Progress, planning and partnership

The Department, in partnership with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) have selected 15 schools in some of our most complex communities, to become Connected Community Schools.

The schools that have been selected will be linked with other service providers such as health, welfare, early childhood education and care and vocational education and training at the local level to ensure the needs and aspirations of students are addressed in a holistic way.

The Connected Community Schools

Boggabilla Central School
Bourke High School
Bourke Public School
Brewarrina Central School
Coonamble High School
Coonamble Public School
Hilvue Public School
Menindee Central School

Moree East public School
Moree Secondary College
Taree High School
Taree Public School
Toomeelah Public School
Walgett Community School
Wilcannia Central School

The NSW Government launched the Connected Communities Strategy in May 2012. The aim of Connected Communities is to use stronger partnerships between schools, the local community and government agencies so that schools can become community hubs driving better educational opportunities for students.
Leadership

Ms Michele Hall has been appointed as Executive Director, Connected Communities and commenced in the role on 17 September 2012. Michele was previously the Director, Aboriginal Education and Training, in the NSW Department of Education and Communities. Michele has extensive experience in a range of senior roles and in Aboriginal education. She also brings a deep understanding and knowledge of current issues in education and training at a state and national level.

Michele’s immediate priorities have been to progress the recruitment of the Executive Principals and commence working with the communities.

The first recruitment round resulted in the following appointments to the Executive Principal position this term:

- Bourke Public School
  Kylie Pennell
- Coonamble High School
  Margaret Mulcahy
- Menindee Central School
  Daryl Irvine
- Moree Secondary College
  Hilton Humphries

Acting Executive Principals will be appointed to the other Connected Communities schools for the first two terms of the 2013 school year to allow planning to start with local communities. Further recruitment action will occur in 2013 to finalise all Executive Principal appointments.

Governance and next steps

The Connected Communities Strategy is a new way of delivering services through strong local partnerships. A local school governance group made up of the local Aboriginal community, AECG, parent and teacher representation will be established in each school community to work with the Executive Principal to develop the planning for the Strategy in each school. As school leadership teams are formed, planning will start with local communities for the 2013 school year.

The Director-General has established a Connected Communities Steering Committee to provide advice to her on the implementation of the Strategy. The Steering Committee comprises senior department officers and representation from the following stakeholders: NSW Teachers Federation; NSW Secondary Principals’ Council; NSW Primary Principals’ Association; Public Schools Principals’ Forum; NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc (AECG); and the Federation of Parents’ and Citizens’ Council.

Two meetings of the Steering Committee have already been held.

A Connected Communities Management Group is also being established to oversee implementation of the strategy and ensure cross-government links. This Group will include senior officers from the Department, the AECG, Aboriginal Affairs and representatives from across other government departments and non-government agencies as required. These may include representatives from health, housing, police, industry and communities services.

Recent announcements

The Minister for Education recently announced that $10 million in capital funding would be provided to Connected Communities schools to improve their facilities. There will be consultation with local communities to inform the development of scopes of work so that the works undertaken meet local needs.

Also announced recently by the Minister is funding for the establishment of community-based preschools at the six Connected Communities locations that do not have a Department preschool. Up to $500,000 will be available for each location to develop a preschool presence. Children from disadvantaged families will be able to attend the preschool at little or no cost to their families for up to two years. The six sites are Bourke, Brewarrina, Menindee, Toomelah, Moree East and Hillvue.