

The Nationals' Plan for REGIONAL EDUCATION



Our Commitments

Regional Education Development -	\$100 million
ICT Capacity Building	\$50 million
Parents & Citizens Fund	\$8.4 million
Deliver flexibility in accessing BAHA and AIC	

Background

A quality education lays the foundation for opportunity and success. For the disadvantaged in our society it offers a pathway to a better life. As a matter of principle the Western Australian government holds the objective of giving every child an equal opportunity to access a quality education no matter where they live.

The Nationals WA believe it is genuinely possible to gain a quality primary school education in a regional school, even in a small school. However, receiving a quality secondary school education is a greater challenge, with access to specialist educational programs and curriculum choice being the greatest barriers. Technology has proven to be an enabler but requires adequate internet access, strong inter-school collaborative relationships and robust maintenance contracts.

Children brought up in regional Western Australia are disadvantaged by distance, isolation and the lack of access to educational resources and opportunities. Student performance assessments consistently continue to show a statistically significant underperformance from regional students when compared to those in metropolitan Perth.

Whilst we are proud of our education system and some of the advances we have made, there remain key areas that need attention if we are to improve opportunities for our regionally based kids.

This is why The Nationals WA, through Royalties for Regions, have provided \$25 million to develop a new approach to teaching in the Kimberley, the Kimberley Schools Plan. This plan will see 22 schools across the Kimberley take part in a ground breaking education project to connect students and communities across the region.

This trial using more explicit evidence-based teaching methods and co-designed attendance strategies that encourage a community partnership in the educational process will offer an insight into future strategies.

Evidence-based explicit instruction methods have demonstrably good outcomes and should be presented as an opt-in choice where communities can demonstrate a commitment to the value of education. The Nationals WA support the Kimberley education trial and will use its results to inform future policy in this space.

Our Commitments

Developing Regional Education

The Nationals WA commit \$100 million over five years to the following initiatives to develop regional education.

Wheatbelt Education Plan

Many families choose residential hostels in the regions or private schools in Perth where they have more confidence in the educational opportunities.

Opportunities for quality secondary education in the Wheatbelt are becoming more and more challenging. District High Schools offer lower secondary programs and sometimes limited upper secondary programs, however often with small student numbers.



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Many families choose residential hostels or private schools in Perth where they have more confidence in the educational opportunities. The Nationals WA believe this region requires a new plan, developed in consultation with the communities where these issues can be properly workshopped and addressed.

It is recognised that some hard decisions need to be made, but only where quality viable alternatives are offered. We believe such a plan should encompass strategically placed full service K-12 colleges such as the Merredin Community College, offering regionally based secondary alternatives, with hostel accommodation to match.

Secondary School Leadership Program

The Nationals WA want to provide pathways for senior regional teachers and principals to access high level professional development. Establishing this leadership program will enable principals to gain further knowledge and skills.

The Nationals WA commit to providing a Secondary School Leadership Program for senior teachers or principals in regional and remote schools, including professional development, short courses and regular meetings with senior Members of Parliament, Ministers, and bureaucrats. Establishing this leadership program will enable principals to better manage their affairs and impart their experiences and knowledge to others within their organisation.

Centre for Excellence in Aboriginal Education

The Nationals will develop a regional 'Centre of Excellence' within a regional high school with substantial indigenous representation. This centre will form the groundwork for a plan to ensure remote aboriginal kids get to school and are afforded decent access to quality schools. Part of this plan will include an Indigenous Cultural Language and Induction Program.

The program will afford teachers the ability to cater for high performing Aboriginal kids, to ensure their pathway to higher education is clear and achievable.

Information Communication Technology

The Nationals WA will commit to \$50 million over 5 years to develop the Information Communication Technology (ICT) capacity of regional schools.

ICT Infrastructure Fund

Regional schools, like regional businesses and residents, are disadvantaged by limited internet capacity and ICT infrastructure.

The Nationals WA will develop a dedicated ICT Infrastructure Fund to ensure regional schools have access to the latest teaching technologies.

This technology will include now-basic technologies like computer upgrades and Smartboards but will also allow inter-school collaboration through virtual education platforms.

To assist with the rollout of ICT infrastructure, a trial school will be identified to engage in the delivery of teaching through ICT channels.

Professional ICT Support

Infrastructure is useless without training and support. This is why The Nationals will establish a professional ICT support program for regional teachers. Not only will this program enable teachers to utilise the infrastructure provided but also provides invaluable professional development for teachers, incentivising regional employment.

Parents and Citizens Association Fund

Regional Parents and Citizens (P&C) organisations provide significant financial support to schools across Western Australia to improve facilities and services.

The role played by a Parents' Association in regional areas can be far greater than simply raising funds, they also provide schools with chaperones, events and vital support. Small schools in particular benefit from parental involvement, with many regional schools relying on their P&Cs to run services like tuck shops, uniform shops and after school care.

In recent years, the Department of Education has provided schools with the opportunity to apply for grants of up to \$20,000 to install playground equipment and shade sails. The uptake rate has been terrific with 423 schools receiving \$7 million for new shade sails and equipment since 2011.

While this assistance is vital, The Nationals recognise a further need to support regional P&Cs in their efforts.

The Nationals WA want to assist regional parents' associations to fundraise with a dollar-for-dollar assistance grant. If a parents' association can raise one dollar, Royalties for Regions will match that dollar to enable them to get better gear for their students.

The Grant will be capped at \$5000 per school per year, and The Nationals commit to providing \$8.4 million over four years to deliver this initiative.

Flexibility in BAHA and AIC eligibility

The State Government's Boarding Away from Home Allowance BAHA and the Federal Government's Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance assist families which are geographically isolated from State schools to send their children to school.

In some cases, local schools don't meet the needs of students, who then need to relocate to schools further away to receive the education they need.

Developing a school bypass policy means that families would be able to bypass a local school if it doesn't suit the educational requirements of students, sending their children to schools further away, and still gain eligibility for the Federal Government's Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) program and the State Government's Boarding Away from Home Allowance.

The Nationals WA commit to offering more flexible arrangements for accessing BAHA and AIC when it can be demonstrated that a local school cannot meet the education needs of a child.

The Nationals WA will invest \$158.4 million into improving the outcomes for regional and remote kids.

The Nationals WA welcome your feedback on this policy:

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