Supplementary questions

1. Would a change to require Special Religious Education to be delivered outside of school hours free up more time for curriculum?

Yes, this possibly would free up more time for curriculum. For small, isolated schools the flying padre comes to the school once a term and delivers mental wellbeing aspects as well as religion so would not like to see something like this change.

2. What assistance have isolated families received for improving access to the internet during the COVID period?

NBN fast tracked the NBN Skymuster Plus so that un-metering of data for certain platforms eg. Zoom etc are not part of data usage. There is a lack of digital literacy and people are still using mobile towers for internet, these towers did become overloaded and slow, and there was a two month wait for Skymuster Plus. Another problem with NBN is the cost in isolated areas, the cost for NBN can be up to $190 per month this is with some limited data, in cities you can access unlimited data for $60 or less, so this is also prohibitive for some families. NBN reduced the cost for some low socio-economic families but still with some limited data.

3. How many isolated students were in need of devices to be able to undertaken their schooling during COVID restrictions? How many were provided with these devices?

For our members, students should have their devices ready for the start of the school year, but as there is only one person who installs and services for distance education and School of the Air this does not always happen. Students do not always have their device ready to start the year in their isolated classrooms this is regardless of COVID or not. There is only one computer per family allocated in the distance education and School of the Air isolated classrooms, until a third child begins school, or you have twins starting. This reduces time students have on their computer and learning with a face-to-face teacher. It can inhibit other subjects as they may need their computers for videos or research.