

SA SiMERR Summit

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Project Title	SA SiMERR Summit (Pilot)
Project Team	Jim Davies, Will Morony Alan Barnes Carol Aldous, Julie Clark (SiMERR SA), Dr John Halsey (Rural Education Forum Australia and Flinders University), Kevin Hosking (Nuriootpa High School).
Period	May 06 – October 06
Funding Agency	SiMERR
Organisational Base	SiMERR SA

Description

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SiMERR SA is acutely aware that its activities are, and should be, informed by the direct input of educators and other stakeholders in rural and regional SA if it is to be a valued contributor to the health of rural and regional education over the long term. A range of formal and informal consultative processes have been identified as a means of establishing SiMERR SA as genuinely connected to its country constituencies. The idea of a 'Summit' is to provide a structured forum in which issues in a particular area can be identified and explored, with a view to SiMERR SA working with the people from that area to make progress in addressing these.

The aim of a SiMERR SA Summit is to:

- Take SiMERR SA to the 'people' — it is 'their' initiative;
- Make contact with, and enlist the involvement of, a broad range of key stakeholders;
- Build the commitment for addressing the issues (in the data and in their minds);
- Test the usefulness of key directions and begin to get down to the practicalities; and
- Listen to the advice.

An initial one-day pilot Summit was held in Port Pirie in September 2006, attracting around 30 participants. The program included a keynote address from the SiMERR National Director to set the scene and identify for participants the challenges facing rural and regional educators. There was also input on school-industry link programs that are currently working in other locations. The bulk of the day was given over to discussion between participants. An extensive report has been developed and published by SiMERR SA. This includes evaluation of all aspects (preparation, promotion, attendees, program etc.) of the pilot Summit, and recommendations for any future summits.

Participants

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Thirty-five teachers people attended the Summit, in addition to those listed above. There was one person from a local company, and one from the TAFE sector, two from the local DECS office and two from central office. The rest of the participants were teachers and leaders from local schools (primary, area and secondary).

Findings

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Purpose Evaluation

Take SiMERR SA to the 'people'

The effort of coming to the country by SiMERR SA was appreciated by the participants. They gained initial awareness of SiMERR SA as having potential to help in some ways or other; it is essential that SiMERR SA follow up to make this a reality, even if only in small ways.

Make contact with, and enlist the involvement of, broad range of key stakeholders

The Summit was not successful in attracting the participation of non-school people. Follow-on activities may help achieve this.

Build local commitment for addressing the issues

Certainly those present appeared to already be committed to improving science, ICT and mathematics outcomes. The next step of trying to influence leaders and others across the District is needed to generate a critical mass of commitment and efforts (and this will need to engage the wider community). The role for SiMERR SA in this, if any, will need to evolve over time.

Test the usefulness of key directions and get down to the practicalities

Certainly the Data Research project was confirmed as timely and useful. SiMERR SA interest in improving distance education outcomes was also seen as useful, as was the more general capacity to help share information and expertise.

Listen to the advice

Participants' advice was insightful and clearly expressed — it has been captured in the report.

Outcomes

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The major tangible Outcome has been the evaluative report Summary of discussions and evaluation of pilot.

Impact

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This project has informed further work by SiMERR SA on a range of fronts, and resulted in some contact with individuals and schools from the district, both under the SiMERR SA banner and otherwise. However, the benefits that have accrued to SiMERR SA and/or to the schools as a result of the pilot were limited. The relatively small human and financial resources of SiMERR SA meant that it was not feasible to work towards a major initiative in and with the district as a direct result of the Summit. As a result, there were no further Summits — the capacity to mount a major, collaborative project as a tangible outcome from a Summit of this kind is seen as critical, and SiMERR SA has not been able to build this into any further events of this nature.

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