
MEDIA RELEASE

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PRINCIPALS FROM AROUND AUSTRALIA HEAD TO NEW FLINDERS COURSE IN RURAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

An Australian-first postgraduate course in rural education at Flinders University aims to boost the capacity and retention of rural educational leaders, and its first 21 students meet on campus on Monday (July 7) to begin the course.

The students, from as far afield as Horn Island off the tip of Cape York, outback Queensland, rural New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria, are all leaders from schools or pre-schools in their local communities, and will commence their Master of Education (Leadership and Management) degree with a launch in the School of Education at Flinders.

The course has been devised by Flinders University and Principals Australia Institute to focus on rural and remote issues, and the students' tuition and research costs will be funded by a \$414,000 gift from the Origin Foundation.

Professor John Halsey, the Sidney Myer Chair in Rural Education and Communities at Flinders, said exceptional educational leaders are critical to ensuring high quality education and care in country Australia.

"This degree is all about acknowledging that rural educational leadership requires specialised study in order to build relevant professional capacity, knowledge and skills," Professor Halsey said.

The participants will have the opportunity to study managing innovation and developing people in organisations and planning change, as well engaging with fellow educational leaders around some of the demanding challenges facing rural educational leaders, such as the education of children with specific learning needs, managing finances and designing individualised curricula.

"Rather than settling for reactive responses to rural challenges, the Masters course will assist leaders to develop their individual capacities for the long term," Professor Halsey said.

"Their schools and students, and their communities, will all benefit substantially."

Principals Australia Institute CEO Mr Jim Davies said one of the Institute's goals is to address the relative isolation that principals in rural and remote locations often experience.

The course will be taught and supported in a blend of face-to-face modes and online modes in which the participants will join a virtual learning community.

“Engaging with rich and diverse professional discourse will foster the formation of dynamic rural educational leaders,” Mr Davies said.

Mr Sean Barrett, Head of the Origin Foundation, said: “We want all children to have the same opportunities, but according to research, children in regional and rural communities are not performing at the same level as those in metropolitan Australia.

“One way of tackling that is to make sure that schools in regional and rural communities have the best principals. Principals in these communities have greater and different challenges to those in cities. After completing this Masters course these principals will have the additional skills to make their schools as successful as possible.”

The first cohort is expected to graduate at the end of 2016.

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