural and remote teachers (approx cost \$0.15M);
- The expansion of the Charleville telephone teaching trial to, in partnership with Telstra, explore delivery options for students studying from home bases (approx cost \$0.35M); and
- A significant review of distance ed provision to ensure that the service can meet the challenges provided with the introduction of new outcomes-based syllabus documents and the advances in technology.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS STUDYING VIA DISTANCE EDUCATION

Over 6000 students study via distance education mode. The Open Access Unit develops materials covering all KLAs from Yrs 1-12 with in excess of \$2M spent annually revising existing materials and developing new materials. The materials are written in serial unit format with students and “home tutors” as their audience. Materials are usually paper-based and are supported by video and audio-tapes. Rewrites of existing materials are planned to occur on a cyclic basis. The current time taken to revise Year level syllabus materials depending on KLA is anywhere from 1-3 years

- There are seven schools of distance educations who use the materials as the basis for the curriculum offered to their students
- Teachers at these schools augment student’s learning with limited lesson provision through HF radio and/or telephone
- In the primary years, home tutors represent the key teaching figure

Our Challenges

To develop in a timely fashion, new materials to support the introduction of new QSCC syllabuses (This is even more of a challenge given integrated nature of primary materials). Updating of paper-based materials is problematic given that small changes can mean the need for entire reprints or the addition of significant supplementary materials. Making distance education materials available to support school-based teachers especially beginning teachers in rural and remote areas. The effectiveness of student-teacher interaction due to the variable quality of HF Radio technology. The real problems surrounding the use of online technology for distance ed into home in rural and remote areas including issues of access to hardware and infrastructure, bandwidth, cost and reliability.

Our Response

EQ responses to these challenges include:

- New processes are currently being introduced and resources injected to reduce the time taken for the Open Access Unit to finalise planned distance education materials re-writes;
- A significant review of distance ed provision to ensure that the service can meet the challenges provided with the introduction of new outcomes-based syllabus documents and the advances in technology;
- The provision of a digital version of all *new* distance education materials to all teachers via the Digital Resource Centre (DRC);

- A beginning to the process of digitising *existing* distance education materials to sit within the DRC;
- Trialling of the use of new on-line technologies for delivering “real time teaching” into home locations as a component to Wave 2 of the Virtual Schooling Service pilot;
- Working at a national level to overcome issues of Bandwidth, cost and on-line content duplication; and
- The expansion of the Charleville telephone teaching trial (0.4M) to, in partnership with Telstra, explore delivery options for students studying from home bases.

STUDENTS AT RISK

Risk is deemed to exist where students’ experience of schooling makes them vulnerable to not completing twelve years of schooling or its equivalent, or may not achieve the essential learnings of the knowledge and skills to participate in employment and as active citizens.

Because risk can occur at any stage of a student’s education, principals and teachers at all levels of education should be alert to the learning needs of students at educational risk.

Risk doesn’t just arise at the end of schooling, but involves factors, which require proactive and responsive service delivery all the way through schooling. Where educational service delivery is not yet appropriately adjusted to the needs of particular groups and communities, these factors may constitute risk:

- Low socio-economic circumstances
- Rurality or remoteness
- Non English speaking background
- English as Second Language
- Pregnancy
- Combinations of the above factors.

The impact of any mismatch between educational services and community need may be exacerbated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and for some groups of boys.

Education Queensland is committed to providing proactive and responsive support services which aim to increase the access and equity of educational outcomes for students identified as ‘at risk’ and who reside in rural and remote communities.

Coordination of Special Needs Funds

The department is responsible for coordinating approximately \$34.7m in special needs funds. These funds assist schools to provide additional support to students identified as ‘at-risk’ in areas of curriculum implementation; teaching/learning processes; purchasing materials and equipment; employing personnel; and staff professional development and training.

Programs include:

PCAP - Priority Country Area Program

Total EQ Budget	Number of Students (Rural/Remote)	Rural and Remote Expenditure
\$3.5	30,000	\$3.5m

LESPSS - Literacy Enhancement For Special Program Schools Scheme;

Total EQ Budget	Number of Schools (PCAP criteria)	Rural and Remote Expenditure
\$11.4m	1999 - 87	\$1.6m
	2000 - 152 <i>under new formulae</i>	\$1.3m

IESIP - Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program

Total EQ Budget	Number of Students (Rural/Remote)	Rural and Remote Expenditure
\$11.m	6,247	\$2.m

ESL - English As A Second Language.

Total EQ Budget	Number of Students	Rural and Remote Expenditure
\$8.1m	75 (NESB)	\$25,000

ILSS - Indigenous Language Speaking Students Initiative

One-off funding program (1998 & 1999) administered on behalf of the Commonwealth to provide intensive ESL instruction to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the Cape and Gulf and Torres Strait Island districts whose home language is not English.

Total EQ Budget	Number of Students	Rural and Remote Expenditure
\$777,600	332	\$777,600

Work on national taskforce on ESL - progress inclusion of these students under Commonwealth ESL guidelines given their second language background in Torres Strait Island Creole and Aboriginal English.

Behaviour Management Initiative

Over the last 3 years, Education Queensland has implemented a behaviour management initiative which is resourced at in excess of \$12.m per annum. The initiative is currently being evaluated. Early findings which indicate the success of the initiative, have been measured by the increased capacity of districts through their behaviour management committees, to develop innovative pro-active and responsive strategies to address the issues.

Needs-based resourcing

Of the 300 Behaviour Management Support Staff, approximately 130 are located in rural and remote areas of the state.

While most of them are behaviour management support teachers, these support staff also include social workers, psychologists, counsellors, guidance officers, youth workers and teacher aides.

Programs range from providing professional development for the behaviour management support staff and the implementation of strategies, such as anti-bullying and anti-violence programs, anger management for high support needs students, education program development for students 'at risk' of or on suspension or exclusion, liaising with community organisations and parents in providing support for particular students, and information sharing via the internet on workable solutions to bullying developed by schools.

Under the Queensland Crime Prevention Strategy, the department is involved in a number of joint initiatives with other state government stakeholders such as Queensland Police, Queensland Health and Family Services to provide on-site support to students with police officers, nurses and youth workers in schools. Police – 1 Mt Isa/1 Kalkadoon (2000 request to place 1 in the Torres Strait) Nurses: 1 Mt Isa/1 Kalkadoon/1 Kingaroy/1 Murgon/1 Chinchilla/1 Charleville/ 1 Charters Towers/Cluster (Isis Burnett)/1 Stanthorpe/Warwick; 1 Palm Island/1 Yarrabah/Cairns SHS)

Rural Alternative Programs Scheme

This scheme has an annual budget of \$250,000 to increase access in rural and remote areas to appropriate alternative education programs for students 'at risk' or on suspension or exclusion.

In the equity programs area

Boys, Gender and Schooling Project

Involves ten schools brought together in two cluster groups: Roma cluster and Cairns cluster. The Roma cluster includes Roma SS, Charleville SS and SHS, Dirranbandi SS and St George SS. The Cairns cluster includes Kuranda SHS, Trinity Bay SHS, Wonga Beach SS, Mossman SHS and Lockhart River SS.

Schools are encouraged to look at issues related to remoteness and rurality as they intersect with other factors such as gender, socio-economic status, language and cultural background, disability and giftedness to impact upon the achievement, participation, attitudes and behaviour of boys and girls in schooling.

Schools also consider factors which impact upon high rates of youth suicide and limited access to youth support services.

Outcome - development of website to share and disseminate examples of effective practice.

Education of gifted and talented students - Rural focus schools project

Two rural focus schools - Hatton Vale State School (West Moreton District) and Denison State School (Emerald District)

Funds are allocated to professionally develop and train teachers to identify and address the needs of students with gifts and talents.

EDUCATION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

Literacy and Numeracy Action Research Project

\$3.m over three years aimed at improving literacy and numeracy skills of students whose first language is not English and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Twenty schools have been invited to participate in the project. Twelve of these schools are located in rural and remote areas. Some of these schools are Doomadgee, Lockhart River, Aurukun, Thursday Island, Badu Island, Bamaga, Woorabinda, Yarrabah and Palm Island.

The project recognises that isolation is a factor that disadvantages students in terms of access to resources, professional development of teachers, and community support structures.

Each participating school will be resourced with an additional teacher with skills in second language development and literacy and numeracy, and an annual grant to cover professional development and training, networking and the purchasing of support materials.

Pasminco Century Project

A Gulf Communities Agreement exists between the Pasminco Century Project, the Queensland Government and native title groups.

The major focus of the agreement is the education, training and employment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the region.

In 1999, Education Queensland has committed \$29,000 to support vocational education projects in the three P-10 state schools (Doomadgee, Mornington Island and Normanton). These funds support program development, facilities and teacher accommodation associated with the project.

Kalkadoon Education Alternative Program (KEAP)

KEAP operates in collaboration with other primary and secondary schools in the Mt Isa area. The program aims to provide a highly supportive and culturally appropriate educational environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with learning, social and behavioural problems.

In 1999, the project received \$90,000 to support the employment of staff and programs focussing on literacy, numeracy, vocational education and training, life skills and school to work transition.

Cooktown Step Ahead Project

“Step Ahead” is a joint initiative between Education Queensland and DETYA receiving funding in 1999 of approximately \$50,000. The project, which is progressing towards sustainability, is a community-based vocational education and training program operating between the Cooktown State School, local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and local industry.

The program targets students identified as ‘at risk’, enabling them to undertake specialised literacy/numeracy development and an AQF Level 1 training in a local industry whilst remaining at school.

'Croc' Rock Eisteddfod Initiative

This is a joint initiative between Queensland Health and schools in the Cape and Gulf and Torres Strait Island districts as part of the National Drug Offensive Campaign. In 1999 Education Queensland committed \$50,000 towards staging the eisteddfod in Weipa in July. The first eisteddfod was held in Weipa in 1998 and was attended by the Governor General and his wife.

School education programs focus on using visual and performing arts to contrast an awareness between the effects of drug and substance abuse and a healthy lifestyle.

The initiative focuses on community capacity building by increasing recognition and awareness throughout private business sectors, government agencies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Participation Officers

Ten officers are strategically located across Queensland, four of which are in rural and remote communities. These officers identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community training and development needs, and coordinate the delivery of appropriate training programs which aim to improve levels of participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education decision-making.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Education Counsellors

77 counsellors are located in secondary schools with large enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and provide pastoral care to support the social, cultural and educational needs of indigenous students.

Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP)

Education Queensland injects in excess of \$1.5m per annum into this remote area program which aims to increase the pool of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers available to teach in rural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

RATEP delivers primary teacher education courses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through a variety of programs through a mix of video conferencing and distance education linked with those accessed via the use of interactive technology. Courses include a Certificate in Education and Diploma of Education from the Tropical North Qld Institute of TAFE and a Bachelor of Education from James Cook University.

RATEP commenced in the mid 90's with two sites and has expanded to 12 sites today. 69 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have successfully graduated from the program.

The program was reviewed in 1998 with a view to expanding its course provision into secondary teaching.

Indigenous Language Speaking Students Initiative (ILSS)

One-off funding program (1998 & 1999) administered on behalf of the Commonwealth to provide intensive ESL instruction to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the Cape and Gulf and Torres Strait Island districts whose home language is not English.

Cape York Partnership Plan

Education Queensland's response to the directions proposed by Mr Noel Pearson for the future delivery of services in Cape York Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In 1999, the department has committed approximately \$100,000 to this plan which includes the appointment of a Community Officer. This officer has been appointed for a three year period to work jointly with Cape York school communities.

The expected outcomes include the provision of educational services, which are more responsive to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, and communities of the Cape York.

Outcomes of the Review of the education and employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Education Queensland

Implementation of a set of policies and a strategy plan which aim to:

- establish agreements at the community level between the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and school staff; and
- improve levels of achievement in the essential learning's, and retention and attendance rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to levels comparable to those expected from non-indigenous students.

Build upon successful initiatives:

- **AITAP** - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program - 450 gifted and talented students (Mt Isa District).
- **AICAPP** - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career Aspirations Pathways Program - access to rural and remote communities.
- **Reconciliation in Schooling Project**
- **Anti-racism program** - "Under the Skin" and the national taskforce project "Racism: No Way!"

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Education Queensland has strong commitment to students with special needs – regardless of their geographic location or type of school attended. Students with special needs include those with disabilities and learning difficulties and learning disabilities.

In line with the intent of the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 an *Action Plan for Students with Disabilities 1998* has been developed. This is revised regularly.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities include those with hearing impairment, vision impairment, intellectual impairment, physical impairment, speech-language impairment, autistic spectrum disorder or a combination of these impairments.

Of approximately 446000 students in state schools in Queensland, 13110 are students with disabilities, i.e. almost 3% of the total student population. Of these, 2% or 9000 are considered to have high special educational needs. Overall 55.1% of students with disabilities reside in rural or remote locations. This is evenly distributed across each Physical Impairment – 53.3%, and Vision Impairment – 54.8%) except for the area of hearing impairment (Hearing Impairment – 64.4%) because of the higher number of Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students with hearing impairments.

Table: Numbers of incidences of students with disabilities requiring specialist support (defined by disability area) (1997)

Region	Metropolitan, rural or remote	AS D	HI	II	PI	VI	Total	*Actual number of students
Capricornia	rural and remote	76	298	580	240	143	1337	1143
Darling Downs	rural and remote	60	66	565	115	94	900	805
Metropolitan East	metropolitan	100	349	1058	640	337	2484	1983
Metropolitan West	metropolitan and very small part rural	101	375	1217	358	198	2249	1905
North Western	remote	12	23	64	21	9	129	123
Northern	metropolitan and rural	60	154	370	230	98	912	752
Peninsula	rural and remote	38	520	473	214	96	1341	1192
South Coast	metropolitan	130	211	1152	426	97	2016	1996
South Western	rural and remote	6	18	93	16	2	135	129
Sunshine Coast	rural	82	310	925	431	171	1919	1824
Wide Bay	rural	88	304	568	357	154	1471	1258
Total		753	2628	7065	3048	1399	14893	13110

*Please note: 1601 students have more than one impairment, i.e. multiple impairments. The actual number of students shows the number of students with disabilities when students are counted only once.

Of the 9 000 with high support needs, 2 500 attend 50 special schools while 6 500 are enrolled in a further 300 special classes in regular schools or receive Visiting Teacher support in local schools.

Children with disabilities may be eligible to receive educational programs from birth. Fifty per cent of students with disabilities live within 1.5 hours of Brisbane, largely due to parental preference due to hospital and large institutions.

Hearing impairment

Currently, there are 2 628 students who have been identified as having educational needs arising from hearing impairment. Of the deaf hearing impaired students 292 have additional impairments

Vision impairment

Currently, there are 1 399 students who are within this disability grouping. Of the students ascertained in the area of vision impairment, 450 have additional impairments.

Intellectual impairment

Currently, there are 7 065 students with intellectual impairment in Queensland state schools who have been ascertained in the area of intellectual impairment. 1 391 have additional impairments.

Physical impairment

Currently, 3 048 students have been identified as having a physical impairment.

1 048 of these students have additional impairments.

Speech-language impairment

Preliminary data indicates the prevalence of students with speech-language impairment requiring significant curriculum modification is less than one percent of the school population.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Currently, there are 753 students ascertained as having needs arising from autistic spectrum disorder. It is estimated that there could be approximately 2100 students with autistic spectrum disorder.

(All figures based on 1997 ascertainment data)

Students with Learning Difficulties and Learning Disabilities

Data suggests between 12% and 15% of each school's total population consists of students with learning difficulties and learning disabilities.

Supporting Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students with a hearing loss as a result of otitis media

Approximately 50 – 80 % of Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students have fluctuating conductive hearing loss as a result of middle ear infection (otitis media). One of the priorities identified in Education Queensland's *Action Plan: Educational Provision for Students with Disability 1998 – 2002* is to review the existing service delivery model for these students. Issues that are being addressed include:

- hearing screening
- models of support
- school role

- class teacher's knowledge and role
- community involvement
- ascertainment
- teacher training and inservice training.

Soundfield Amplification Systems (SASs) are a very effective means of providing whole class amplification, improving the signal to noise ratio in the classroom for students with a mild hearing loss. There are currently over 100 Soundfield Amplification Systems in use in Queensland schools – the highest proportion of these systems per student population in use in any state/territory in Australia. The Low Incidence Unit (a statewide service centre for students with low incidence disabilities and learning difficulties) also has 15 SAS systems available to schools on a loan basis. This loan system allows schools to borrow a SAS for a term to assess the effectiveness of the system before purchasing.

In 1997, The Low Incidence Unit produced a CD ROM professional development package designed for use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community teachers. The CD "Otitis Media: What Every Teacher Should Know" provides a wealth of information on the health, audiological and educational management of otitis media.

Students with Learning Difficulties and Learning Disabilities comprise between 12 – 15% students. Support is provided at local school and if schools are not able to access appropriate expertise then it can be provided through statewide services.

There are over 1 600 support teachers to assist in areas of behaviour management, learning difficulties and providing guidance/school counselling.

Processes to Facilitate Access and Participation in Schooling

Education Queensland has developed processes to enable students with special needs to access and participate in schooling. These processes focus on curriculum needs rather than deficits or impairments.

Ascertainment for Students with Disabilities

Ascertainment is the process by which the specialist educational support needs of a student with disabilities can be identified from level 1 (data collection) to level 6 (requiring an individualised program). Education Queensland tries to match the recommended specialist educational support needs of a student with the educational program options including identification of the educational facility (closest to the student's home) which is best able to provide a quality educational program for the individual student.

Currently staffing including 1 517 teachers over 150 occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists, 20 nurses who all work toward agreed Individual Education Goals identified by educational teams involving the parents. Special staff are available to assist the local teacher with special education delivery regardless of location.

Appraisalment for Students with Learning Difficulties and Learning Disabilities

Appraisalment processes are used to assist students with learning difficulties and learning disabilities. Local staff and parents identify the level of support and appropriate intervention strategy for each student.

A new Appraisalment system will be gradually introduced to support students with learning difficulties and learning disabilities.

Currently there are 930 teachers supporting students with learning difficulties and learning disabilities throughout Queensland schools.

Key points of the ascertainment and appraisal processes are that there is:

- an educational focus not a deficit
- parental involvement
- coordination at the local school
- specialist support available at either the school, district, or state level.

Initiatives at the School Level

Most initiatives occur at the school level. Significant school based initiatives are outlined below.

Individual Education Plans

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are mandatory for students with disabilities ascertained as having specialist educational support needs at levels 4 (from 2000), 5 (from 1999) and 6 (from 1998). The IEP process brings parents, professionals and the student (where appropriate) together to consider the student's current level of performance and to determine needs and learning priorities for the next six months. The plan documents these prioritised educational goals, which are specific for each student with a disability.

Support and training for teachers

The Centre for Teaching Excellence was established in 1997 to ensure better professional development and training for educational personnel. Tertiary Inservice Support offers assistance for teachers to engage in open postgraduate study for the purpose of upskilling in an identified area of need. Priority areas identified for 2000 are:

- Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Impairments -vision, hearing, intellectual, orientation and mobility
- Learning Support and Learning Difficulties
- Behaviour Management

Teaching Students with Disabilities (kit)

This resource was designed to support teachers and administrators in primary and secondary schools in the provision of educational programs for students with disabilities. It consists of a videotape and booklet in each of the following areas: introduction, school administrator, hearing impairment, intellectual impairment, physical impairment and vision impairment. The kit presents teaching strategies, information on a range of disabilities and support available. A copy of this kit was sent to every school facility in Education Queensland.

A new course is being developed by Education Queensland to train teachers to work with students with physical impairment. As no courses exist in Australia currently Education Queensland is developing a course in conjunction with Griffith University to skill teachers. Teachers will be able to access the course through a Website and receive mentoring from Advisory Visiting Teachers.

Specialised equipment and technology

Low Incidence Unit, Adaptive Technology Services (ATS) provides support to Education Queensland personnel supporting students with disabilities across the state, including rural and remote locations, through:

- telephone “Hotline”, fax and email
- ATS listserv
- trial loans library (alternative mouse, keyboard devices, switches, communication devices)
- website
- *On-Line* journal
- consultancy, workshops and professional development.

The *Technology for students with disabilities* project aims to inservice support staff (advisory visiting teachers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech-language pathologists and learning difficulties’ support teachers) in the use of adaptive technologies with students with disabilities. All districts, including those in rural and remote locations, will be invited to nominate up to ten teachers or therapists to participate.

Environmental modification

Funds are provided annually to schools to complete minor capital works to ensure schools are accessible for all students. A specific enhancement through the *Education for All* initiative has been to provide \$1.2m to modify school facilities to meet the needs of students with physical impairment. A large component of this will go to rural and remote schools.

Teacher aides

A resource kit titled Teacher Aides: Working with Students with Disabilities (kit) has been developed to provide practical information for teacher aides working with students with disabilities across Education Queensland facilities. It was developed to complement the training course for teacher aides provided by Bremer Institute of TAFE.

Support teachers (Learning Difficulties)

Currently there are 930 support teachers working in Queensland schools. Fourteen of these are working in the seven Schools of Distance Education and a further two provide statewide support from the Low Incidence Unit. Training for this group has been identified as a priority by Districts. Funded tertiary study and training days are available to support the continual provision of skilled personnel for these positions across the state. The Support Teacher Learning Difficulties is involved in the provision of programs for students in conjunction with class teachers by modifying curriculum and adapting environments to suit individual student needs.

Initiatives at the District Level

Specialist Support staff

Advisory visiting teacher service:

Advisory visiting teachers play a key role in the delivery of quality education to students with disabilities (birth to school exit) who have been ascertained as requiring specialist educational support (levels 1–6). AVTs in the areas of hearing impairment, physical impairment and vision impairment support students with disabilities in non-government schools in rural and remote locations. If students with disabilities are unable to access specialist services locally then they can request support from the Low Incidence Unit.

Therapy services

Education Queensland employs 46 occupational therapists, 46 physiotherapists and over 100 speech-language pathologists to support educational services to students with special needs enrolled in state schools throughout the state. Students with a disability who have been ascertained may be eligible for support, according to the criteria outlined in the documents: *Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Services* (SM-09, DOEM) and *Speech-Language Therapy Services* (SM-10, DOEM). These guidelines provide a framework for the organisation of therapy services in Education Queensland schools in all locations.

Principal Education Officers, Student Services

Thirty-six PEO (SS) coordinate the array of services and programs for students with special needs across their district. This involves negotiating the access and participation of students with disabilities to specialised programs and services including

Initiatives at the State Level

Action Plan - Educational Provision for Students with Disabilities 1998-2002

The *Action Plan (1998-2000)* is based on Educational Provision for Students with Disabilities (1993) which outlines Education Queensland's commitment to providing equitable educational opportunities to ensure that students with disabilities have access to, participate in, and gain positive outcomes from schooling through a range of curriculum options across primary, secondary and special schools. To facilitate this the Action Plan will guide the development of educational services for students with disabilities. It is reviewed annually.

Statewide support - Low Incidence Unit

The Low Incidence Unit provides specialist support services on a request basis to schools in the each of the Impairment areas and in the area of Learning Difficulties and Learning Disabilities. These services include the provision of professional development activities to staff, information sessions for parents and students, and assistance in the development of curriculum and pedagogy to meet individual student needs. During the 1999 school year the Low Incidence Unit has responded to 877 requests from schools across the pre-school, primary, secondary and special education sectors.

References:

- Action Plan: Educational Provision for Students with Disabilities 1998–2002 (1998)
- Ascertainment Guidelines for Student with Disabilities (1998)
- Department of Education Manual (DOEM)
- Educational Provision for Students with Disabilities – Policy (1993)
- Individual Education Plans for Students with Disabilities (1998)