



RURAL YOUTH AMBASSADORS

National Forum

Canberra

What are the Key Areas??

Discussion Paper

February 2021

Introduction:

Throughout 2020, rural young people from New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia were involved in the Rural Youth Ambassador program – a program aimed at providing the opportunity for rural and remote young people to develop their leadership skills while focusing on the needs and future ideas relating to their education.

64 rural and remote young people from Year 11 were involved in the program which included communities such as Broken Hill, Bourke, Streaky Bay, Kaniva, Mount Gambier, Alstonville, and Tumut – and everywhere in between.

In each state, these young people considered a range of challenges and explored possible solutions to them over the twelve months.

In addition to each state being involved in a range of online forums and discussions with a wide range of people, the three groups met a number of times with the three groups coming together in the Rural Youth Ambassador Virtual Centre.

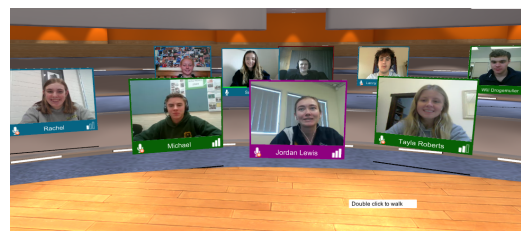
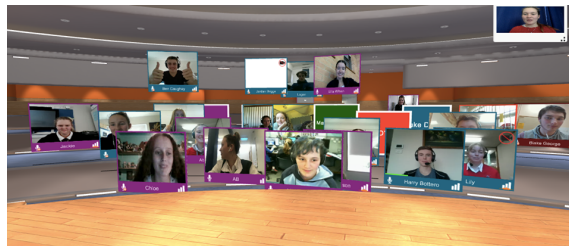
Within these discussions, the young people shared what the discussions were in each of the states and begun exploring the key areas that they had identified and outlined the ideas that they had developed as solutions to these challenges.

At a state level, each Rural Youth Ambassador group will present their ideas to relevant Ministers and Education personnel.

Interestingly, although not surprising, the ideas explored are very similar.

Over the past few weeks, the three states have been developing a common statement that they would like to share with Minister, Education personnel and key stakeholder groups when they come together in Canberra from the 24th to 26th February 2021.

The following provides an overview of the challenges and ideas developed as a result of these discussions.



Rural Education Provision

Key Challenges:

- *Breadth of Learning Opportunities*
 - Due to lower numbers the subject choices we are offered is far less compared to our urban peers – often meaning we cant study the areas we would like
 - Extra curricula options are limited due to lower numbers – eg drama, debating, teams sports, etc
 - Limited options in relation to vocational programs
 - Limited numbers resulting in small social networks
 - Long distance to get anywhere
- *Staff Recruitment*
 - Difficulty getting staff to come to rural and remote communities
 - Very hard to get staff in specific learning areas – sciences, performing arts, etc.
 - Staff have little expertise in the effective use of technology
- *Information and Support*
 - It is very difficult to access support services and other student information support.
- *Virtual Learning*
 - We have to access virtual learning for lots of subjects – not our preferred learning approach
 - The connectivity is a real issue in our communities for virtual learning
 - The skills of our staff are not strong in the use of technology.



Our Idea:

We believe that through schools working together within their region, or district, that there would be a great choice of learning opportunities provided for us,

From our perspective, we would like to see governments provided resources to schools through a “collaborative approach” where there would be resources provided for specific initiatives and programs on the basis that schools work together for the benefit of all students in the region or district.



Some of our ideas could include

- development Of a common timetable across a region or district thus allowing students to access learning regardless of which school they were based at;
- one education program be offered and delivered through a blended learning approach. Eg some core subjects being provided in each of the schools (literacy, numeracy, science) but other courses being offered through a mix of face to face and online delivery.



We believe that the Aurora College model is a good one to look at in NSW, but have them more local – eg an Aurora College based within each region or district.

- The development of “across schools” camps and excursions, sports, extra curricula program would provide a greater choice for rural and remote students;
 - Staff being provided in each school in areas such as literacy and numeracy, but other staff (especially in learning areas hard to get staff for) could be shared across a region or district;
- Establishing a regional or district online learning and support system that allows students to learn across the schools, allow staff to share knowledge and support, and provide information on a range of topics for students.
- Support a region or district approach to specialised services and support such as student services, career education, and the like.



After Schooling Information

Key Challenges

- Access to quality career and pathway opportunities are very limited.
- We find it very hard to find out the information we would like to have when we are making decisions about our future – we have to travel to the city for this often.
- The opportunities for our future is limited as we don't get the exposure that urban young people get to careers and jobs;
- While post school organisations offer a lot of programs and information, we don't get to hear a lot about what it is really like, especially from other rural young people.
- We have limited information on what we need to know when we relocate from our hometown to undertake work or further study

Our Idea

- We think that young people sharing their stories and providing a mentoring role back to their community would be the best way to help in this area – could we support them to travel back to their communities and share their journeys?
- We would love people who grew up in our community, and are doing something awesome today, to come back and share their experience with us, their advice and perhaps mentor us, or provide work experience. Rural towns grow some awesome people.
- While we like what the “Your Career” booklet has we would like it to have a lot more stories of young people who have left their town and gone onto employment or further study – we love the concept of Rural Inspire – we need to grow it and link it with “Your Career”.
- We would love to see more stories and journeys provided through video clips, stories of young people who came from our rural towns and have them shared through social media.
- We would love to see young people sharing their experiences about “real things” like sharing a house, tax, budgeting, scholarships, etc.
- We would love to see a “Mobile Expo” travel around rural and remote communities to provide information on a range of topics and areas:
 - Involving people who grew up in rural communities travelling with the expo.
 - Providing information and workshops on a range of topics and options
 - Could this be part of the Rural Inspire that many of us have experienced in the future.



Mental Well Being

Challenges

- This is a growing area of concern for young people in rural and remote communities.
- Access to mental health and well-being support is very difficult to gain in rural and remote communities.
- Confidentiality is a major area of concern amongst rural and remote young people – we don't want everyone knowing what we are going through.
- Schools are not always the best places for these support services to be provided as everyone knows when you see them, and therefore you "have a problem".
- There is a stigma associated with mental health in many rural and remote communities and we are often not prepared to share what is going on or seek help.
- E counselling is not the answer for us.
- We often find that we don't have access to workshops and seminars within our schools that provide information or support in these space – we would love to have more preventative mental health workshops.

Our Ideas

- Linked with our first idea, we would like to see that mental health workers are provided to rural and remote communities through a region or district – this would help with confidentiality and allow young people to access these services anonymously and locally.
- We would love to see an increase in the number of workshops and discussion focused on helping young people in rural and remote communities to develop skills and knowledge to prevent mental health issues – building resilience and supporting young people to seek support.
- The idea of having "Well-being Wednesday" – a time, or day" each week that focuses on the needs of students – allowing them to take time out, undertake work away from school, catch up on school work and the like.

