



newsletter

NSW Teachers Federation

July 2011

Questions for the Rural and Distance Education Manager

The March 10 meeting of the Distance Education Restricted Committee (DERC) developed a series of questions that was sent to the department's Rural and Distance Education Manager, Mike Toms. Unfortunately the response to these questions was not received in time for the DERC meeting on June 2 and will be discussed at the September DERC meeting.

Priorities

During the meeting on June 2 the DERC identified key issues pertaining to distance education. They are hoping to develop and implement strategies that will address these issues.

The key issues are:

Counselling

The provision of school counsellors and better support to deal with students with mental health issues as well as emotional and behaviour problems is considered a priority by the DERC.

A disproportionate number of DE students have high support needs. For many students, mental illness and behavioural disorders prevent them from attending mainstream schools where they would have had access to counselling support. All DE students should have equity of access to school counselling services and support systems.

The committee will be working on strategies to have the DET fulfil its obligation to provide equitable support services to all students regardless of their enrolment status.

Resourcing

The resourcing of distance education centres continues to be an area of concern due to a number of factors.

These factors include:

- The amount of materials being produced locally by DECs has increased due to the abolition of the Centre for Learning Innovation (CLI). From this, the requirement for teachers to produce their own resources has increased significantly. Teachers are now required to produce a variety of materials to meet the increasing number of high support needs students in DE and the increase in the school leaving age of students.
- The quality of information technology resources (hardware and software), training and the application of these in DECs. Delivery of quality distance education has a particular reliance on these technologies for teaching and learning. The effective use of reliable and appropriate technologies needs to be addressed.

Governance

The DERC identifies the critical need for consistent policy and governance in DE. This need was identified as a result of inconsistent policies and actions with and between regions as they relate to DE students. For example, the inconsistencies within regions in relation to the provision of school counselling services to DE students.

The committee has identified these issues as a priority and will be looking to develop strategies to improve the delivery of DE.

If any distance education teacher would like to inform the committee on these issues or strategies that have improved the teaching and learning opportunities of DE centres, schools, teachers and students please send your comments via email to mail@nswtf.org.au and mark them "Attention: DERC". The committee meets once a term.

The Distance Education Restricted Committee (DERC) is a Federation committee elected for a two year period; these members represent the full range of distance education (DE) delivery, including autonomous Distance Education Centres (DECs) city and country, integrated country DECs, a specialised DEC and a distance education primary school.

The two Federation Officers attached to work with this committee are City Organiser Michelle Rosicky and Country Organiser Noel Creenaune.

Committee members

The Term 2, 2011 meeting of the DERC involved the introductions of a number of newly elected committee members. They are:



Keiran Dabsch — Southern Cross School

As a member of DERC Keiran wants to focus Federation on campaigning for proper support for distance education students with significant needs.



Andy Pavlou — North East Public School of Distance Education, Port Macquarie campus

Andy is passionate about securing greater access to school counsellors for distance education students.



Hannah Morley — Dubbo School of Distance Education

Hannah would like to use the DERC to articulate local distance education issues in a collegial forum.



Jeff Nicholson — Ingleburn High School

Jeff would like to bridge the gap in understanding among the different stakeholders in distance education.



Eamon Gormley — Sydney Distance Education Centre

Eamon is interested in e-learning and how quality digital learning objects/resources can be shared amongst distance education teachers.



Greg Cousins — Camden Haven High School

Greg's aim is to help improve the standards of distance education by ensuring resourcing doesn't decline.