

## South Australia

### Creating the Future (Schooling for tomorrow)

#### November 2006 Report

#### 1. Context

The *Creating the Future* project is a strategic initiative, led by the South Australian Department for Education and Children's Services (DECS), engaging a range of stakeholders in exploring the future of education and care. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is assisting DECS in leading this project by providing a range of assistance and resources, based on its own international project *Schooling for Tomorrow*.

South Australia has a strong commitment from the highest levels of government to be an international leader in education and care.

*I want South Australia to lead the way in providing the best possible education system for young people, not only for today, but also for future generations.*

Mike Rann, Premier of South Australia, 26 September, 2006

*Our goals are to assist all young people to achieve their potential, and have the skills and values they need for a better future.*

Jane Lomax-Smith, Minister for Education and Children's Services, 26 September 2006

#### 1.1 Why Change?

Trend analysis highlights that South Australia has been experiencing changes in its demographics which will influence future education provision. The uneven growth and decline in student numbers across South Australia has resulted in an imbalance between what is needed by learners and communities and what currently exists. A combination of declining enrolments in public schools and declining birth rates in South Australia means that some schools are below the enrolment required to make them viable in terms of curriculum offered, social mix of students, access to specialist teachers and facilities, and flexibility to provide for a range of needs. The effect of less than optimum enrolment numbers is, in many cases, underutilisation of resources and facilities, and inequitable educational provision.

Concepts of optimum size and quality education and care will be used when considering the provision of schools and preschools. *Creating the Future* has become the mechanism for thinking about ways of meeting the future needs of the South Australian Community. *Education Works* (a program outlined below) has become the vehicle to achieve its delivery.

## 2. Outcomes

*Creating the Future* has achieved the following over the previous two years:

- 2.1 The South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services Chief Executive convened a high level steering committee which created and endorsed the policy drivers and aims of the project. This group committed to a cross agency approach as the way to improve education and care. Members agreed to challenge traditional boundaries, including governance arrangements. This approach has been successfully adopted in the *Children's Centres* outlined below. Members also nominated leaders within their agency who worked to develop future education and care scenarios.
  
- 2.2 Tony Mackay, OECD agent, led groups of education and cross agency leaders to:
  - extrapolate current South Australian trends to develop a number of probable future scenarios (covering global, governance and economic, knowledge and information, family and community and childhood and adolescence issues)
  - examine how participants felt within those scenarios, leading to the development of principles underpinning a preferred future
  - develop the elements of a preferred future to be examined within each proposed implementation context
  - develop inquiry questions for evaluating proposed new approaches that enable the delivery of improved services.
  
- 2.3 Scenario planning modules have been integrated into leadership programs at the South Australian Centre for Leaders in Education (SACLE). SACLE provides leadership development services for the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services. The module *Futures Thinking* has been created to invite leaders to engage with the notion of futures thinking and to explore dispositions, skills and strategies, with colleagues in schools preschools, districts and associations. This module has been integrated into two leadership programs. 1. *Leaders Briefings* and 2. *Leadership Frontiers*. The *Leaders Briefings* are open to all newly appointed principals and preschool directors with approximately 60 participants attending four sessions held during the year. One of these sessions includes the *Futures Thinking* module. *Futures Thinking* is also part of the *Leadership Frontiers* suite of programs which examines anticipated trends and provides leaders with an opportunity to engage with capacities needed for leadership in new times. This program is open to all leaders and is designed as a generative conversation; approximately 35 participants attend a one day program. It is scheduled to continue throughout 2007. The key themes explored include:
  - dialogue about possible and probable futures
  - consideration of global, national and local trends
  - scenario building

- leadership and organisational sustainability
- building shared vision

2.4 Futures' thinking has provided the underpinning of the department's revolutionary reform initiative 'Education Works'. *Education works* is about delivering better choices and opportunities for children in the State education system. It includes all schools and preschools and the range of education and children's services from Birth to Year 12 provided by the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services.

The first stage of the *creating the future* project methodology was to gather from communities their views of education provision to highlight emerging community expectations. The South Australian Minister for Education and Children's Services and the Chief Executive, DECS, conducted a series of 17 community consultation forums. These forums enabled parents, grandparents, carers, educators, leaders and community members to have their say on future directions in education and how to best deliver school and preschool services. These forums reflected the important role of parents and families in their children's education and revealed the priorities that help to shape the future care and education of young South Australians. The top six issues raised included funding for education facilities and maintenance, school staffing, support for children with disabilities, class sizes, the concept of 'one stop shops' and curriculum issues.

### 3. Policy Drivers & Aims

3.1 The policy drivers for the *creating the future* project include:

- to deliver better choices and opportunities for children in the public education system
- to foster integrated approaches wherever this has the potential to enhance seamless service delivery.

3.2 The broad aims of the *creating the future* project include:

- to gather thinking from the South Australian community and views for designing educational futures
- to embed long term (scenario) planning into strategic planning activities
- to use futures thinking and scenario building to inform strategic policy
- to build capacity for inquiry and innovation through leadership development
- to develop a responsive and contextual evaluation design

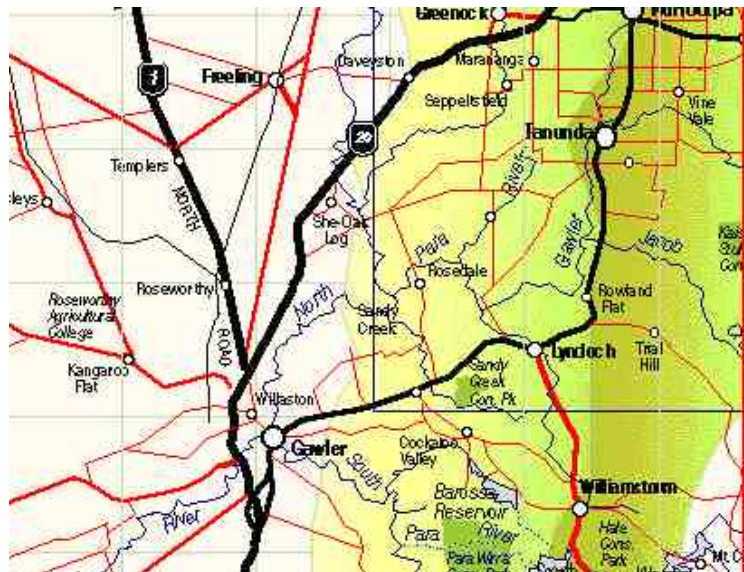
#### 4. Work to date

4.1 The two earlier reports on this project have focused on the methodology and structure of the project. South Australian trends, probable and preferred futures were also examined. In summary, the most significant trends were identified as:

- growing inequity (rich vs poor)
- changing nature of families and parenting
- growing expectation for the community to take on responsibility
- growing conservatism
- shift to national directives about education and its funding
- creativity (expected and invited)
- market forces and regulation (parents and community driving education choice, funding and conditions)
- ageing workforce and population (influencing infrastructure and service provision).

4.2 Three scenarios emerged which provide a basis for critical inquiry were outlined in more detail in the previous report. An overview of these scenarios follows:

##### 4.2.1 The cluster school



The *cluster school* includes a group of campuses in the same socio-geographic area with co-located community services. Local businesses, service groups and churches use and contribute to the facilities on the campuses. Community members access a range of services directly and indirectly from any of the campuses. Further education facilities exist and hours of opening are flexible depending on demand and, in rural areas, seasonal.

Learning is contextualised to the local area and includes pathways to local employment opportunities as well as providing access to tertiary studies through a variety of modes. Local expertise and visiting professionals contribute to curriculum delivery. Service providers, including

teachers have flexible working hours and conditions and collaborate with other community members to provide the range of services determined by the governance group. Transfer between campuses is easy and teachers' particular skills and interests are used at the point of need.

#### 4.2.2 The community centre



The *community centre* is characterised by shopping, medical services, sporting facilities, learning resources, government and other community services being located in a central area within the community. These areas have extensive transport infrastructure and are a significant social centre for entertainment and leisure activities as well as retail services.

Curriculum frameworks include the learning experiences implicit in community engagement throughout a person's life. Citizenship and socialisation are key elements of the curriculum. Extending the previous co-location of services to include public education facilities enables a mix of public and private provision. The location of educational facilities within the context of other public and private community services enables better health, welfare and social access.

### 4.2.3 The village



The *village* adopts the facilities mix and organisational style of 'aging in place' residential centres for aging citizens, education facilities are located within a complex of accommodation and services related to education and care. Learners of all ages are able to engage with learning at the level that suits their ability. The facilities are designed for multi-use and for the whole community.

Existing private and peripatetic government or private professionals are utilised as appropriate in educational contexts. Ongoing professional learning and transition between traditional schooling sectors (early, primary, middle, senior years) is facilitated. Community, health and education professionals collaborate to provide integrated services to the community. Online access to most government regulatory and provision services are readily available and supported. A core of professionals organises curriculum and learning, drawing on the experience and expertise of local residents and the professional's supporting them. The school day and year is flexible and facilities are utilised on a year round basis.

## 5. Current Focus

*Education Works* is the name given to the current reform initiatives in the Department of Education and Children's Services which builds on the positive elements outlined in all of the scenarios outlined above.

Education Works initially will:

- deliver six brand new schools in the Adelaide (State Capital) metropolitan area
- invest up to \$83 million to improve schools
- establish 10 Trade Schools for the Future
- create 20 new *Children's Centres*
- connect preschool, junior primary and primary schools to enable children to more easily progress with their education
- support smaller class sizes
- provide 100 extra teachers over four years to help create smaller Year 3 class sizes across all primary schools from 2007
- include additional investment through the school building capital works, a total of \$45.5 million investment in 20 schools across the State
- involve communities in shaping a 21<sup>st</sup> Century education system through consultation.

Education Works promises to focus a number of major projects to create better opportunities for every child in the South Australian public education system. It involves better:

- learning environments
- curriculum choice
- integration of services for children and parents
- skills and values
- job skills.

*Education works* is still being developed and uses a combination of the scenarios as follows:

### 5.1 The Cluster School

The six new schools are becoming known as 'super schools', they will include the characteristics of being *in the same socio-geographic area* and community members *will be able to access a range of services directly and indirectly from the campuses*. Together with the new Children's Centres they will work to connect preschool, junior primary, primary and secondary students improving pathways through a clustered arrangement. The new schools together with the 10 new Trade Schools will improve *pathways to local employment opportunities as well as providing access to tertiary studies through a variety of modes*. Service provider's terms and conditions within the new schools and centres will encourage *flexible working hours and conditions*.

### 5.2 The Community Centre

Elements of the community centre scenario are most strongly being implemented around learning experiences and mixes of public and private provision. A new South Australian Certificate of Education

(SACE) is being developed, to complement *Education Works*, which will enable more young people to gain the skills they need for the future. The community centre scenario states that *curriculum frameworks include the learning experiences implicit in community engagement throughout a person's life*. The new SACE promotes the education and training system comprising the full range of learning opportunities that will assist a student to achieve their learning goals. Possible learning opportunities include, for example, formal and informal learning opportunities undertaken in workplaces and the community, programs accessed through educational institutions such as schools, TAFE and universities, and courses developed elsewhere and undertaken through the internet or other distance education technologies. SACE has a spatial metaphor – that of a ‘learning space’ rather than the traditional school or preschool alone, - as a way of thinking about this broad education and training system.

The community centre enables a mix of public and private provision. The six new schools will be provided by public and private funding and partnerships. The new capital works investment will also support public-private partnerships.

### **5.3 The Village**

The village scenario is characterised by ensuring facilities are multi-use and able to be used by the whole community. It supports integrated services and learning pathways.

The six new schools will be multifunctional. They will be state of the art schools offering a ‘birth to secondary’ education, and specialist schools in areas including sciences, the arts, sport and special education. There will be provision to make these services more widely available.

The 20 new Children’s Services will progressively be established across South Australia. Working in partnership with the local community, Children’s Centres will bring together a range of services for children and families, based on local needs and family choice. Services will focus on child and family education, health and support.

Early childhood educators, child health professionals, community development workers and family support staff will work with families to deliver programs that promote the learning, development, health and wellbeing of children from conception through to the early years of school. *Community, health and education professionals will collaborate to provide integrated services to the community.*

The new Children’s Services will connect preschool, junior primary and primary schools to enable children to more easily progress through their education. The 10 new trade schools will be school-based centres which will connect high schools to TAFE and local industry to deliver practical job and career opportunities in areas of skills shortage. In the village model, *ongoing professional learning and transition between*

*traditional schooling sectors (early, primary, middle, senior years) is facilitated.*

## **6. Community Involvement**

True to the aim to gather thinking from the South Australian community and views for designing educational futures, parents have influenced departmental policy. They have said that they want schools that offer a strong, broad curriculum to give their children the best choices for their future. Over the next five years, *Education Works* will continue to work with communities to create a new generation of schools and preschools.

Communities will be invited to look at facilities and services in their area, and to think creatively about ways that enable more specialist subjects, choices and opportunities for students, and more effective school management. An outcome may include collaborative clusters of secondary schools to ensure a broad mix of academic and vocational programs for students. This is an example of *Creating the Future's* first policy driver *to deliver better opportunities and choice for children in the public education system* in action.

## **7. Creating the Future Project Evaluation**

One broad aim of the *Creating the Future* project is to develop a responsive and contextual design evaluation strategy. In order to comprehensively evaluate the Children's Centres, the South Australian Department of Education and Care is working with Healthy Development Adelaide, (a group of health research professionals from the University of South Australia, Flinder's University, Children Youth and Women's Health Services and other government departments) to scope out research questions and evaluation. The evaluation strategy is subject to grant funding and will take some years to complete.