



## 2025 Rural Schools Federal Conference Report

### Nikki Mahony -QLD

ICPA (Aust) thanked Minister Clare for including ICPA (Aust) as a stakeholder in the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) Ministerial Reference Group. The National School Reform Agreement is a joint agreement between the commonwealth, states and territories to lift student outcomes across Australian Schools.

<https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/review-consultations/ministerial-reference-group>

Federal Council participated online and in person in these discussions and reiterated that we looked forward to continued involvement.

A Summary report can be found here: <https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/resources/better-and-fairer-education-system-consultation-paper>

The above report echoes the concerns of many members. Attraction and retention of teachers in our rural, remote and regional schools is difficult due to the complexities of the environment they find themselves in. The report acknowledges that some schools find it hard to attract and retain skilled teachers, these schools are often in rural, regional, and remote locations.

The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (December 2022) was developed by all education ministers across Australia. This plan is well underway and is designed to attract teachers in all areas of education, both in the metropolitan and rural areas. There are five priority areas – two that deal directly with improving teacher supply and keeping the teachers we have.

ICPA (Aust) is encouraged that all governments are finally recognising the shortage of teachers in our schools and are putting plans in place to address this worldwide concern. Unfortunately, it is rural and remote schools that are often at the wrong end of the supply chain when teachers are deciding which school best meets their needs and metropolitan schools are often favoured over rural and remote schools for teaching placements.

#### **Incentivising experienced teachers into rural, regional & remote positions**

The Rural Schools portfolio received one motion from the Goldfields Eyre branch in Western Australia at the Federal Conference in Sydney in 2024, again reiterating the need for national awareness and incentive programs.

A letter was sent to the Minister for Education, Hon Jason Clare MP in September 2024 acknowledging the national teacher shortage and requesting the federal government continue to explore options for incentive programs to attract experienced teachers to rural, regional, and remote schools.

The Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship Program and special measures to reduce the HELP debt for teachers in very remote areas of Australia were announced in 2023.

During our May 2024 delegations to Canberra, Federal ICPA Council confirmed our support for the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships, however also raised concerns that this is a missed opportunity for rural and remote schools. ICPA (Aust) believes this scholarship could be an excellent opportunity to include a rural and remote school teaching position as part of the qualifying criteria, or an extra financial



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incentive if teaching in a rural and remote school was undertaken. Federal Council implored the Federal Government consider including a rural and remote incentive into the scheme.

More information on these programs can be found on the following links.

<https://www.education.gov.au/teaching-scholarships> <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-loan-program/reduction-help-debts-teachers-very-remote-areas>

In response to ministerial letters in 2024, ICPA (Aust) acknowledged that while State Governments are responsible for employing teachers and have varying incentives to encourage teachers to rural schools, it has been our experience that these incentives are not always well advertised and experienced teachers often think these are graduate positions only when they are actually open to all teachers.

As well as requesting federal funding for national incentives that would address teacher shortages nationwide and better support States, ICPA (Aust) advised that a Federal Government run advertising campaign pitched at experienced teachers and their families to encourage them to “go bush” would also be beneficial.

### **Paid Pracs**

Members of ICPA Aust. welcomed the Federal Government’s announcement that students studying to be a teacher, nurse, midwife or social worker would now be eligible to receive \$319.50 per week while on a compulsory practicum placement. During Canberra delegations in May 2024, ICPA Federal Council also requested that paid practicums be extended to include students in the allied health areas as we can see that this would have a significant impact in supporting rural and remote schools.

While advised by some ministers that this was unlikely to happen it was suggested that a HELP reduction type scheme would be more beneficial to attracting university graduate students to rural and remote schools. ICPA Aust. has appealed to the Federal Government to explore options for such a scheme.

The roll-out on July 1 highlighted several gaps and issues – for example Diploma of Education students NOT being eligible under the scheme despite needing to meet same prac placement requirements.

Anyone experiencing issues with prac placement process and eligibility, PLEASE fill out lived experience forms and contact us with your specific case studies.

### **Skilled Visas**

One potential tool to address the national teacher shortage sits within the immigration portfolio - Australian work visas for teachers and early childcare educators from overseas. Education providers have the option to sponsor educators and teachers to work in Australia via a **Temporary Skill Shortage visa (subclass 482) or Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186) visa**. At present the category of Primary School Teacher (ANZSCO 241213) is on the STSOL (short term skills occupational demand list) and not eligible for application under subclass 189 (MLTSSL; Medium- and Long-Term Strategic Skill List). All primary teaching applicants must be state sponsored under the subclass 190 or 491.

ICPA (Aust.) has written to The Hon Tony Burke MP - Minister for Home Affairs, Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Cybersecurity and Arts - requesting the Federal Government consider including Primary School Teacher into the MLTSSL list and also consider a secondary quota with rural and remote placement conditions for all teachers. The response from Minister Burkes office is below;

*“The Government remains committed to supporting the education sector to address workforce shortages, including in regional Australia. Applications for employer sponsored visas for teachers in regional Australia*



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are currently being processed as the first priority, along with applications for occupations in the education sector across Australia, see: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-processing-times/skilled-visa-processing-priorities>.

While I acknowledge that the Skilled Independent (subclass 189) visa is not available for primary school teachers, there are a range of other visas available including regional visas; the Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (provisional) (subclass 494), employer sponsored stream and the Skilled Work Regional (provisional) visa (subclass 491) which is a State or Territory nominated visa for primary school teachers. On 7 December 2024, the Government replaced the Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visa with the Skills in Demand (SID) (subclass 482) visa. The Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) applies to the Core Skills stream of the new SID visa, of which Primary School Teacher (241213) is included. This list also applies to the Direct Entry stream of the permanent Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS) (subclass 186) visa, see <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/Visa-subsite/Pages/work/skills-in-demand-482-landing.aspx>

Thank you for raising this matter”

ICPA (Aust) will continue to follow the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan and the National School Reform Agreement. We invite members to contact Federal Council for any further information.

### **Additional PACER Rebates to Continue in 2025**

While no changes have been made to account for remoteness and ease of access to transport options, the temporary 50% increased PACER rebate rate (2024) will in the very least going to continue throughout 2025.

The rebates are per student travelling and are based on schools distance to Canberra (as the crow flies!)

The Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) is an initiative of the Australian Government which provides financial assistance for students in Years 4-12 across Australia to travel to Canberra, the nation's capital. To be eligible schools are required to participate in PACER approved programs with at least three of the four Mandatory PACER Institutions booked when submitting an [Online Application](#).

### **2025 PACER ZONES WITH ADDITIONAL LOADINGS**

FOR SCHOOLS WITH ICSEA 1000 OR LESS  
AND REGIONAL OR REMOTE SCHOOLS

ZONE	DISTANCE (KMS)	2025 REBATE PER STUDENT	ADDITIONAL LOADING SCHOOLS ICSEA 1000 OR LESS	ADDITIONAL LOADINGS TO ATTRACT PARTICIPATION FROM REGIONAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS		
				50% ICSEA 1000 or below	150% Outer regional	200% Remote
0	0 - 140	\$5	\$0		\$0	\$0
1	150 - 400	\$30	\$75	\$45	\$60	\$75
2	500 - 800	\$45	\$100	\$60	\$80	\$100
3	1000 - 1499	\$90	\$45	\$135	\$190	\$225
4	1500 - 1999	\$150	\$75	\$225	\$300	\$375
5	2000 - 2999	\$300	\$150	\$450	\$600	\$750
6	3000 +	\$510	\$255	\$765	\$1,020	\$1,275



#### NOTES:

- \* Zone 5 includes all students from Tasmania because of air/sea travel expenses.
- Remote islands get an extra \$120 for additional costs.
- The additional 50% rebate amount still applies as shown in column 4 of the table.



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For more details, visit the PACER website ( [www.Pacer.org.au](http://www.Pacer.org.au) )

We encourage all members to keep up the pressure for modifications to remote areas in these zones. We would love any case studies to support our argument.

### **Joint Council Portfolio catch-up**

In November 2024, ICPA State and Federal Rural School portfolio leaders met over zoom to give updates and discuss possible supportive actions moving forward. The team also discussed the introduction of a new curriculum for teacher education at universities, the positive outcomes of a trial program conducted by the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE), and the potential for Prac students in WA to stay in residential colleges for rural and remote placements. Other topics included the challenges and solutions related to schools facilities, the department's efforts to address housing issues for staff in rural and remote areas, and the ongoing issue of workload for principals in small one-teacher schools. Louise Martin (Federal President) shared her experience at the first-ever parent roundtable meeting with the Minister for Education, where she highlighted the issue of declining Naplan results and the need for better-skilled teachers in rural areas.

Thank you for your case studies and for bringing issues to the attention of ICPA Aust. Please continue to submit these to support the advocacy for our rural schools, teachers and students.

“Lived experience” (case study) forms can be found on the website and are the most useful tool we have in being better able to explain and provide meaningful context for all your issues that we advocate for, so I encourage you to make good use of them.