



Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC)

**Regional Report:
Meetings in the Pilbara Region
26-28 October 2015**

Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Regional Context.....	3
3. Regional Program.....	5
4. Key Issues.....	6
5. Conclusions.....	14
6. Recommendations.....	16
Appendix 1 The Pilbara Region	19
Appendix 2 RREAC Members attending regional discussions.....	20
Appendix 3 Pilbara Regional Discussions – 26-28 October 2015.....	21
Appendix 4 Literacy, Attendance, Engagement and Retention Programs in the Pilbara.	25

Executive Summary

The ongoing provision of quality education and training to rural and remote Western Australia is dependent on the Minister for Education (**Minister**) receiving sound strategic advice. The Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (**RREAC**) fulfils an important role in providing advice to the Minister from a cross-sectoral perspective and encompasses both public and private provision.

Each year, RREAC seeks to hold at least one meeting in a regional area and engages in discussion with regional stakeholders. Regional discussions ensure that RREAC members are attuned to the many issues and challenges facing, and strategies being employed by, regional and remote communities. Regional discussions also provide an important opportunity for regionally-based stakeholders to engage with RREAC in context.

In October 2015, RREAC held its regional meeting in the Pilbara based out of Karratha. RREAC developed an extensive and engaged program; over three days meeting with over 65 people involved in education and training.

The assistance of the Pilbara Education Regional Office (**PERO**) with stakeholder liaison and the provision of facilities was instrumental in achieving an informative and successful program. RREAC also acknowledges the generosity of people with whom it met, and thanks them for their time and the sharing of their knowledge and experiences. The commitment of people to achieving successful outcomes within the Pilbara region was clearly evident.

Each regional visit by RREAC has highlighted common challenges, and region-specific challenges, arising in relation to rural and remote education and training. Visits have also revealed different regional practices to address similar issues. The importance of local solutions to local challenges is a common theme in regional discussions. RREAC's visit to the Pilbara highlighted these matters.

This report summarises the major themes, issues and concerns arising out of RREAC's discussions including:

- attraction and retention of staff
- pre-service education about rural and remote teaching
- student attendance and retention
- residential facilities
- vocational education and training
- a holistic approach
- a place-based suite of products?
- cross-sectorial cooperation and regional clustering.

The report is not an analysis nor does it attempt to be comprehensive; rather it provides a colloquial regional snapshot of matters raised during RREAC's visit. RREAC will consider some issues further and report separately to the Minister in line with its terms of reference.

1. Introduction

As part of RREAC's core business, the opportunity to experience first-hand education in a regional context is paramount. Each year, RREAC seeks to hold at least one meeting in a regional area and engages in discussion with regional stakeholders. Regional discussions ensure that members are attuned to the many issues and challenges facing regional and remote students, staff, service providers, families and communities, and are also attuned to the strategies employed to overcome disadvantage and maximise outcomes. Regional discussions also provide an important opportunity for regionally-based stakeholders to engage with RREAC in context.

From 26-28 October 2015, RREAC held its regional meeting in the Pilbara, based out of Karratha. The Pilbara region was of interest to RREAC as an example of a region experiencing a recent period of significant growth and development with a range of education and training systems and sectors.

RREAC developed an extensive and engaged program; over three days meeting with over 65 people involved in education and training. The assistance of the Pilbara Education Regional Office (**PERO**) was instrumental in achieving an informative and successful program. The commitment of PERO and other people with whom RREAC met to achieving successful outcomes within the Pilbara Region was clearly evident.

2. Regional Context

2.1 The Pilbara Region

The Pilbara Region is one of the largest regions in Western Australia. A population of approximately 67,000 people call the Pilbara home; of which Aboriginal people comprise 20 per cent of the population, compared with the national average of 2.5 per cent of the population. More than 80% of Western Australia's resource production comes from the Pilbara: 90% of Australia's iron ore exports, 85% Australia's LNG exports, 80% of Australia's crude oil and condensate. While dominated by the minerals and energy sectors, other industries such as construction, manufacturing and agriculture complement and broaden the region's economic base. Employment in the Pilbara has doubled since 2006.¹

There are 29 state government schools, three Catholic schools, and three independent Aboriginal community schools. The diversity of education delivery in the region is illustrated, for example, by the composition of the state government schools which include five remote schools,² four senior high schools, one district high school and remote annex, one School of the Air,³ one education service centre and one regional engagement centre.

¹ Department of Training and Workforce Development, Pilbara Development Commission, (2014), *Pilbara Development Commission Annual Report 2013-2014*, page 6. Government of Western Australia. Available from: <<http://pdc.wa.gov.au/commission/>> [8/10/15].

² 2015: 122 students (source – PERO).

³ 2015: Port Hedland School of the Air - 45 students and School of Isolated and Distance Education - 97 students (source – PERO).

The Pilbara Institute (formerly TAFE) is a major vocational training provider in the region. Two universities have a regional base⁴ and other tertiary studies can be undertaken through external or flexible study.⁵

Education and training challenges as noted by the Pilbara Development Commission include:⁶

- *Low attendance rates*, leading to lower levels of skilled labour being available to take up employment locally.
- *Lower retention of students through to higher levels of secondary school* (when compared to the State as a whole). This reduces both the skilled labour available and those eligible to attend tertiary education.
- *Literacy and numeracy results for Pilbara students are below State averages*, resulting in a working age population with less capacity to meet industry demand.
- *Literacy and numeracy levels for the Pilbara Aboriginal population are also low*, which create barriers for the Aboriginal population in gaining sustainable employment and participation in the economy.
- *Difficulties attracting and retaining school leaders, teachers and support staff*. This reduces the capacity of institutions to deliver quality education outcomes.
- *Lack of access to quality education* has been identified as one of the main reasons families/ households are reluctant to move to and remain in the Pilbara.
- *Education access and delivery hindered by remoteness and distances* between major towns.
- *Higher number of fly in/fly out personnel seeking to up-skill*, for whom it is difficult to attend classes in person or even online.
- *Cultural barriers to education in some Aboriginal communities*, requiring tailored teaching approaches and additional staff training/resources (which may often be limited).

Further detail can be found in Appendix 1.

2.2 Regional initiatives

During its visit RREAC noted a strong regional focus highlighted by recent State Government regional initiatives encompassing education and training including:

- The Pilbara Cities Initiative (established in April 2010)
- Pilbara Cities Education Partnership
- State Government Regional Services Reform (launched May 2015)
- Pilbara Regional Investment Blueprint (launched 7 October 2015)

⁴ The Rural Clinical School of the University of Western Australia is located in Port Hedland and Karratha. Curtin University delivers select courses in humanities and business through Karratha and Port Hedland.

⁵ For instance, the University of Central Queensland has been delivering distance education through the Karratha Distance Education Hub since 2015.

⁶ Department of Training and Workforce Development, Pilbara Development Commission, *Pilbara Workforce Development Plan 2013–2016*, pages 20-22. Government of Western Australia. Available from: <<http://www.pdc.wa.gov.au/our-focus/knowledge-hub>> [8/10/15].

In its report on its regional meeting in Albany in 2012,⁷ RREAC noted that “RREAC has over many years documented issues and strategies to address gaps in regional education. Specifically, recent RREAC reports on technology, early education, higher education and remote education have been forwarded to Commissions for consideration in their Blueprint development”. The Pilbara Regional Investment Blueprint includes discussion around education and training.⁸

3. Regional Program

3.1 Participants

A comprehensive program was developed for RREAC and discussions involved a range of relevant stakeholders. Over three days RREAC⁹ met with over 65 people involved in education and training, including:

- the Pilbara Education Regional Office
- Karratha Senior High School
- Roebourne District High School
- St Luke’s College
- current and former interns and mentors involved in the Pilbara Cities Education Partnership internship program
- industry partners and service providers in the vocational education and training sector
- current and former students (both ATAR, and vocational education and training) from Karratha and other locations across the Pilbara
- the Pilbara Institute
- Trade Training Centre
- Gurlu Gurlu Maya-CSSU Roebourne Early Learning Centre
- Mawarnkarra Health Service
- Boonderu Music Academy (based at the Roebourne District High School).

Further details can be found in Appendix 3.

The assistance of PERO with stakeholder liaison and the provision of facilities was instrumental in achieving an informative and successful program. RREAC also acknowledges the generosity of people with whom it met, and thanks them for their time and the sharing of their knowledge and experiences.

3.2 Format

RREAC received information by way of formal briefing from some stakeholders and held less formal meetings with others. The program used various forms of consultation including one to one discussions, presentations, video conferencing facilities with stakeholders from

⁷ Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council, (October 2012), *Report on the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council Regional Meeting in Broome*. Available from: <<http://rreac.des.wa.gov.au/reports/ReportsMinister>> [21/1/16].

⁸ Department of Training and Workforce Development, Pilbara Development Commission, (October 2015), *Pilbara Regional Investment Blueprint*. Government of Western Australia. Available from: <<http://www.pdc.wa.gov.au/our-focus/pilbara-blueprint>> [8/10/15].

⁹ Refer to Appendix 2 for RREAC members attending regional discussions in the Pilbara.

outside the Karratha area to obtain a wider regional perspective, discussion forums with plenary and focus group elements, and tours of facilities.

Informal feedback from participants was very positive; for example, with regard to the plenary and roundtable focus session held with industry and service providers in relation to vocational education and training in secondary schools, participants expressed the view that that the RREAC-hosted liaison provided a collegial and collaborative environment on which Pilbara participants might build in the future.

3.3 Scope

Discussions held were in the context of RREAC's 2015-2016 focus areas¹⁰ and included:

- An overview of the Pilbara education region (for example: regional services, aboriginal education, engagement and transitions, Pilbara Cities Education Partnership projects)
- secondary schooling both public and private (including attraction and retention of students and teachers)
- residential facilities
- the experience of some teacher interns and mentors involved in the Pilbara Cities Internship Program
- industry partnerships and service provision in the vocational education and training sector
- the experience of some students and graduates in the Pilbara region
- "wrap around services" (including early learning, parent centres and health)
- literacy, numeracy, attendance, engagement and transition.

4. Key Issues

A number of recurring themes arose in discussions:

- attraction and retention of staff
- pre-service education about rural and remote teaching
- student attendance and retention
- residential facilities
- vocational education and training
- a holistic approach
- a place-based suite of products?
- cross-sectorial cooperation and regional clustering.

¹⁰ 2015-2016 focus areas:

1. Access of students in the rural and remote areas of the state to comprehensive education at the senior secondary level (Years 11 and 12) - in its various modes of delivery.
2. Access to secondary school for Aboriginal students.
3. Access to boarding facilities for Aboriginal students.

4.1 Attraction and retention of staff

Quality staff has been identified as a key ingredient in ensuring educational institutions are effective in creating learning environments in which students strive, thrive and achieve. A recurring theme during RREAC's regional discussions over the years has been the ongoing challenges with the recruitment and retention of staff, particularly for schools outside of the major regional town. Issues are complex and have been canvassed elsewhere.¹¹

All schools with whom RREAC met while in the Pilbara have ongoing difficulty in attracting and retaining staff. RREAC heard that in 2015, Karratha Senior High School had 34 new teachers (50% staff turnover). It had also experienced 20 deputies in three years, six principals in six years. However RREAC heard that the school was achieving stability, was involved in regional attraction and retention projects with PERO and had a good rapport with universities. On a positive note it was also observed that a regional focus can also mean longer term staffing of those that commit and *"along with a good mix of relatively new staff this introduces new ways of doing things and new ways to implement curriculum"*.

Such challenges also have consequential effects on staff who are currently employed at the schools including:

- The lack of relief staff leading to -
 - Inability to conduct professional development activities for staff or provide teacher intern mentoring during professional hours
 - Inability for staff to take personal leave when ill as they know that their absence may put stress on the school
 - Difficulties in replacing staff who are on long service leave or leave without pay.
- Higher costs of providing professional development for staff when the cost of a teacher travelling to Perth to do so is in the region of \$1800.

RREAC heard of the need to value investment in teacher quality, with views expressed that to attract and retain quality teachers to the area this would include:

- subsidised, quality housing
- timely and quality maintenance and repair provision
- improved and maintained access to communication (ICT/ telecommunication/video conferencing etc.)
- appropriate infrastructure and service: medical, social, recreational etc.
- building and maintaining robust, consistent and sustainable teacher professional development, performance and accountability processes across all school in the region and comparable to the State.

RREAC notes that the public and private education sectors have put in place various strategies to attract and retain teachers in rural and remote areas including the provision of allowances, subsidised accommodation and additional leave. Such initiatives should continue to be supported and other innovative solutions developed.

¹¹ For example, refer to Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council, (October 2012), *Report on the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council Regional Meeting in Broome*, pages 4-5. Available from: <<http://rreac.des.wa.gov.au/reports/ReportsMinister>> [21/1/16].

4.2 Pre-service education about rural and remote education

One strategy to improve attraction and retention rates is to better prepare students for rural and remote teaching appointments. As part of its ongoing interest in this area, in August 2015 RREAC received a presentation regarding teaching internships from Dr Sue Ledger and Associate Professor Cal Durrant, School of Education, Murdoch University.

While in Karratha, in conjunction with PERO, RREAC arranged a discussion forum to obtain the views of some current and former interns and mentors involved in one aspect of the Pilbara Cities Education Partnership initiative – the Pilbara Cities Internship Program (PCIP).¹²

Internships offered through the PCIP target secondary pre-service teachers in subject areas considered priority appointments in Western Australia. The internship is for the final year of study of a Graduate Diploma or Bachelor of Education. Interns live, work and study in the identified school/ community for the duration of the course of study.

All interns with whom RREAC met were contracted to teach in Pilbara secondary schools for 2016 or were providing relief. All mentors were based in Pilbara schools. The sharing of their experience as part of the regional internship program was immensely valuable for RREAC to understand what it is like to study and commence work in a regional area.

There was a general consensus among participants that the immersive program enabled interns to be better “classroom ready”, and provided a unique opportunity to integrate work and theory, particularly as it pertained to a rural or remote environment. As noted by some participants the program “*Gives you time and space to make a lot of mistakes, trial by error, to test and work out your own pedagogy and teaching style*” and being exposed to the administrative aspects of schooling “*enables you to be well-prepared so when you graduate you can focus on teaching*”. Additionally RREAC heard that an internship reinforced an appreciation of the important relationship between community/school, particularly in rural and remote areas.

During the course of discussion opportunities to refine the program were also explored and RREAC has conveyed these to the program coordinators. Some comments related to enhancing interconnectivity between interns, mentors and participating schools, and others related to pursuing a closer alignment between curricula requirements and practical work experience.

RREAC is of the view that pre-service programs such as the Pilbara Cities Internship Program can assist in promoting the contextual and professional advantages of working in rural and remote education and, with a suite of other support (refer to section 4.1), can assist in the attraction and retention of teachers to rural and remote areas.

¹² Opportunities provided through Pilbara Cities Education Partnership enable the provision of attraction and retention, and e-learning strategies which include teacher development coaches, teacher interns, increased band width, video-conferencing and Connect platform.

4.3 Student attendance and retention

There are significant issues with absenteeism, particularly among Aboriginal students,¹³ which has a direct effect on achievement. Missing three days of school per week amounts to missing up to nearly eight years of schooling from pre-primary to year 12. This is the equivalent of only attending until the end of Year 4.

With regard to secondary school programs PERO advised that Aboriginal students tend to disengage at Year 9 and very few finish secondary schooling. For this cohort, secondary schooling is therefore focused on retention strategies and aspirational pathways.

RREAC learnt of a number of lower and senior secondary school engagement programs being conducted in the region's high schools. Many had achieved success with the engagement, retention and aspiration building of Aboriginal students to Year 12 and beyond. Programs varied between secondary schools although all ran the program "Follow the Dream".¹⁴ RREAC heard of other attendance strategies including "host" and "home" school attendance, and the development of school networks that share funding and resources to strategically support each other in areas (Pilbara, Karinjini and Hedland).

The range of programs being operated reinforced RREAC's view that there are different regional practices to address similar issues. This enables local responses to more local issues. Appendix 4, provided by PERO, illustrates the range of literacy, attendance, and engagement and retention programs in the Pilbara.

RREAC learnt of successful programs at Marble Bar Primary School (2012 Footy Program), Onslow Primary School (universal, targeted and individualised support),¹⁵ Follow the Dream, and the Clontarf Academy. RREAC also learnt of new programs that indicate initial success including The School House Project at Hedland Senior High School, and the Boonderu Music Academy (based out of the Roebourne District High School).¹⁶

Views were also expressed to RREAC that there is a risk inherent in the fact that some programs may be too "person dependent"; that is, fostered through the interest and efforts of an individual, and therefore may not survive staff or leadership turnover. This is a risk in a region where the attraction and retention of teachers is an ongoing challenge (refer to section 4.1).

¹³ Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, (August 2015), *Report 16: Follow on: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*. Government of Western Australia. Available from: <https://audit.wa.gov.au/reports-and-publications/reports> [15/10/15].

¹⁴ *Follow the Dream: Partnerships for Success* is an interagency program managed by the Department of Education and run in collaboration with the Graham (Polly) farmer Foundation and Kurongkuri Katitjin at Edith Cowan University. The program targets Aboriginal students with high aspirations as they commence their secondary education. Through individualised case management in the areas of academic acceleration, longitudinal subject selection, career and transition support, students are encouraged to complete Year 12 and achieve results that enable entrance into tertiary studies. The program can also include high achieving and motivated students undertaking vocational education and training (VET) school pathways, provided they meet the program selection criteria. Available from: <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/aboriginaleducation/detcms/navigation/teaching-and-learning/follow-the-dream/> [21/1/16].

¹⁵ Support includes universal (e.g. school balls), targeted (e.g. classroom targets, points and a prize) and individualised support for child and family (targets, plans home visits).

¹⁶ Boonderu Music Academy – for more information refer to: <http://www.boonderu.com/> [21/1/16].

Complex cultural, social and health challenges influence student attendance and retention. RREAC also heard about the need for a holistic approach to these challenges (refer to section 4.6).

RREAC is of the view that identification and expanded application of successful and sustainable programs, practices and policies which support and improve attendance rates of aboriginal students is essential. Robust strategic planning and the embedding of these programs is advisable to ensure consistency and sustainability.

4.4 Residential facilities

As noted elsewhere, the Pilbara region has a shortfall of some 2,000 15-19 year olds compared with other similarly sized regions because of the trend of families leaving once children reach high school age; a reflection of the perceived limited opportunities in high school and post-compulsory education.¹⁷

There was a consistent thread of thought that some challenges associated with rural and regional education and training may be addressed by the provision of a regional residential facility; that development should be a priority and would add value. Reference was made to regional facilities available in Broome and Geraldton.

RREAC recognises complex issues surround the development, operation and sustainability of residential facilities (whether boarding or school term hostels). There are particular challenges for aboriginal students with differing cultural expectations and needs around a strong sense of community.¹⁸

4.5 Vocational education and training

With the changes in Western Australian Certificate of Education (**WACE**) requirements, education and training has entered a new paradigm in access to, and provision of, vocational education and training (**VET**) in schools (**VETiS**). There is a greater demand on vocational education and training pathways. This paradigm can be challenging in a rural and remote context.

RREAC discussions indicate that VET outcomes are deliverable with some success- RREAC was briefed on the success of a school-based traineeship program in Karratha offered through a registered training organisation and an employer (Children's Service Support Unit

¹⁷ Department of Training and Workforce Development, Pilbara Development Commission, (October 2015), *Pilbara Regional Investment Blueprint*, page 58. Government of Western Australia. Available from: <<http://www.pdc.wa.gov.au/our-focus/pilbara-blueprint>> [8/10/15].

¹⁸ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (March 2000), *National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education* initiated in 1999. *Emerging Themes*, page 17. Available from: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/pdf/human_rights/rural_remote/emerging_themes.pdf> [21/1/16]. Also Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (May 2000), *Recommendations*, pages 52-53. Available from: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/pdf/human_rights/rural_remote/Rec_book.pdf>. [21/1/16].

(CSSU)). However, RREAC also noted feedback from stakeholders that there are a number of issues that keep arising with VETiS in regional areas.¹⁹

RREAC heard anecdotally of:

- limitations in the number of local offerings and availability
- a number of providers offering the same courses
- courses being cancelled after students had achieved number of competencies due to unavailability of staff
- timetabling conflicts reducing a student's ability to access courses at times offered by providers
- difficulty placing disengaged students with employers for work experience; requiring focus on a select group of employers for this cohort
- thin markets requiring new models of access and delivery, especially for students at educational risk
- the possibility of including practical courses such as obtaining a drivers licence and work tickets – how to facilitate this?

RREAC's focus group sessions with industry and service providers evidenced strong enthusiasm and commitment to the region and its education and training pathways and outcomes. Partnerships between industry and government to support educational and training outcomes are considered an important initiative in the region. It is also clear that local solutions to issues must involve the local providers, employers and wider communities.

Industry and community partnerships play a pivotal role in instigating initiatives and leveraging programs including scholarships, mentoring, traineeships and other programs.

RREAC was interested in opportunities to harness individual enthusiasm and alliances into a collective, consistent and sustained hub of support to enhance VET programs, and will explore these matters further.

4.6 A holistic approach

In addition to discussions based in Karratha, RREAC visited Roebourne and spent time at Roebourne District High School, the Mawankarra Health Service²⁰ and Gurlu Gurlu Maya - Roebourne Early Learning Centre.²¹

¹⁹ For example, in the CSSU case referred to, students undertaking a Certificate III in Children's Services in Years 11 and 12 had a high success rate at achieving employment after school – 6/9 students. Although this program has been shown to be successful in Karratha, RREAC was informed that other schools have not replicated the programme as transport and timetabling the program has been a perceived barrier.

²⁰ Mawankarra Health Service is an Aboriginal community-controlled health organisation established in 1985. It is funded to provide a comprehensive and integrated primary health care service to the people of Roebourne, and the related communities of the Pilbara.

²¹ The Roebourne Children and Family Centre (CFC) is funded as part of the *Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development* to provide a range of services for families living within the community of Roebourne and the surrounding towns. Available

At Mawankarra, the service takes a holistic approach to health care delivery. Programs are designed to incorporate Aboriginal community models with western technologies to produce the best health outcomes for their clients. Programs include maternal and child health, chronic disease and primary health care outreach. The Service underwent a major refurbishment in recent years and is now the biggest medical facility in the town, offering alcohol and drug programs.

At Gurlu Gurlu Maya services include approved childcare with a quality early education program and a range of community programs (such as play groups, parenting workshops, holiday programs, cooking classes and adult education programs). The Family Information Support and Help service is also available for the Roebourne Children and Family Centre (CFC), which provides families with access to a trained psychologist. CSSU²² works with a range of providers to cater for the needs of the community through the Roebourne CFC. The Department for Local Government and Communities delivers the Best Start Playgroup for Aboriginal families with the Roebourne CFC. The Best Start program provides early education and parenting support for Indigenous families with children from birth to 6 years. Health providers such as Population Health also deliver services from the CFC, providing a holistic and collaborative spectrum of services to children and families living in Roebourne.

RREAC noted the importance of wrap-around services for children and young people. The work the CSSU were doing to consolidate a sustainable model across communities and grow a local workforce was impressive.

RREAC's experience reinforced its view that "wrap-around services" provision by bringing together the services and activities that children and their families need, is pivotal to community engagement and therefore community health, growth and prosperity.

Strength can be found through the provision of interagency services (for example: child health, parenting skills, drug and alcohol awareness, literacy and numeracy development) through schools; these should be further explored and expanded. In so doing RREAC emphasises the need to ensure a cohesive, complementary, accessible and sustainable suite of programs and services (refer to section 4.7).

4.7 A place-based suite of products?

A common theme expressed by people with whom RREAC met was the need to ensure a cohesive, complementary, accessible and sustainable suite of programs and services. This view encompassed many services (whether education and training, engagement and retention programs, or health and community services).

RREAC heard about lots of "pockets of provision" but there were views expressed that there was also "pockets of absence" both in public and private sector provision.

from: < <http://www.cssu.org.au/childrens-services/childcare-centres/roebourne-early-learning-centre/> [8/10/15)].

²² Children's Services Support Unit (CSSU) Inc. is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1973 to provide childcare services.

There was a significant degree of frustration expressed by people with whom RREAC met. Matters raised included:

- The plethora of programs and funding that exist and the challenge of harnessing this considerable resource to a focused evidence-based approach that delivers real and measurable outcomes.
- The current multitude of services RREAC heard of in Roebourne must be very confusing for people on the ground, especially when it is delivered in a “fly in/fly out, drive in/drive out” model.
- Are there too many providers in one area and none in another?
- How to ensure services are provided in the most efficient and effective way with less duplication and better co-ordination?
- How to ensure that programs that may be “person dependent” as a provider/coordinator can become embedded in a community for continuity and sustainability?
- Can we focus the many players in this space and only promote a few programs that are sustainable?
- How to ensure services are provided in the most efficient and effective way with less duplication and better co-ordination?
- Can there be a coordinated and complementary suite of products that can be funded, which have been tested, that can be offered?
- Can a “bank of ideas” be developed to coordinate offerings to enable community selection and participation in a highly strategic manner with a sustainable collective impact?
- Is there a need to communicate more effectively with local stakeholders the range of programs, funding and initiatives from government agencies – is this an area for improvement?

RREAC notes that there has “*historically been a range of programs and activities funded by the private and community sectors to improve the delivery of education and health in the Pilbara and enhance its outcomes and pathways. However, many have been undertaken in individual towns or schools through individual stakeholder arrangements and not as part of an integrated sector-wide plan.*”²³

The importance of being able to adopt a “place-based approach” whereby you can engage appropriately with community, and gauge and meet the needs of a community was emphasised. Pivotal to this was the importance of developing networks across government departments and agencies for a more holistic approach to meeting the challenges and needs of a “place-based approach” such as that required in Roebourne. It was mooted that this will minimise duplication and unnecessary expenditure, address issues in a more strategic and targeted way, and facilitate local commitment to decisions and planning.

²³ Department of Training and Workforce Development, Pilbara Development Commission, (October 2015), *Pilbara Regional Investment Blueprint*, page 59. Government of Western Australia. Available from: <<http://www.pdc.wa.gov.au/our-focus/pilbara-blueprint>> [8/10/15].

There is a need for the public and private sectors to increase cooperation and collaboration within the region. There were many examples of the positive impact of collaboration and shared focus, however this became more difficult to achieve the further you moved from a significant regional centre.

RREAC supports the development of a mechanism that that will capture and map services and programs available to a region through the public and private sectors with a view to supporting strategic selection, provision, coordination and sustainability of a suite of complementary products. This can assist with adopting a “place-based approach”.

4.8 Cross-sectorial cooperation and regional clustering

Cross-sectorial collaboration touches on the holistic approach and place-based suite of products noted above.

Additionally RREAC noted a tendency for public and private schools to remain autonomous with little evidence of liaison or collaboration at a local level. One school of thought was the possibility of a school cluster board of public and private sector providers to share local knowledge and approaches for the benefit of the whole community.

As noted by PERO - there needs to be a continued focus on the development of strong networks across the region at a network school level to enable schools to deliver education diversity given the contextual differences among schools.

5. Conclusions

General

1. RREAC recognises a number of challenges in the Pilbara region, including lower education participation, retention and achievement outcomes, and the need for more employment and training pathways for students.
2. There is a need to recognise regional differences and challenges, and local differences and challenges within a regional area.
3. It is evident that there is strong passion in the Pilbara towards achieving realistic and practical outcomes, and participants are open to sharing their challenges with RREAC.
4. In light of the decline in the resources sector, there is an opportunity for the region to rebrand itself and this may flow into education and training offerings and employment outcomes.

Attraction and retention of staff and pre-service education

5. RREAC notes that the public and private education sectors have put in place various strategies to attract and retain teachers in rural and remote areas including the provision of allowances, subsidised accommodation and additional leave. Such initiatives should continue to be supported and other innovative solutions developed.

6. RREAC is of the view that pre-service programs such as the Pilbara Cities Internship Program can assist in promoting the contextual and professional advantages of working in rural and remote education and, with a suite of other support, can assist in the attraction and retention of teachers to rural and remote areas.

Student attendance and retention

7. RREAC is of the view that identification and expanded application of successful and sustainable programs, practices and policies which support and improve attendance rates of aboriginal students is essential. Robust strategic planning and the embedding of these programs is advisable to ensure consistency and sustainability.

Residential facilities

8. RREAC recognises complex issues surround the development, operation and sustainability of residential facilities (whether boarding or school term hostels). There are particular challenges for aboriginal students with differing cultural expectations and needs around a strong sense of community.

Vocational education and training

9. Industry and community partnerships play a pivotal role in instigating initiatives and leveraging programs including scholarships, mentoring, traineeships and other programs.
10. RREAC was interested in opportunities to harness individual enthusiasm and alliances into a collective, consistent and sustained hub of support to enhance VET programs, and will explore these matters further.

A holistic approach

11. RREAC's experience reinforced its view that "wrap-around services" provision by bringing together the services and activities that children and their families need, is pivotal to community engagement and therefore community health, growth and prosperity.
12. Strength can be found through the provision of interagency services (for example: child health, parenting skills, drug and alcohol awareness, literacy and numeracy development) through schools; these should be further explored and expanded. In so doing RREAC emphasises the need to ensure a cohesive, complementary, accessible and sustainable suite of programs and services.

A place-based suite of products

13. There is a need for the public and private sectors to increase cooperation and collaboration within the region. There were many examples of the positive impact of collaboration and shared focus, however this became more difficult to achieve the further you moved from a significant regional centre.

14. RREAC supports the development of a mechanism that that will capture and map services and programs available to a region through the public and private sectors with a view to supporting strategic selection, provision, coordination and sustainability of a suite of complementary products. This can assist with adopting a “place-based approach”.

6. Recommendations

That the Minister note this report on the issues noted during RREAC’s meetings in the Pilbara region in October 2015.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 The Pilbara Region

Pilbara Development Commission, Pilbara Workforce Development Plan 2013–2016*

- **Highest level of schooling - lower than the State average.** In 2010, only 80.0% of year 12 students at Pilbara public schools graduated compared with 87.0% for all public schools in Western Australia (Pilbara Development Commission August 2011).
- **Aboriginal persons - education and training.** Aboriginal persons residing in the Pilbara were more likely to have left school in year 8 or earlier, when compared with Aboriginal persons across the State.

The 2011 Census data shows Aboriginal residents in the Pilbara have a lower average level of schooling completed relative to Western Australia's Aboriginal population. In the Pilbara, 19.4% of Aboriginal adult residents had completed year 12. This compares to 20.6% rate for total Western Australia's Aboriginal population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011b).

- **Post school qualifications.** The pool of post school qualifications for the Pilbara is insufficient to meet the requirements of the employment market. The tertiary qualified Pilbara labour force has an overrepresentation of certificate qualified participants, when compared to the State. In the Pilbara an average of 66.8% of adult residents have post school qualifications as per the 2011 Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011e).
- **Training delivery.** Vocational education and training is likely to be the key means of providing the post school qualified workforce in the Pilbara. The Department of Training and Workforce Development's VET Enrolments Data Collection (2011) indicates that in 2010 there were a total of 5150 students funded under the National Training Agreement enrolled in vocational education and training courses in the Pilbara, predominantly studying certificate II and III level qualifications.

As at 31 December 2011, 1472 people were undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships in the Pilbara. The majority were males undertaking certificate III level courses. There is a relatively small pipeline of certificate I and II participants in training. This reduces the pipeline for subsequent training and ultimately for skilled capacity in the local labour force.

* Department of Training and Workforce Development, Pilbara Development Commission, Pilbara Workforce Development Plan 2013–2016, pages 20-22. Government of Western Australia. Available from: <<http://www.pdc.wa.gov.au/our-focus/knowledge-hub>> [8/10/15].

Appendix 2

RREAC Members attending regional discussions

- Hon Robyn McSweeney MLC (Chairperson)
- Hon Jacqui Boydell MLC (Deputy Chairperson)

Community and consumer representatives

- Ms Kylie Catto, President, WA Council of State School Organisations
- Ms Kay Gerard, CEO, Food, Fibre and Timber Industries Training Council (WA) Inc.
- Mr Christopher Mitchell, Executive Officer (Regional Development Australia, Kimberley) as representative for the Western Australian Local Government Association
- Ms Wendy Newman, CEO, Wheatbelt Development Commission as representative for the Regional Development Council
- Mr Lincoln Rose, President, State School Teachers' Union of WA Inc. (SSTUWA), as representative for the STTUWA and the Independent Teachers Union WA
- Mrs Elizabeth Sudlow, Representative, Isolated Children's Parents' Association of WA
- Mrs Brenda Williamson, President Yuna CWA, as representative for the Country Women's Association of WA Inc.

Funder and provider representatives

- Dr Tony Curry, Director School Improvement, Catholic Education Office of WA
- Dr Ross Kelly, Director, Policy, Planning and Research, Department of Training and Workforce Development
- Mr Gary Robinson, Regulation and Compliance Consultant, Association of Independent Schools of WA
- Mr Richard Strickland, Director General, Department of Education Services

Secretariat

- Ms Mia Betjeman, Principal Executive Officer

Appendix 3

Pilbara Regional Discussions – 26-28 October 2015

Date: 26 October 2015		
Name	Position/Organisation	Topic includes
Mrs Pansy Hicks	Ngarluma Elder (Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation)	Welcome to Country
Sue Cuneo	Regional Director, Pilbara Education Regional Office	1. Overview of Pilbara education region; secondary school cohort and programs; access to education; attendance challenges; literacy, attendance, engagement and retention programs; aboriginal education initiatives
Sharon McCawley	Coordinator Regional Services Pilbara Education Regional Office	As above 1
Sue Beath	Manager Aboriginal Education Pilbara Education Regional Office	As above 1
James Gorham	Engagement and Transitions Manager Pilbara Education Regional Office	VET offerings, outcomes and challenges; Aboriginal school-based traineeship programs
Chelsea Miles	Coordinator, Pilbara Cities Education Project Pilbara Education Regional Office	Pilbara Cities Education Partnership projects; attraction and retention of teachers
Greg Kelly	Principal, Karratha Senior High School	RREAC 2015-2016 focus areas – perspective of Karratha Senior High School
Jennifer McMahon	Deputy Principal, Karratha Senior High School	RREAC 2015-2016 focus areas – perspective of Karratha Senior High School
Alanna Otway	Principal, St Luke's College	RREAC 2015-2016 focus areas – perspective of St Luke's College
Aleksander Blazeski	Former intern, Hedland Senior High School	2. Experience as an intern or mentor involved in the Pilbara Cities Internship Program
Nicole Tragenza	Intern, Newman Senior High School	As above 2
Mariam Ghosn	Mentor, Newman Senior High School	As above 2
Paul Natale	Intern, Newman Senior High School	As above 2
Tessie Taylor	Mentor, Karratha Senior High School	As above 2
Aroha Haumaha	Mentor, Karratha Senior High School	As above 2

Date: 26 October 2015		
Name	Position/Organisation	Topic includes
Hayley Clarke	Intern, Karratha Senior High School	As above 2
Andrew Nield	Intern, Karratha Senior High School	As above 2

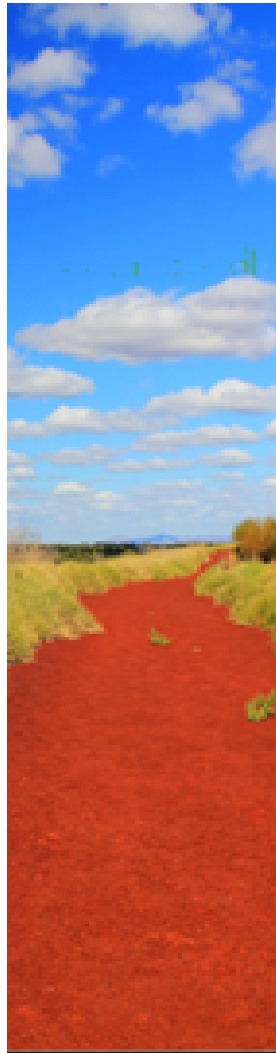
Date: 27 October 2015		
Name	Position/Organisation	Topic includes
Marlene Boundy	Managing Director, Pilbara Institute	3. Challenges, opportunities, industry partnerships and service provision in the VET sector
Danny Brown	Team Leader, IBN Group	As above 3
Bart Parsons	Owner, Blanche Bar & Business Excellence Award winner 2014 & 2015	As above 3
Petina Sharvin	Branch Manager, DFP Recruitment Karratha	As above 3
Tracey Stewart	VET/WPL Administrator, Karratha Senior High School	As above 3
Vicky Dsouza	Head Chef, Accor Group	As above 3
Ingrid Heemsker	Business Consultant AMA Apprenticeships and Traineeships Services	As above 3
Josh Gusthart	Area Manager, Spotless	As above 3
James Gorham	Engagement & Transitions Manager, Pilbara Education Regional Office	As above 3
John Lally	CEO, Karratha Districts Chamber of Commerce & Industry	As above 3
Sam Bullen	Director & Trainer, Children's Services Support Unit (CSSU) Inc.	As above 3
John Jacky	Community Coordinator, Spotless	As above 3
Alison Traine	Director of Training & Commercial Operations, Pilbara Institute	As above 3
Craig Turley	Senior Advisor Communities & Partnerships, Rio Tinto	As above 3
Ellen Kay	Industry Training Consultant, Apprenticeships Support Australia	As above 3
Sharon McCawley	Coordinator Regional Services, Pilbara Education Regional Office	As above 3
Annaleise Wilson	Education & Training Industry Liaison Officer, Pilbara Education Regional Office	As above 3

Date: 27 October 2015		
Name	Position/Organisation	Topic includes
Mary Bato	Former student Karratha Senior High School	4. The experience of being a student or graduate in the Pilbara region (WA Certificate of Education – ATAR and vocational education and training)
Olivia-Fern Marshall	Former student Karratha Senior High School	As above 4
Natalie Jarvis	Former student Karratha Senior High School	As above 4
Melanie Roper	Former student Karratha Senior High School	As above 4
Teliah Patton	Former student Karratha Senior High School	As above 4
Leif Braidwood	Participation Student	As above 4
Tahlia Banks	Current student St Luke's College	As above 4
Emma Lennon	Current student St Luke's College	As above 4
Renee Evelyn Liardet	Current student St Luke's College	As above 4
Grace Simon	Current student St Luke's College	As above 4
Jahdel Baker	Current student St Luke's College	As above 4
Kodie Bicker	Current student St Luke's College	As above 4
Natasha Flaherty	Current student St Luke's College	As above 4
Allisha Kay	Current student Karratha Senior High School	As above 4
Teleatta Quatermaine	Current student Karratha Senior High School	As above 4
Jaxon Withnell	Current student Karratha Senior High School	As above 4
Jake Innarmorati	Current student Karratha Senior High School	As above 4
Hayley Neil	Current student Karratha Senior High School	As above 4
Elli Parker	Current student Karratha Senior High School	As above 4
Daniel Beatie Gilmore	Former student Hedland Senior High School	As above 4
Kristy Dwyer	Current student Hedland Senior High School	As above 4
Wade Nugent	Current student Hedland Senior High School	As above 4
Jack Rogers	Former student Tom Price Senior High School	As above 4
Curtis Hicks	Current student Tom Price Senior High School	As above 4
Shanelle Jones	Current student Tom Price Senior High School	As above 4

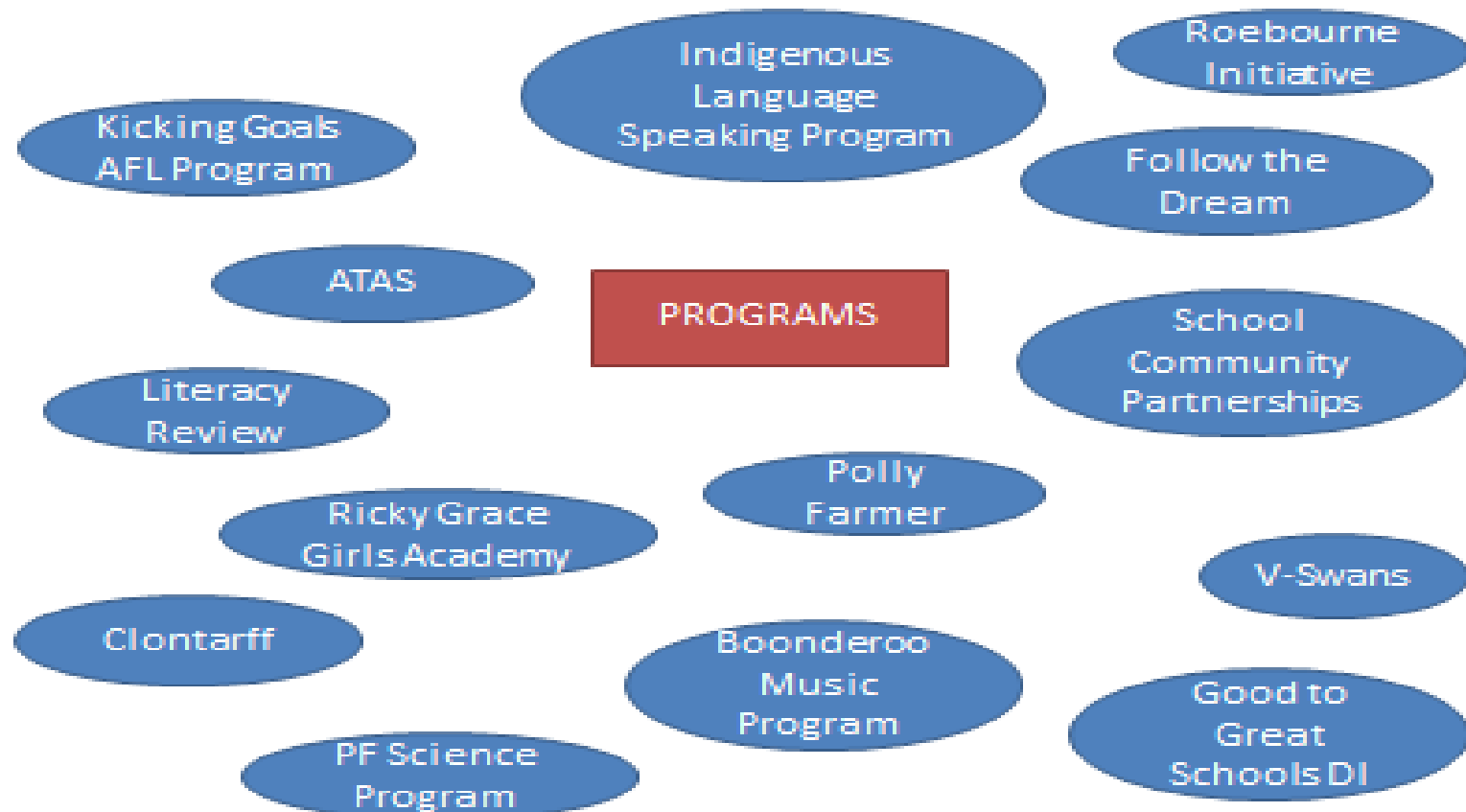
Kobi Hayward	Current student Newman Senior High School	As above 4
Sam Hawkins	Current student Newman Senior High School	As above 4
Marlene Boundy	Managing Director, Pilbara Institute	5. VET provision in the Pilbara, tour and inspection of Pilbara Institute facilities
Alison Traine	Training Director, Pilbara Institute	As above 5
Jan Edwards	Training Director, Pilbara Institute	As above 5
Peter Hiosan	Training Manager, Pilbara Institute	As above 5
Tania Mancer	Lecturer Business, Pilbara Institute	As above 5
Reme Pereira	Lecturer Electrical, Pilbara Institute	As above 5
Greg Kelly	Principal, Karratha Senior High School	Secondary schooling (WACE: ATAR and VET) and tour of Karratha Senior High School
Tracey Bell	Business Manager, Karratha Senior High School	Secondary schooling (WACE: ATAR and VET) and tour of Karratha Senior High School
Alanna Otway	Principal, St Luke's College	Secondary schooling (WACE: ATAR and VET) and tours of St Luke's College and the Trade Training Centre

Date: 28 October 2015		
Name	Position/Organisation	Topic includes
Alice MacPhillamy	General Manager Gurlu Gurlu Maya- CSSU Roebourne Early Learning Centre	"wrap around services" (including early learning, parent centres and health); community engagement, support and collaboration
Monique Wheatley	Business Manager, Mawarnkarra Health Service. Roebourne	"wrap around services" (including health); coordination and interagency/industry collaboration; community engagement, support and collaboration
David Paine	Principal Roebourne District High School	Student attendance, engagement, transition, literacy and numeracy; community engagement, support and collaboration; attraction and retention of staff.
Qynn Beardman	CEO, Boonderu Music Academy (based at Roebourne DHS)	Pilot program; student attendance, engagement, literacy and numeracy; community engagement, support and collaboration

Appendix 4 Literacy, Attendance, Engagement and Retention Programs in the Pilbara.



Literacy, Numeracy, Attendance, Engagement and Retention Programs in the Pilbara



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