

MORAWA & WIDER NORTH MIDLANDS EDUCATION & TRAINING PLAN - OVERVIEW

Students educated in rural and remote Western Australia enjoy many lifestyle benefits and opportunities that are not readily accessible to metropolitan students. However this does not extend to educational and training opportunities.

The Mid West has almost 30% more than the state average of the number of educationally vulnerable students, absenteeism is three times the state average and NAPLAN results confirm that Mid West Public School students are up to twice as likely not to meet National Minimum Standards (NMS) across the categories of numeracy, reading and writing. Secondary attainment rate is 15% below the rest of the State and only 12% of aboriginal students complete Year 12 (Mid West Development Commission Blueprint 2050). It needs to be noted that although these figures are somewhat skewed by the Murchison socio-economics, they remain significant.

Schools in rural and remote Western Australia are under increasing pressure to retain a sustainable number of students. Primary schools have been severely affected through the transfer of Year 7s to high schools. At the same time schools are being asked to do more with less and are receiving less support from Regional and Central Office. Further it is increasingly difficult to attract and retain quality teachers to country areas. The demand upon schools' resources has been further exacerbated by the change in the demographics of rural Western Australia because there has been a take up of cheaper housing by families of lower socio-economic status. The towns and schools of the North Midlands are no exception.

It is more apparent now than ever that the only way that smaller rural Primary Schools, and in turn their towns, are going to survive is through cooperation and collaboration with and between surrounding towns and schools. In the North Midlands it is equally important that an educationally viable regional secondary institution, be established at Morawa District High School (MDHS), with adequate facilities, resourcing, appropriate bus routes and residential accommodation such that Year 7s stay in the District and so do their families. This is consistent with the aspirations of the Mid West Development Commission (MWDC) as spelt out in its 2050 Mid West Regional Blueprint:-

'To build strong viable schools with a hub and spoke model that combines boarding away from home and transport options to ensure sustainable student populations at all schools'.

In mid 2016 the Shire of Morawa with additional funding support from the Mid West Development Commission sought to identify the opportunities and challenges for the Morawa and wider North Midlands communities through the engagement of well-respected educators Peter and Barbara Browne. Their report acknowledged the proactive efforts of North Midland's schools and the strong support for them within their respective communities.

In the course of the development of the report some 95 people were consulted. Included were school governing bodies, Principals and staff, Shire Councillors and Chief Executive Officers, community members, senior officers of the Department of Education, Agriculture and allied industry experts, members of the Morawa Education Industry and Training Alliance, Geraldton University Centre, Central Regional TAFE in Geraldton, the Mid West Development Commission and Aboriginal education experts.

The report identified that schools in the North Midlands are at a tipping point in their quest for sustainability. Without a concerted effort and affirmative action a number of schools may face the prospect of closure. Along with general economic conditions and the consolidation of farming land, the Government decision to move Year 7 students to high school has severely impacted school numbers and the viability of towns. Many parents believe their children are too young to board at that age and so move the whole family to either Perth or a large regional centre. The towns with secondary students have fared better but if the primary schools that surround them fall away, so in time will the District High Schools.

Although the Western Australian College of Agriculture-Morawa (WACOA-M), and Morawa and Carnamah District High Schools (DHS), are somewhat protected from the Year 7 transfer, by having secondary students, the other Primary Schools in the region are being significantly impacted. From 2012 to 2016 there has been a decline of over 20% in Primary numbers in the North Midlands (Schools on Line).

The purpose of this Ten Year Education and Training Plan for the Shire of Morawa and the wider North Midlands, that identifies realistic and achievable education and training initiatives. These, when implemented, will not only help students in the area have access to a wide range of educational and training opportunities but also help stabilise the populations in Morawa and other towns in the North Midlands. Further the Plan makes Recommendations for ways in which the MDHS-WACOA-M IPS cluster can expand in numbers and gain greater standing and status through specialisation and differentiation.

The work done by Peter and Barbara Browne emphasises schools will only survive if formalised education clusters are established with a school-of-choice District High School as a hub. To transform the current North Midlands District High Schools into schools that can compete with metropolitan or larger regional schools, is going to require major changes, including a quantum shift in resourcing and staffing, and a cultural shift in the thinking of many community members. The report provides realistic and achievable education and training actions for consideration.

MORAWA & WIDER NORTH MIDLANDS EDUCATION & TRAINING PLAN – CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

There are several important initiatives that provided important background information when developing the Ten Year Education and Training Plan for Morawa Shire and the wider North Midlands. These are outlined as follows.

Morawa was identified as a Super Town in 2012 as part of the State Government's plans for Regional Development. This status afforded Morawa the opportunity, and indeed the responsibility, to collaborate with other education and training providers in the surrounding North Midlands. The following excerpt from the *Super Town Growth and Implementation Plan 2012* paints a useful background to this paper:

‘As a Super Town, Morawa has the opportunity to increase its amenity and services that will not only benefit the Morawa community, but will also benefit surrounding towns in the region. Morawa will play a vital role in being part of a network of towns that benefits from not only strengthening Morawa, but sees mutually beneficial services across the towns of Perenjori, Three Springs, Mingenew, Mullewa, Carnamah, Coorow and Yalgoo. Morawa will continue to develop the range and quality of its education and training services and will develop into a Centre of Excellence associated with education, training and employment’

In other sections of the document it states:

‘Morawa will also develop into a recognised ‘Centre of Excellence’ for education, training and innovation, providing Trade Training courses associated with the WA College of Agriculture as well as establishing an Industry Training Centre to provide training opportunities for young people seeking a career in the mining industry. The Morawa District High School will continue to develop its curriculum, and will provide competitive schooling within the region, which will assist in attracting and retaining young families in town. The Morawa Education and Industry Training Alliance will continue to play an important role in governing education and training projects for the region. Morawa, having being selected as a SuperTown for the North Midlands sub region, will play an important role in leadership and service delivery for the region well into the future. The communities of the North Midlands sub region have the opportunity to partner together to develop and cohesive and integrated governance framework to build upon the clear vision offered by this Growth and Implementation Plan and to continue to progress key projects and capitalise on the significant opportunities that the region offers. The key message arising from this Growth and Implementation Plan is that the North Midlands region has a significant opportunity to increase the level of services, infrastructure and social amenity now, and it is only through a strong and committed partnership approach between the communities, government, industry and stakeholders, that this opportunity can be harnessed to deliver the level of services and amenity required of the region’

In reference to Morawa becoming a Centre for Excellence for Education and Training for the North Midlands, *The Super Towns Growth and Implementation Plan* goes on to state: *Morawa will continue to develop into a 'Centre of Excellence' providing high quality education, training and research and development services to the North Midlands sub-region and beyond. In this role, Morawa's District High School will continue to be improved so that it is competitively placed alongside Perth and Geraldton schools. Morawa will also continue to develop and provide trade training and industry training courses as well as the potential to incorporate an electronic training hub providing 'real time' interactive tertiary courses at a facility based in Morawa. With this leadership already in place, Morawa seeks to become the recognised 'Centre of Excellence' for education, training and innovation of the North Midlands region'*

The Morawa Super Town Growth and Implementation Plan also proposes that an Industry Training Centre (ITC) be established at Morawa as it *'will play a critical role attracting business growth and will position Morawa as a prominent education and training hub in the Mid West region'* by enabling:

- *Facilitation of a sub-regional Workforce Development Hubs across the Mid West region.*
- *Access to information on career and training opportunities, well as opportunities to continue education and professional development within Morawa.*
- *Development of a variety of accommodation to meet needs of key groups such as service workers, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.*
- *Development of a regional workforce to support the forecast growth in the mining infrastructure sectors.*
- *Further development and promotion of an integrated education and training services model for the region.*
- *Industry and government buy-in to the education sector within Morawa.*
- *Creation of employment opportunities in Morawa.*

Complementing the Morawa Super Town Growth and Implementation Plan is a Key Action from the *North Midlands Economic and Development Strategy (NMEDS)* released in 2013 which states: *'Explore how industry and training/ education sector partnership models, such as Morawa Education and Industry Training Alliance (MEITA), can best be utilised to satisfy future sub-regional training and employment needs. This will require ongoing consideration of opportunities for training local and non-local workers in skills relevant to local industry. This initiative should also explore the opportunities to strengthen links between training and local industry, focussing on providing direct pathways for graduates to be employed locally.'*

The Morawa Shire Council as a member of the Morawa Education Industry and Training Alliance (MEITA), and as a further demonstration of its commitment to ensuring quality education in the area, commissioned the Ten Year Education and Training Plan.

Initiatives over the past ten years at both MDHS and the WACOA-M also provide important background information. In 2005 WACOA-M and the MDHS decided to mesh timetables and become an integrated learning community for Years 10, 11 and 12. In 2011 MDHS and WACOA-M applied to form an Independent Public School Cluster (IPS) and in 2013 they became officially known as the Morawa IPS. Year 10, 11 and 12 students are now able to study an extensive range of subjects, both ATAR and VET across the two schools in a peaceful, farm and school setting.

The release of the MWDC Regional Blueprint 2050 in 2015 provided further important background information. The Executive Summary of the MWDC Regional Blueprint 2050 states the following Education and Training Challenges:-

1. *Challenge: Ongoing and expanded investment is needed to support facilities and programs that deliver successful early education and parenting outcomes across the region.*
2. *Challenge: Build strong viable schools with a hub and spoke model that combines boarding away from home and transport options to ensure sustainable student populations at all district high schools.*
3. *Challenge: To build strong, viable and seamless primary to secondary education opportunities that meet the needs of every Mid West student.*
4. *Challenge: The region's educational attainment rates are poor across most primary and secondary education cohorts.*
5. *Challenge: Continued planning and investment in priority education infrastructure is necessary to meet future regional education, training and workforce development needs throughout the Mid West.*
6. *Challenge: Despite having excellent higher education and training providers the region's tertiary attainment rates are well below the broader norms (there are opportunities to leverage off the region's state of the art higher learning providers to improve higher education and training outcomes).*
7. *Challenge: The potential of technology and virtual learning is not being fully utilised (or available!!) to optimise education delivery throughout the region. (there are opportunities to utilise technology and virtual learning platforms to link education and training delivery with a range of innovative Mid West projects in areas such things as radio-astronomy, renewable energy and remote services.*

8. *Challenge: Attendance, attainment and retention levels of Aboriginal students are low in comparison with non-Aboriginal students in the Mid West.*
9. *Challenge: Regional and remote schools face particular challenges with teacher recruitment and retention, which can significantly impede the standard of education received by students.*
10. *Challenge: To enhance Mid West student aspirations and awareness of educational pathways.*

The release of the Super Town Growth and Implementation Plan in 2012, the North Midlands Economic and Development Strategy (NMEDS) in 2013, the establishment of the forerunner of MEITA in 2006, the 2013 Morawa IPS Cluster initiative, and the release of the MWDC Regional Blueprint 2050 in 2015, all provided the context for developing the Ten Year Education and Training for Morawa Shire and the wider North Midlands.

MORAWA & WIDER NORTH MIDLANDS EDUCATION & TRAINING PLAN - SUMMARY

Priority areas were identified in the Browne's consultancy, each representing a focal point for action by all levels of Government and local communities to ensure the viability of the schools and quality education for all children in the North Midlands.

Areas for consideration from the consultation across Morawa and the wider North Midlands schools were identified as:

1. Early Childhood Education
2. Declining School Populations
3. Limited Residential Accommodation
4. Student Welfare
5. Disengaged students
6. Aboriginal Education
7. Attraction and Retention of Staff
8. Breadth and Depth of Learning Opportunities
9. Infrastructure and Facilities
10. Career Pathways and Post School Options
11. Digital Infrastructure and IT
12. Reputational Management

Key Recommendations in the Report relate to:

- The Morawa Independent School Cluster of Morawa District High School and the Western Australian College of Agriculture-Morawa, positioning itself by all means possible to become the 'school-of-choice' for secondary education in the upper part of the North Midlands;
- That Morawa District High School be recognised as a K-12 Regional College for the North Midlands region with appropriate resourcing, bus routes and expanded residential facilities; that the governance of such a Regional College should in part be shared by contributing communities;
- That Carnamah be recognised for the capacity to cater for Years 7-10 in the lower North Midlands; and that Primary Schools throughout the North Midlands, where practicable, should form clusters with shared governance.

MORAWA & WIDER NORTH MIDLANDS EDUCATION & TRAINING PLAN – DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

From the areas identified from the consultation process conducted across Morawa and the wider North Midlands schools, the following specific recommendations are provided:

1. Early Childhood Education

- 1.1 That MDHS lobby and seek funding for a Child and Parent Centre (Family Centre) to be built on the school site as soon as possible
- 1.2 That MDHS be proactive in forming an Early Childhood Cluster/Hub with Perenjori, Mingenew and Three Springs
- 1.3 That MDHS continues implementing of early intervention initiatives to decrease the number of developmentally vulnerable children entering Kindergarten

2. Declining School Populations

- 2.1 That MDHS be recognised as the North Midlands Community/Regional College (NMCC/NMRC)
- 2.2 That the proposed NMCC/NMRC be the hub of a North Midlands Education and Training Cluster (NMETC), with the WACOA-M being an Associate Campus
- 2.3 That a model of Governance for the North Midlands Community/Regional College (NMCC/NMRC) be established, such that the communities of the surrounding towns have a significant say in policy establishment and strategic direction

3. Limited Residential Accommodation

- 3.1 That the residential campus at the WACOA-M be extended to cater for 100 WACOA-M students plus 20 beds for students attending MDHS
- 3.2 That current bus routes be reviewed with the intention of establishing 'express runs' to Morawa for Year 11-12 secondary students from towns in the wider North Midlands

4. Student Welfare

- 4.1 That MDHS seek funding for a building to house the Middle School cohort of Years 7-9 or alternatively, for the refurbishment of current buildings
- 4.2 That MDHS continues to implement specialised Year 6/7 transition programs
- 4.3 That MDHS develop, in consultation with feeder primary schools, common pastoral care and behaviour management policies and practices

5. Disengaged students

- 5.1 That MDHS continues to develop alternative learning pathways with specific engagement programs and practices, beginning in the early childhood years to the senior schooling years
- 5.2 That MDHS investigate implementation of a SHINE program for girls

6. Aboriginal Education

- 6.1 That MDHS play a lead role in the establishment of a North Midlands component of a Mid West Centre of Excellence: Alternative Learning (CEAL) either on-site in Morawa or off-site such as a Residential College at Tardun or similar
- 6.2 That MDHS introduce specialist aboriginal engagement programs such as those offered through the Polly Farmer Foundation, Follow The Dream and other Clontarf programs, and other programs such as those offered at Sevenoaks Senior College
- 6.3 That MDHS continues to develop pathways to MEEDAC programs especially those based at the Karara Geoff Wedlock Innovation Park, and other work based training programs available through GUC and the Geraldton Campus of the Central Regional TAFE

7. Attraction and Retention of Staff

- 7.1 That the WACOA-M and MDHS strengthens Teacher Training partnerships with the Geraldton University Centre and practicum teachers and the Geraldton Campus of the Central Regional TAFE and to host students doing their teacher training
- 7.2 That the proposed governing body of the North Midlands Education and Training Cluster (NMETC) develop a Career Incentive Package (CIP) for graduates considering teaching in the proposed cluster
- 7.3 That the Morawa Shire lobby for improved housing and rental subsidies that will help to attract teachers to Morawa

8. Breadth and Depth of Learning Opportunities

- 8.1 That MDHS and WACOA-M continue to grow resources to deliver more face-to-face senior secondary courses, including a gifted and talented program and ATAR pathways,
- 8.2 That MDHS and the WACOA-M further develop GATE, ATAR and VET pathways offered through the tertiary system
- 8.3 That the WACOA-M purchase more arable land so as to offer relevant and innovative learning programs not offered at the other Agricultural Colleges
- 8.4 That the WACOA-M either purchase or lease sufficient pastoral property so as to deliver a full range of contemporary pastoral studies

9. Infrastructure and Facilities

- 9.1 That MDHS and WACOA-M lobby for asset upgrades that provide purpose built, attractive and modern school buildings and are commensurate with the role that the NMCC/NMRC will play in the Mid West
- 9.2 That an audit be undertaken of buildings in Morawa, particularly the Brookfield mixed accommodation Village that could be used for additional accommodation

10. Career Pathways and Post School Options

- 10.1 That staff from MDHS and WACOA-M continues to assist parents in the feeder schools surrounding Morawa, to plan school and career pathways for their child through to post school education and training options
- 10.2 That MDHS and the WACOA-M develop partnerships with and other Universities and tertiary institutions that offer courses relevant to rural communities
- 10.3 That MDHS and the WACOA-M develop a 'careers and courses' pathways package for the North Midlands showing pathways to courses of study that develop skills and knowledge identified as being most in demand by employers
- 10.4 That the WACOA-M Trade Training Centre and Trailer facilities be heavily promoted for training purposes particularly in feeder schools and the Murchison

11. Digital Infrastructure and IT

- 11.1 That the Shires and schools in the North Midlands should lobby forcefully State and Federal government agencies and make representations to politicians, for reliable internet of sufficient broadband width to deliver online teaching and learning programs for primary, secondary and tertiary students
- 11.2 That the WACOA-M and MDHS continue to develop studies in the Application of IT in Agriculture and Agribusiness
- 11.3 That MDHS and WACOA-M strengthens strategies to ensure that socio-economically disadvantaged students have access to a range of electronic learning opportunities

12. Reputational Management

- 12.1 That a professional advertising agency be engaged to promote the Morawa IPS Cluster of WACOA-M and MDHS as being a school-of-choice for secondary education in the North Midlands
- 12.2 That parents from the surrounding feeder primary schools be involved in setting policy and practices in the proposed NMETC, through a governance structure that sits separately to those decision making bodies such as the P and Cs, IPS Boards and School Councils already in place
- 12.3 That the educational and training opportunities available through the Morawa IPS Cluster, be promoted at all levels of the media including social media

CARNAMAH & COOROW OVERVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS

The main focus of this Ten Year Education and Training Plan is on the Morawa Shire and its surrounding communities, which is essentially the upper part of the North Midlands. Much of the discussion and subsequent recommendations relate therefore to Morawa and the Shires of Perenjori, Three Springs and Mingenew. At the request of the Mid West Development Commission focus has also been placed on planning for education and training in the lower section of the North Midlands with special reference to Carnamah Shire, with Carnamah DHS and Eneabba PS, and Coorow Shire with Coorow PS and Leeman PS.

The 'secondary hubs' for the lower North Midlands are Carnamah DHS and Jurien Bay DHS. They must be resourced appropriately and become the school-of-choice for parents, at least until their children complete Year 10, rather than sending them away to board at the end of Year 6. Without retention of a much larger number of Year 6 students going into Year 7-10 at their local 'secondary hub' the smaller North Midlands schools and hence towns, will be decimated. The Department of Education and the Regional Education Office should be proactive in brokering and formalising arrangements of cluster primary schools around their 'secondary hubs'. This will help communities to keep their local school and the social fabric of their towns.

Natural 'secondary hub clusters' in the lower North Midlands go outside the North Midlands boundary as defined by the MWDC. Jurien Bay DHS and Moora SHS tend to be options preferred by parents of Leeman and Coorow PSs. Carnamah parents who do send their children elsewhere for Years 7-10, tend to opt for Moora SHS or Perth rather than northwards to MDHS. These variations need to be accepted and fostered in the interests of students receiving the very best education that is possible. Cluster/hub arrangements will change shape over time due to many different circumstances.

It is an advantage in a 'hub and spokes' cluster model if, as far as possible, there is a comfortable meshing of policies, procedures and timetables. This will assist students in their transition to secondary and help avoid behaviour and achievement slippage that so often occurs at this point. Meshing of timetables is not easy but is well worthwhile in the long term. It provides greater opportunity to share teachers and resources as well as providing broader and deeper learning opportunities for students.

The change in the demography of towns has meant a considerable drop in the Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA). There has been an increase in the number of low socio-economic and dysfunctional families, often with limited parenting skills, being moved into rural towns throughout the North Midlands. This is presenting challenges for the schools in many ways, the main one being behaviour management and disengagement with the learning process. It is impacting on the school's reputation and requires careful management especially at a time when many families are not seeing their local school as a school-of-choice.

The following recommendations are provided in relation to Carnamah & Coorow:-

- 1. That the magnitude of the declining school population crisis in the lower North Midlands should be recognised by all stakeholders as having the potential to close schools in the next ten years and severely damage the economic and social fabric of associated towns;*
- 2. That the Regional Education Office should play a leadership role in establishing formal structures to maximise collaboration and cooperation between primary schools and establishing clusters based around the secondary hubs of Carnamah DHS and Jurien DHS. Further that formal cluster governance structures should be established;*
- 3. That Carnamah DHS and Jurien Bay DHS be appropriately resourced and staffed as 'secondary hubs' so they become a school-of-choice for secondary schooling for students living in the lower North Midlands;*
- 4. That Carnamah DHS establish a clearly identifiable Middle School with a strong emphasis on pastoral care, behaviour management and student outcomes;*
- 5. That Carnamah DHS School Council and the Shire Council forcefully lobby their local members and the DOE to ensure that Carnamah DHS has appropriately qualified secondary specialist teachers;*
- 6. That the non-IPS schools in the lower North Midlands strive for IPS status;*
- 7. That the considerable capacity of Local Governments to improve teacher attraction and retention, teacher housing, school resourcing and school services, should be harnessed;*
- 8. That all Shire and school stakeholders should work together to address the inadequacies of the current and proposed broadband provision that is and will, continue to limit education and training opportunities in the North Midlands;*
- 9. That the value and use of electronic delivery should be embraced by schools in the lower North Midlands;*
- 10. That Carnamah DHS collaborate with MDHS to share lessons through electronic delivery. Further that the two schools should share secondary specialist teachers where possible;*
- 11. That the towns without Family Centres should endeavour to establish such a Centre or similar;*
- 12. That all schools should maximise the implementation of early childhood programs that would lead to a decrease in the number of developmentally vulnerable children entering schools;*
- 13. That all schools in a 'hub and spokes' cluster arrangement should share the same behaviour management and pastoral care policies;*
- 14. That schools in the lower North Midlands should collectively form a Teacher Training Partnership with the Geraldton University Centre;*
- 15. That relevant individuals and organisations should work to ensure that their communities improve participation in TAFE and Higher Education. Further that the Geraldton Campus of the Central Regional TAFE and GUC should be invited to community awareness raising forums;*
- 16. That towns without Community Resource Centres, should establish community study centres with adequate broadband;*
- 16. That schools with increased numbers of aboriginal students be staffed and resourced appropriately;*
- 17. That facilities be made available for disengaged students. Further that towns of the lower North Midlands should work with other Mid West towns to establish a Regional re-engagement centre in an appropriate location such as at Tardun; and*
- 18. That the Carnamah community embark on a professionally based marketing campaign to promote Carnamah DHS as a secondary school-of-choice*

MORAWA & WIDER NORTH MIDLANDS EDUCATION & TRAINING PLAN – NEXT STEPS

The Report will be provided to the Morawa Education & Industry Training Alliance (MEITA) and Mid West Development Commission for their consideration and likely be the catalyst for MEITA's development of a rigorous implementation plan that identifies resourcing requirements which will underpin a submission to Government.

Further consultation will need to be initiated with the Shires of Carnamah and Coorow around the specific findings and recommendations relating to the lower North Midlands. Ideally any proposals that are accepted by these communities should align with the upper North Midlands in terms of a potential joint subregional resourcing submission to Government.

Through cooperation and collaboration with and between surrounding towns and schools the implementation planning seeks to have educationally viable educational facilities that will not only help students in the area have access to a wide range of educational and training opportunities but also help stabilise the populations in Morawa and other towns in the North Midlands – effectively delivering community revitalisation through education!