Katie Grub has received Premier’s Teacher scholarship at Parliament House on Saturday 30 August by the honourable Mike Baird MP. Katie will spend 35 days in China in May/June 2015 to:

Examine best practice teaching strategies of how to include the Cross Curricular strands of Sustainability and Australia’s Engagement with Asia into Distance Education beginners Chinese language programs with development of ICT pathways and authentic resources to support learning.

In her application Katie outlined how:

- Young Australian learners of distance education are unique. A large majority are from Aboriginal backgrounds, special needs or talented (e.g. young pro surfers) who are learning in isolation. To help increase student engagement, bust ‘stereotypes’, and perceived difficulty of the language, authentic language and cultural tasks connected to the environment whilst directly relating to the Personal Worlds of young Australian learners need to be explored.

- Research shows that once the environment becomes your playground a strong relationship is established with it and this is one strategy for the sustainability theme to be threaded into language courses whilst still meeting content requirements. The emergent surf, skateboarding, associated Chinese youth culture and how they relate to the environment will be explored, as well as sustainability initiatives such as the Green Fence Policy, organic farming, and sustainable design. This will provide an opportunity for learners to develop global connections and perspectives.

- Working in a regional area where there are minimal opportunities for engaging in language specific professional development, has led to content focussed language courses that include only token aspects of traditional culture. Speaking to educators, business leaders and community in the PRC will enable the researcher to obtain the tools to develop strategies and understandings on language concepts and components to create culturally rich and interesting task based learning that includes the cross curricular and general capabilities in an integrated way.

The study will aim to prove that cross curricular themes can be linked to the topics of The Personal World and included in beginners Chinese language courses that will enhance interacting, producing texts and understanding texts. The basis of this study encompasses activities that align to the dimensions of the Quality Teaching Framework of Intellectual Quality, High Quality Learning Environment and Significance, ultimately enabling students to become deeply engaged in their learning.

In China, Katie will be involved in the following activities:

1. Learn about relationships between digital media, lifestyle sports and the environment. Emerging surf culture in China, sustainability and cultural identity. How to include the topic of sustainability into language programs.
2. Visit Charles Lanceplaine who is a film maker, photographer & ICT specialist covering youth culture in Shanghai and surrounds and will share knowledge and footage of river surfing, street skateboarding that features Chinese youth speaking about their daily lives, music, fashion & the environment – he will take Katie to visit the skateboarding community at Love Park – Shanghai
3. Visit Shang-ri la Institute for Sustainable communities. The Shang-ri la Institute will help to organise a visit to some of the 14 water schools e.g. Yan’an Middle School, Huaping
Primary School & East China Normal University no. 2 affiliated middle school.

4. Visit Green Initiatives to include sustainability into education programs and develop links to other ‘green’ initiatives in Shanghai like building initiatives, sustainable social enterprises.

5. Beach clean-up activities with local community

6. Visit Typhoon Surf Club and local areas to have access and gain insight into a sub-culture within China that is not well known and the local community life and how they relate to their natural environment. To obtain resources for the blog, virtual tour and to experience local environmental programs

7. To visit the RYue Bay Surf Team and participate in surf education activities – children learning to surf. Obtain information about their experiences and connection to the environment – to participate in beach clean-up activities with local schools and to see how they are including environment into their studies. Work on setting up a sister school relationship