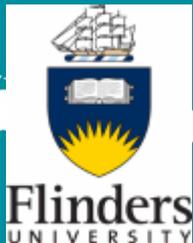


Ten myths about remote communities and schools

Remote Education Systems project



6 March 2019

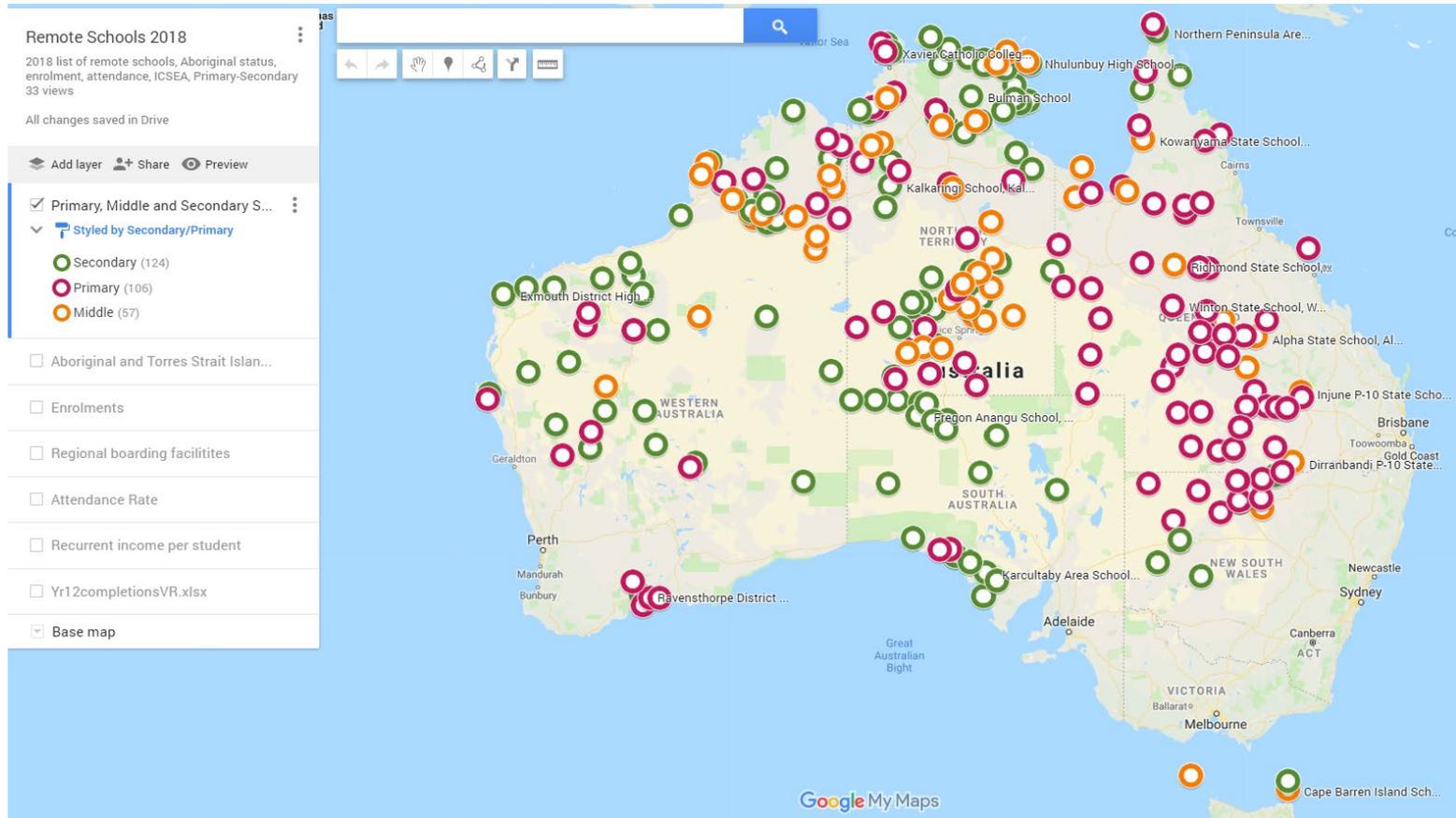


Acknowledgments

Before schools there was education



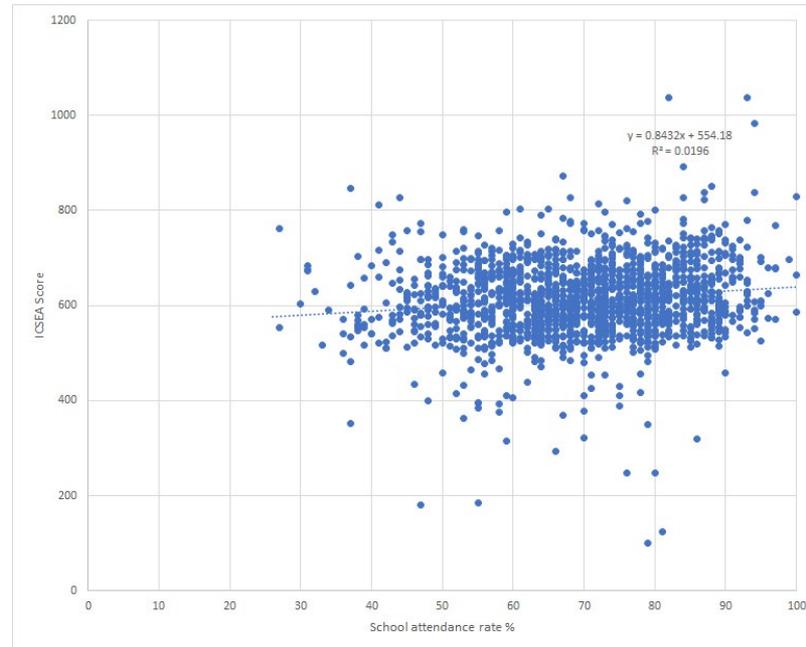
- Very Remote Schools



<https://tinyurl.com/y58xqwbj>

Myth 1. Remoteness is a disadvantage

- Remoteness is a geographical concept that assumes there is such a thing as a 'centre'



Myth 2. Being Indigenous is a disadvantage

- ‘Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage’ (SCRGSP 2014)
- ‘Closing the Gap’ agenda (Australian Government 2019)
- But surely the evidence shows that Indigenous people are poor, behind, dysfunctional, die young and ARE therefore disadvantaged?
- BUT who measures these things? Do the measures reflect a particular set of ontologies, epistemologies, axiologies and cosmologies? Do they attempt to measure advantage from a remote Indigenous standpoint?
- The indigenous disadvantage myth denies Indigenous agency.
- It is blind to the **non-Indigenous disadvantage** that exists in remote communities.

Myth 3. There are no jobs in remote communities

- The 'real jobs' mantra... (Scullion 2014, and Australian Government 2019)
- Data shows that non-Indigenous employment in remote communities has grown considerably
- AND unemployment rates in communities is not as high as you might think, though labour force participation is relatively low
- BUT who defines what work is?
- AND what kind of jobs are schools preparing young people for?
- ANYWAY, who of us wants a 'real job'? Wouldn't we rather have 'unreal jobs'?



Myth 4. Education (or training) is the 'key'

- Human Capital Theory: education → economic prosperity
- What doors does education unlock?
- But in remote communities, >30% of all jobs require nothing more than Year 10 AND/OR no post-school qualifications
- Post school qualifications among Indigenous people increased 6x in the 10 years to 2011, but employment only increased by 10%
- So what is education for?



Myth 5. Remote communities (and schools) are unsustainable

- 'Lifestyle choice'?
- What defines 'sustainability'?
- The welfare 'problem' (Forrest 2014)
- The cost of closure: who remembers the Kennett years in Victoria?
- Whose costs matter?



Myth 6. We've just got to get kids to school

- Do attendance strategies work?
- RSAS, SEAM, Truancy Officers..., Early Years investments
- Does increased attendance lead to improved school outcomes?
- Does increased attendance lead to economic prosperity?
- “How can the kids learn if they don't go to school?”

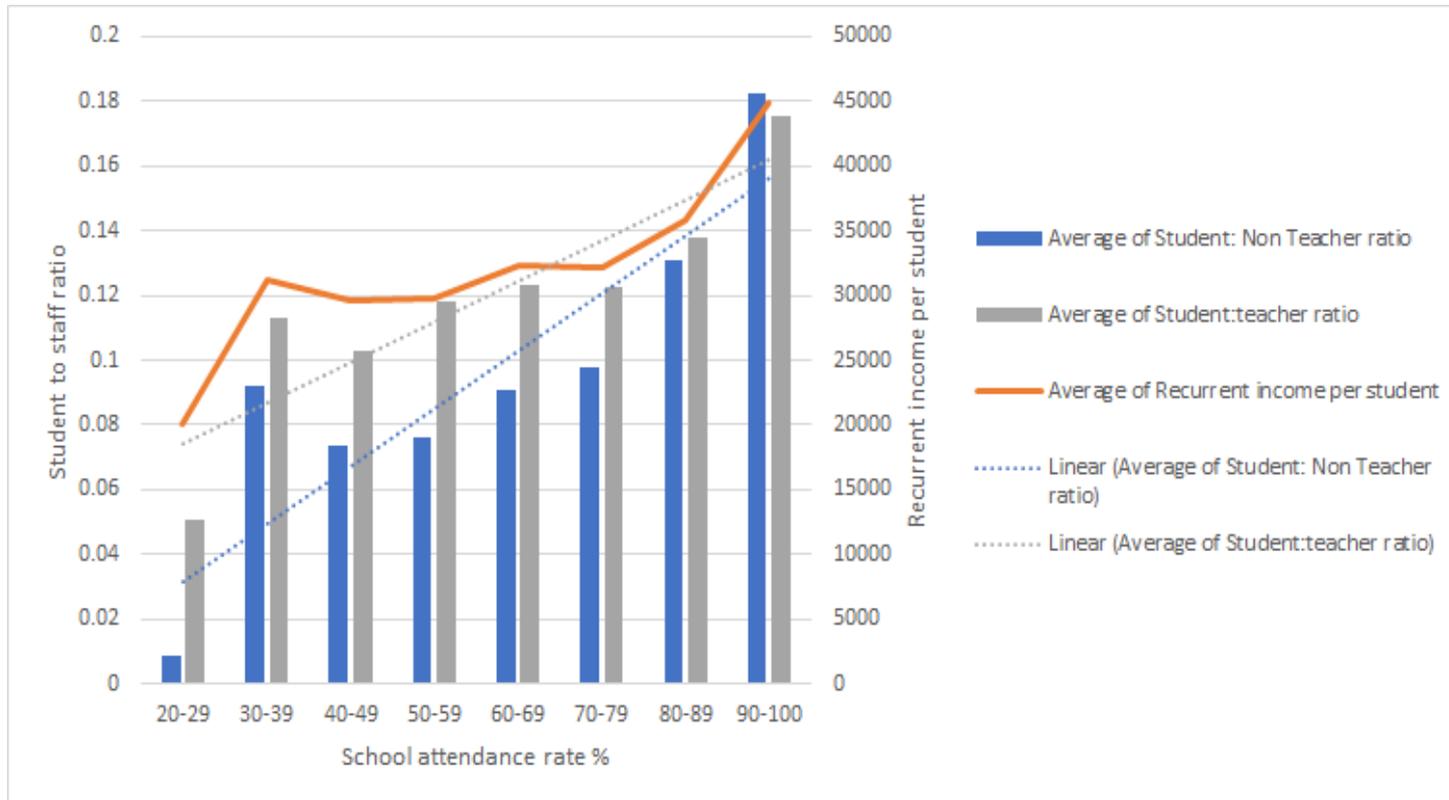


Myth 7. (Quality) teachers make the most difference

- Hattie's (2003) oft cited claim
- Poor teachers and teaching the blame for poor outcomes.
- But what defines a quality teacher? Qualifications? Experience? Or something else?



Positive outcomes when schools employ locals



Source: Analysis from My School data (2008-2014)

Myth 8. More money makes no difference

- Evidence supports a view that greater investment in schools doesn't make a difference to educational outcomes (see Mundine in The Australian 28/8/15).
- BUT in remote schools, more money *does* make a difference to attendance and academic performance, provided it is directed at students.
- Teacher financial incentives are not the solution.

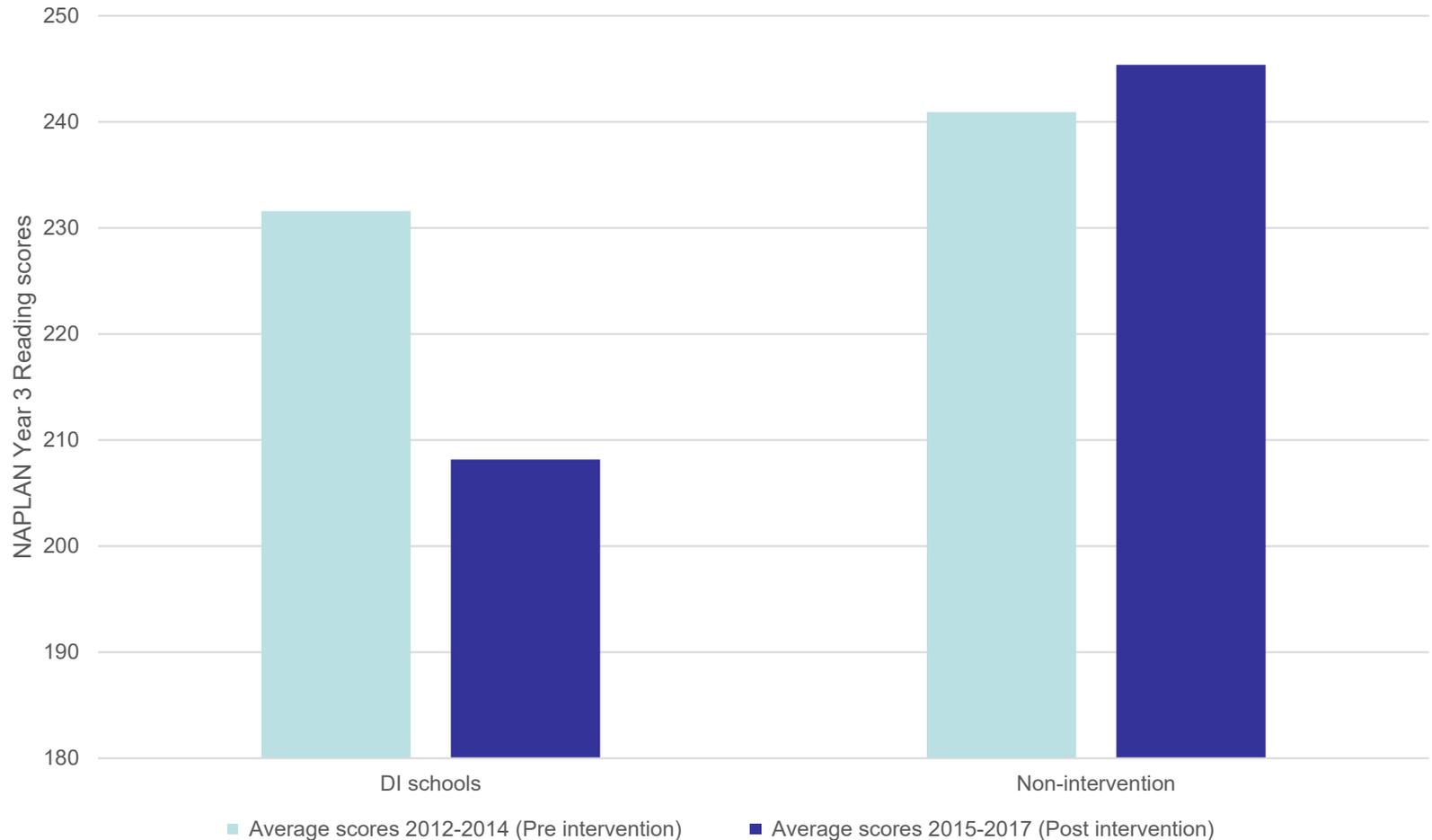
Myth 9. Boarding schools will solve the problem of remote education

- Wilson's (2014) review of Indigenous education in the NT
- AIEF and other proponents of boarding (Pearson 2014, Langton in ABC 2014)
- But what do we know about the outcomes of boarding for students?
- And what do we know about the outcomes for communities of a concerted push to educate kids out of communities?



Myth 10. What works? Evidence based programs?

\$30 million later...



Why these myths continue

- They self-propagate (like Myth 7 and 10)
- They make sense if what is valuable is determined in the metropolis (like Myth 1) or those invested in their assumptions (like Myth 4)
- They rarely get challenged (like Myth 6)
- They roll off the tongue and are easy to repeat (like Myth 2 and 3)
- There are vested interests to ensure they continue (like Myth 8)
- No-one has bothered to do the research (like Myth 9)
- The implications haven't been thought through (like Myth 5)
- Misunderstanding of the context
- Political and philosophical imperatives

Suggested readings

- Guenther, J., Bat, M., & Osborne, S. (2013). Red Dirt Thinking on Educational Disadvantage. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 42(Special Issue 02), 100-110. doi:10.1017/jie.2013.18
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- Scullion, N. (2014, 24-25 May 2014). 'Intervention focus on 'real jobs'. *The Australian*.
- Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision [SCRGSP]. (2014, November 2014). *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2014*. Retrieved, December 2014 from http://pc-temp.clients.squiz.net/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/181909/key-indicators-2014-report.pdf
- Wilson, B. (2014, May 2014). *A share in the future: Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*. Retrieved, May 2014 from http://www.education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/37294/A-Share-in-the-Future-The-Review-of-Indigenous-Education-in-the-Northern-Territory.pdf

More about remote education

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/John_Guenther2

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