



2026 Rural Schools Report

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Better and Fairer Schools Agreement Progress report – Rural Perspective

The Australian Government's Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (BFSA) marks an important step forward in both school funding and national education reform.

As a progress update, the report outlines early implementation of a 10-year plan to bring all public schools onto a pathway to full and fair funding through the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), alongside the rollout of targeted reforms in literacy, numeracy, student wellbeing and teacher support.

The move toward transparent, needs-based funding, combined with clearer accountability and measurable national targets, provides a stronger foundation for improving outcomes — particularly for students in regional, rural and remote communities. Early recognition of workforce pressures and administrative burden also reflects issues long raised by rural stakeholders.

The report correctly highlights that this work is still underway.

From a rural perspective, several areas remain in development. Workforce challenges — particularly the attraction and retention of experienced teachers in rural and remote schools — continue to be a key issue. The specific operating context of small schools, including teaching principals and limited staffing structures, is not yet fully reflected.

Distance education and geographically isolated learners are also not strongly visible within the current framework, despite being a core part of education delivery in many parts of Australia. Similarly, access to secondary pathways, including boarding and subject availability, remains an area for further consideration as implementation progresses.

Practical equity measures, such as the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER), also continue to present opportunities for refinement to better reflect the realities of distance and access.

Overall, the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement demonstrates clear progress and intent.

The opportunity now lies in ensuring that ongoing implementation continues to evolve in a way that reflects the diversity of Australia's education landscape — including the unique needs of rural and remote communities.

True equity will be achieved not only through funding reform, but through policy that continues to adapt to place, access and lived experience.

ICPA (Aust) maintain open channels of communication with the Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP and appreciates the opportunity to participate in the National Parent Roundtable discussions with face-to-face meetings in November 2025 and March 2026.

Paid Pracs

Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) settings will be reviewed in 2027-2028 so ICPA (Aust) will continue our advocacy in this space.

For CPPs already in existence, if anyone is experiencing issues with prac placement process and eligibility, PLEASE fill out lived experience forms and contact us with your specific case studies.

Incentivising Experienced Teachers

Attracting and retaining experienced teachers in rural, remote and isolated schools remains a long-standing priority for ICPA (Aust). Families continue to raise concerns about the impact of teacher shortages, staff turnover and limited access to experienced educators on student learning, continuity and wellbeing.

ICPA (Aust) has continued to advocate for stronger incentives and targeted measures to support the placement and retention of quality teachers in these communities. In response to correspondence on this issue, the Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP, acknowledged the importance of access to quality teachers for all students, regardless of location, stating:

“Ensuring access to quality teachers is critical to giving every child the opportunity to thrive at school, regardless of where they live. The Australian Government is working with states, territories and non government sectors through the Better and Fairer Schools Agreements to prioritise academic success for students from regional and remote locations, and build a strong and sustainable workforce.

In September, the Department of Education convened a national teacher workforce roundtable. In response, Education Ministers have asked the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to scope a review of the teacher and principal standards. Consultation with the profession, including those teaching in isolated communities, will be included in this process. “

PACER

PACER (The Parliament and Civics Education Rebate) has been moved from Rural Schools to the Student Travel portfolio in 2026, where it technically belongs.