

TEACHER EDUCATION PORTFOLIO CONFERENCE REPORT – June 2024

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of all teachers and teacher aides, especially those who work in our small rural and remote schools across the state, and those who deliver lessons into some of the remotest of remote schoolrooms via Schools of Distance Education.

The nationwide teacher shortage continues to exacerbate the already difficult task of attracting and retaining quality educators in rural and remote areas. Additionally, the cost-of-living crisis has also created restrictive financial barriers to those pre-service teachers wishing to undertake rural and remote placement. The high costs associated with travel and accommodation during mandatory placement, coupled with the loss of income from part-time employment, whilst still having to maintain their usual student accommodation is creating 'placement poverty' for these students. A noticeable number of enquiries around the ICPA Branch Incentives for Pre-Service teachers have been made by students and university placement officers, in a bid to source additional funding to alleviate the financial burden of placement. The costs of travelling long distances to rural and remote areas, along with high priced and often 'in demand' accommodation, have seen some students having to forgo the enriching and diverse experience that rural placement offers. Positive rural placement experiences are critical to the conversion and uptake of rural teaching positions by young graduates, which in turn assists in the attraction and retention of teachers in these challenging times. State Council would like to thank those branches who offer this financial assistance and would welcome the support of other branches as these incentives have been shared with universities. The additional financial assistance may help attract pre-service teachers to your area. *News and Views* would be more than willing to share the support shown by the branch and allow the experience of rural placement to be showcased.

ICPA Qld values the working relationship and opportunities provided by the QCT (Queensland College of Teachers), the regulatory body for the teaching profession in Queensland. It works in the best interest of the public and the profession to ensure teachers are qualified, current in their practice and suitable to teach students. In October 2023, the QCT provided the opportunity to participate in the Teacher Supply, Preparation and Employment Partnership Forum (TSPEP) where the work of ICPA Qld and perspectives from rural and remote areas were very much welcomed.

Home Tutor Recognition & Career Pathway Development

ICPA Qld 2023 State Conference saw a motion calling for the formal recognition and creation of accredited training pathways for Home Tutors to not only recognise the skillset gained within a distance education home classroom, but to also improve future employment opportunities.

Within the motion explanation, the joint initiative between the Northern Territory Government and Charles Darwin University, Certificate III / IV in School Based Education Support, Home Tutor Pilot Program was referenced. Particularly, the importance for Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) and the need to address and dismantle current barriers associated to the required 100-hour placement of these courses.

A pre-conference session at ICPA Federal Conference in Darwin and the ongoing assistance of Kiya Gill of ICPA Northern Territory, has provided a valuable insight into the process, challenges, and barriers of the Northern Territory model. To assist with the understanding of Home Tutors within Queensland, the ICPA QLD Home Tutor survey was developed and circulated through various channels. The survey attracted 200 responses from across all areas of the state and unanimously showed a strong level of interest from Home Tutors to have their skillset recognised by formal qualifications. It also showed that a 'Parent' was the main person

who performed the role of a Home Tutor, that pathways to become Teacher Aides and qualified Teachers were preferred. Interestingly, 75 responders indicated that the main reason for their interest in upskilling was to assist with future employment opportunities within rural and remote communities where they currently reside. State Council would like to thank all those who participated in the survey and supplied additional comments as it has provided valuable information and formed a solid foundation to move forward with.

The Teacher Education Portfolio team identified that to establish a robust Home Tutor Education program in Queensland it would require buy-in and commitment from all involved parties. During delegations, councillors sought input around this proposal from the Rural & Remote Division of the DoE including the Distance Education Teams, TAFE QLD, Universities, and the Queensland College of Teachers. There has been interest from all stakeholders given the focus areas identified by the 'National Teacher Workforce Action Plan'. This potential cohort who possess prior workplace experience transferrable to teaching, and who already live in areas typically difficult to resource is primed for higher education providers and RTOs to establish tailored, stackable, and micro credentialled programs. This silent and untapped workforce would greatly assist with the current skills shortage. Furthermore, this is an opportunity to recognise the skills of an overlooked group of mainly women, who have sacrificed their income earning capacity due to being a Home Tutor. By attaining formal qualifications this initiative stands to equip Home Tutors/Governesses with universally recognised skills to either assist with supporting students via Distance Education or providing future employment opportunities within the education sector.

ICPA Qld is currently working collaboratively with TAFE QLD, who are best positioned to provide support in thin markets, in consultation with the DoE, to support the development of a Queensland Home Tutor Education Pilot Program. Initial investigations to identify the diverse scenarios and barriers that Home Tutors are uniquely faced with to ensure programs will meet the needs of the potential suite of participants are currently being collated. ICPA Qld would welcome any interested Home Tutors to become involved as this initiative evolves.

ICPA Qld is committed to ensuring that the vital role that Home Tutors play in assisting the delivery of Distance Education is formally recognised and their skillset is supported to gain formal qualifications. This will assist with future employment pathways, whilst maintaining the integrity of the teaching profession to ensure there is a consistently high standard of educators and teacher aides servicing our rural and remote areas.

I would like to thank those councillors who are stepping down for their assistance over the past 12 months, in particular, Mrs Anneli Day for her mentorship with the Teacher Education portfolio. I look forward to working alongside my fellow councillors into 2024 to provide an all-important voice for our members to ensure the continued advocacy for equitable education outcomes.

Sonya Shelley
Teacher Education Portfolio Leader