

## **PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL**

### **RURAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS REPORT**

#### **Jane Cunningham – Portfolio Holder, March 2023**

At the 2022 State Conference one motion was present by the Goldfields Eyre Branch in regard to the state of disrepair and lack of services offered at the Fairbridge WA run camp schools, in particular Goldfields Camp School in Kalgoorlie.

Fairbridge took over the running of the Dampier, Geraldton, Point Perron, Pinjarra, Pemberton and Kalgoorlie Camp Schools in 2018 with a press release from the Hon. Sue Ellery stating that, *“Staff are committed to providing students from all schools in Western Australia with an affordable and high-quality camp experience.”*

Disappointingly, our members have been reporting a degradation of facilities and poor-quality camp experiences at Fairbridge run camp schools, specifically the Geraldton and Kalgoorlie sites. This is of particular concern to the Goldfields Eyre Branch, as the termly School of the Air camps have been impacted significantly.

In May 2022, letters were sent to the CEO of Fairbridge and Hon. Sue Ellery, Minister for Education.

At the June face-to-face meeting, ICPA (WA) met with Ms Mirina Muir, the CEO of Fairbridge. Ms Muir was not aware of what School of the Air was and the significance of camps each term for children and their families.

Ms Muir met with us again at the October face-to-face. During this meeting, she acknowledged that after our first meeting she had a much greater appreciation of the need for Kalgoorlie School of the Air to access appropriate facilities at the Kalgoorlie Camp School. We were told that she would be visiting the sites late last year and there were changes being put into place.

On 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023 I received an email stating, *“There isn’t much more I can add. I have been discussing your situation with the Department of Education and how next we can assist you. These are ongoing discussions.”*

Some changes have been made, but as it stands, the camp school is still not a suitable venue for our students and their families to stay. Currently, families are staying in a local caravan park.

Ms Ellery was disappointed to hear about the declining conditions and facilities at Kalgoorlie and Geraldton Camp Schools and arranged to send representatives to inspect the sites. We were due to meet with Ms Ellery online to discuss these inspections and how we can move forward on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022. Unfortunately, approximately an hour before our scheduled meeting, there was a Labor Government Cabinet reshuffle and Dr Toni Buti was appointed as the Minister for Education, so our meeting was cancelled. Dr Buti has been contacted and we are waiting patiently for his team to contact us to arrange a meeting.

#### **STAFFING OF RURAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS**

2022 saw a continued difficulty to staff some regional and remote schools.

There has been a notable increase in the number of teaching vacancies filled by an unqualified teacher with a limited registration. These appointments are usually pre-service teachers, or untrained teachers with specialisations in specific subject areas which have been difficult to source. These are usually students in their fourth year, though there are reports of many second and third year trained teachers in our regional schools.

### **INCENTIVES TO BOOST TEACHER SUPPLIES**

On November 13<sup>th</sup>, Minister Ellery announced \$12.4 million to boost regional and remote teacher supply. The aim, to attract more teachers to 48 Western Australian schools that are harder to staff. It includes one-off payment incentives payments for 2023, varying from \$5000 to \$17 000 depending on location.

While these new immediate measures target WA's hardest-to-staff schools, the State Government continues to work with the Commonwealth to address the national teacher shortage. This includes development of a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan with Education Ministers from around the country and an extra \$328 million in funding announced by the Federal Government for associated actions aimed at attracting, training and retaining educators.

On December 7<sup>th</sup> additional initiatives were announced to boost teacher supply for WA public schools.

The package of new measures includes:

- Provision of an Attraction and Retention Initiative payment of \$5,000 to new and existing teachers working in education support schools and centres in 2023
- Establishment of a pre-service Teacher Recruitment Pool to support pre-service teachers with limited registration in their final year of study while they are employed
- Broader eligibility requirements to employ registered teachers with a three-year qualification, with targeted training to support those who are new to WA's public school system
- Trialling Highly Accomplished, Lead Teacher (HALT) positions to support quality teaching in regional secondary schools experiencing staffing challenges
- Additional stipends of up to \$700 per week for final year secondary pre-service teachers undertaking a placement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) learning areas.