

INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

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Summary

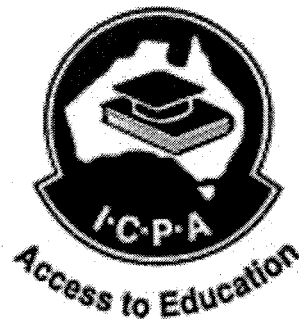
Response

to the

Inquiry into the Recruitment and Training of Teachers

from the

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW Inc.



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Inquiry into the Recruitment and Training of Teachers.

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW Inc, (ICPA-NSW), welcomes the opportunity of responding to the Inquiry into the Recruitment and Training of Teachers.

ICPA-NSW is a voluntary parent body dedicated to ensuring that students from rural and geographically isolated areas of NSW have equality of access to education with that experienced by their urban peers.

Teaching has suffered in recent years from a loss of status, which in turn has discouraged young people, particularly males, from undertaking training in this profession. Graduates need to be able to inspire their students to achieve and strive for their best, irrespective of their colour, race or ability.

Our society is made up of students with differing abilities, backgrounds and opportunities. Education in our schools provides them with the key to their future.

ICPA's comments in this submission reflect the attitudes in many rural and isolated communities towards teachers. There is a real need for quality teachers in these areas and for well-equipped young people to enter and remain in the teaching profession.

(a) the best means of attracting quality teachers to New South Wales public schools and meeting the needs of school communities.

1. In meeting the needs of school communities the teacher needs to be aware of **how small rural communities operate** – the interdependence of schools and the community. There should be (as ICPA has requested in the past) a rural schools or small schools component included in all primary and early childhood education degrees.

2. **Incentives need to be available** to meet the needs of quality teachers in isolated areas – not necessarily monetary as the added financial incentives can be lost in increased income tax.

Suggested incentives include:

- **Increase in travel allowance** – due to the spiralling fuel costs in isolated areas teachers need to be compensated with an increased payment per/kilometre rate, when taking their own vehicles to work related destinations.
- **Reinstate “forage payments”** for teachers who travel certain distances to work, if no teacher housing exists in the community.
- **Approval for their children to receive the AIC boarding allowance** to attend a larger school of choice – access to education is stated as one of the main reasons that mature or experienced teachers cite as their reason for leaving rural areas – to access a large secondary school for their children.
- **Housing advantages** – this has been addressed to some extent however it is difficult and a disincentive for teachers coming into areas where there is no housing available. In small rural communities there is limited accommodation for rent which then means teachers may have to live in the nearest large regional centre and travel each day – this is very expensive especially in light of current fuel costs.

3. Mentoring and support for teachers in isolated areas

A graduate’s first year as a teacher is taken up establishing routines and classroom strategies. Professional competence needs to be the focus of the second year of teaching. Too much to cope with all at once can deter the graduate teacher and contribute to the high ‘drop out’ rate.

4. Early notification of permanent positions

- This is a difficult task for the DET but **needs to improve**, as new graduates and older teachers who have not been granted permanent positions are choosing positions with non government schools or interstate departments to gain a permanent position as soon as possible.
- Teachers **need to have a permanent income**, especially after studying and accumulating a huge HECS debt at the time they wish to start buying a car or taking out a lease on a flat, unit or house after student accommodation.

5. Reduce HECS debt payments – for graduating teachers who give so many years of service in rural and isolated areas. This incentive should be weighted to teachers working in schools that attract high incentive transfer points.

(b) the effectiveness and efficiency of current means of recruiting teachers to New South Wales public schools, including recent graduates and career change teachers.

- The shortage of teachers in maths, science and technology has meant the fast tracking of teachers through courses – this works in some cases but in others the shortage of face to face experience in the classroom can prove detrimental in a school in a ‘hard to staff’ area.
- The employment of mature aged students who have been in the workforce and have a sound skills based training through working in industry eg Technology and Applied Studies Teachers can be extremely advantageous.
- Teachers leave if they do not have the support of more experienced teachers in dealing with classroom problems as they occur.
- Recent graduates **MUST** be given notice of positions as soon as possible after graduation – no one can afford to wait until the 11th hour to find out if they have employment.
- The need for more teachers to ‘trial’ teaching in ‘hard to staff’ schools or isolated rural areas while supported by their training facility is needed. The need for mentoring by experienced teachers in the particular location or situation cannot be emphasised enough.
- **Fast track local casual teachers to permanent positions** - many local casual and temporary teachers are severely disadvantaged by the present system of employing staff to permanent positions. These teachers have often given many years of dedicated service to local schools only to be overlooked by the system when permanent positions become available. Non-local Permanents transferring in and targeted Graduates are given preference over local teachers who have worked in the area for sometimes up to 20 years, waiting for a permanent position.
- The current use of mobile casuals or teachers moving from another area to fill a vacancy should not be at the expense of long time local casuals who are seeking a permanent position when it becomes available.

(c) differences and similarities between primary and secondary school recruitment needs.

- **All teachers need support!!!**
- Primary teachers have to teach across grades in the one room. They are establishing ‘building blocks’ – teaching children how to read, how to write and how to develop their communication skills – they are setting the foundations for further learning. They are developing learning skills and styles – secondary education does not have the time to develop these skills. Many secondary teachers cannot adapt to the different methods and approach needed for primary students.
- Infants, primary and secondary teachers all need different methods of approaching the relevant age group.
- Secondary school recruitment should be targeting specific subject skills – it is not fair to expect primary trained teachers to teach senior secondary – there can be a crossover in the middle school years but not as much attention is paid

to literacy skills at secondary level – many secondary teachers do not know how to deal with a student with poor literacy skills, learning difficulties or disabilities.

- Teachers in Central schools (K to 12) should be encouraged and assisted to upgrade the skills they lack, if required to teach across many stages of learning.
- Many teachers in Central schools are required to teach subjects for which they have not had the necessary training eg PD/Health/PE teachers may be required to take HSIE or Maths lessons if there is a shortage of staff in a school.

(d) existing initiatives and programs of the Department of Education and Training, including *Teach NSW*, scholarships for undergraduates and accelerated training courses.

- Teacher housing rental – 70% to 90% reduction in local market rental for schools allocated 6 to 8 incentive transfer points.
- \$5000.00 annual retention benefit for teachers in 40 hard to staff schools in NSW.
- Casual Teacher Plan – some names on this list have no intention of working in isolated areas.
- 200 teaching scholarships awarded per year
 - to support talented students who wish to **teach Technological and Applied Studies, Mathematics, Science or English** in Western Sydney and non-coastal rural areas.
 - Scholarships are available **for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders** to help get more indigenous teachers in our schools. These scholarships are available for primary or any secondary teaching subject area.
 - The scholarships **cover the costs of HECS fees** for subjects successfully completed while studying for a teacher qualification. A training grant of \$1,500.00 for each year of the scholarship is also provided to meet the costs of incidentals, textbooks and student administration fees.

(e) the role of the NSW Institute of Teachers and its accreditation and endorsement requirements.

- ICPA believes the NSW Institute of Teachers should have the power to provide accreditation – that a teacher should keep learning after graduation – they should be rewarded for improved skills and those teachers who do not meet the required standard, as determined by the Institute, should be provided with assistance in improving and upgrading their accreditation.
- If teachers cannot meet the required standards they should not be promoted but remain in the same positions until they do reach the standards.
- Teachers (at all levels) should not be allowed to just “occupy a position” until retirement if they are no longer effective in that position. These people (particularly senior teachers) make it difficult and frustrating for the younger, enthusiastic teachers keen to get on.

- There should be guidelines in place to allow the removal or standing aside of incompetent teachers – students should not have their educational opportunities diminished or affected because of incompetent or ‘lazy’ teachers.
- The Institute of Teachers will enable teachers to have professional standing – something sadly lacking of late.
- Teachers need a professional body to gain recognition of skills and achievements and to raise the profile of teachers in the wider community. This will attract people to pursue a career in teaching, which should be viewed as the ultimate career.

(f) the role, distribution and effectiveness of university pre-service teacher education.

- Not all universities have the same courses and structures for teacher training. A set of standards, as in the draft, will ensure standardisation of courses and ensure that teachers are adequately prepared for a career in teaching.
- Teacher training courses should be developed by the Universities and be checked and endorsed by the Department of Education and Training to ensure that the course material is preparing the graduate teacher for the programmes required in the education system.
- At present different universities have different courses within their teacher training programmes. Standards will ensure consistency. Different teacher training courses now restrict graduate teachers in the levels that they can teach. Eg. Charles Sturt University Early Childhood graduates can teach birth – year 6. Macquarie University Early Childhood graduates can only teach birth – year 2.
- Lecturers and teachers should devise programmes in consultation for students’ practical experience so that they are more meaningful for the classroom situation and also the student teacher. Presently lecturers devise the programme and send the student teacher into a school with a set of requirements, which may be totally impractical for the classroom teacher as well as the students and therefore doesn’t achieve anything for the student teacher. There needs to be more practical experience included in teacher training courses. An initial period needs to be set aside before the practical to enable the student teacher, classroom teacher and supervisor to plan and consult to ensure a more appropriate teaching experience is available. Funding needs to be provided to release the classroom teacher for this consultation.
- Beyond the Line – getting student teachers out into isolated rural schools is essential. Teachers need to experience life in these communities to know the advantages in many cases. Student teachers cannot afford in many cases to take isolated rural appointments for internships. Often they have a job where they attend university, many will still have to pay rent on flats, houses while out on internships and this can be very costly. Some consideration needs to be given towards the cost of travelling to isolated rural towns for internships.
- Student teachers should not have assignments due while undertaking internships, particularly if away from university. There needs to be better timetabling in some institutions.

- Student teachers need mentors who have had recent experience in the classroom – not just theoretical lecturers.
- Lecturers should have extensive experience in all aspects of their discipline – eg early childhood lecturers should have school experience not just day care /pre-school experience.
- The availability of accommodation during student’s internship is vital. Many rural areas don’t have accommodation available for a student for the duration of an internship because they are in isolated areas.
- Student teachers are often confined to an area for their internships where they have friends or relatives so they have FREE accommodation available. They already have to maintain accommodation where they are studying and to pay two lots of rent when there is no income is beyond most students.
- Universities have designated areas they prefer to place their student teachers. This often causes difficulties for the students in finding accommodation and meeting these added costs during internships.

(g) any other matter arising from these terms of reference.

ICPA believes that:

The successful education of future generations depends primarily on today’s graduates of our training institutes.

Members of NSW Council of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association are prepared to speak further to this submission if required. ICPA looks forward to positive recommendations from this inquiry which will further raise the status of teachers in NSW and ensure that their recruitment and training adequately prepares them for work in our schools including those in rural and isolated areas.