

## Recipient Details

Name of organisation or individual: [O] ICPA Springsure/Rolleston Branch

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## Responses

### Curriculum and assessment

These questions, we believe, are aimed at teachers, yet the teachers I have spoken to say that they are unable to comment due to this being a political review and it is against Education Queensland policy for them to voice their opinion.

There is so much politics in the education system that a valuable source is being subdued by teachers not feeling they can contribute ideas because of retribution. We also believe that Current assessment, as in NAPLAN, will never give a true indication of a child's achievements while schools teach to it. Assessments should come in a variety of formats, not always the same and no one should be aware of when they will be until the day. This we feel will help get an accurate reading on the children's education process as well as the teaching within the schools.

Rating: 7

### Teachers and teaching

The Darling Downs South West (DDSW) Professional Learning Hub in Roma and the Teacher Education Centre for Excellence (TECE – Rural and Remote, Kelvin Grove) are two groups that are focused on sourcing and preparing student teachers who are interested in teaching in remote areas. It is imperative that pre-service teachers understand 'what they are getting themselves in to' when they sign up to a small school. It isn't just the remoteness, but the 'out of classroom' workload associated with these small school roles that applicants really need to be made aware of. Currently, Teaching Principals are being sent to small schools and spend the first semester learning how to be a Principal, understanding the administration workload, learning to teach & plan multi-age classes and learning to live away from their families.

It is imperative that all teachers who are applying for small school teaching positions are given appropriate training BEFORE they take up the role. They need to be aware of what administration is required so as not to have the stress of learning on the job.

Often it is very hard for Teaching Principals to get away to complete professional development as it is extremely hard to get relief teachers in remote areas. This can be detrimental to their career and also lead to dis-satisfaction within their job and not wanting to stay in a rural community. ICT should be implemented and used to make PD available in these types of situations.

In some small schools there is an Administration Hub which takes most of the financial workload from the school's Administration Officer, a 'Principal Hub' would work the same way. All Principal's administration would go to an external centre to be completed. This frees up our teaching Principals to actually teach stress free. It could even go so far as having one Principal for all of the small schools within a set radius and the schools have a higher level teacher based at the school that is solely responsible for teaching the students.

Rating: 7

### Leaders and leadership

By implementing a 'Sister School' approach where a small school is partnered up with a bigger school within a certain radius. Teachers who are showing leadership qualities at the bigger school could be 'groomed' for the likes of a teaching Principal position at smaller and remote schools. By using these trained teachers takes away the uncertainty of what small schools are about and what is needed in a one teacher school, these teachers already have a sense of community and a friend's base so wouldn't feel so isolated. They also have an established mentor base within the bigger school community which is something that cannot be understated.

This could then lead to the likes of the 'less populated school' becoming a 'teaching school' where student teachers who are interested in becoming a Principal or working in a small school could come for a term and actually see what is involved in:

1. teaching multi-age classes
2. the administration involved
3. Living in a rural community

As mentioned in the discussion paper, often student teachers are hesitant to do their pre-service training in remote areas due to the financial implications associated with leaving their home base in metropolitan areas. If funding were made available to willing small schools, they would be able to employ them on an 'apprentice teacher' base salary so they do not fall behind financially. There would be an extra set of hands in the classroom and the student teachers would get on the ground training and hopefully be more inclined to continue on to other rural areas.

Small schools in remote areas have always been used as a way for teachers to advance through the education system's ranks quickly. Ensuring local Teacher Aide positions/hours are not impacted would be a way to 'give back' to these communities who are doing their bit, usually to the detriment of their students.

Rating: 7

### School and Community

The Isolated Parent's and Children's Association (ICPA) along with the Darling Downs South West (DDSW) Professional Learning Hub and the Teacher Education Centre for Excellence (TECE – Rural and Remote) are three groups that are working towards bridging the gap between what preservice teachers expect from rural communities and what the communities expect from the education system.

Communication between school leaders and parents is crucial in small communities as each relies on the other to provide a quality education to the students. When there is a breakdown in communication, it makes for a stressful time for both teachers, parents and community members. Currently the department has no known process in place where parents are able to voice their concerns to someone other than the Principal. Often the Principal is reluctant to hand over the contact details and parents are left going around in circles trying to acquire information and generally have to speak to someone who doesn't even know where the school is. An information sheet which outlines the recommended process and contact information for grievances in all regions is required. DET have an information sheet available "Making a complaint – Information for parents and carers" but the only phone number on the sheet is for the Office of the Ombudsman. There is

no reason why each school's P&C President cannot be given the relevant names and phone numbers of who they need to talk to in order to get their concerns to the appropriate contact.

Rating: 7

### Information and Communication Technology

Telecommunications must be improved. It is essential that Government continues to work with organisations like ICPA to ensure that information is being received at ground level.

How could ICT be used to improve educational outcomes for regional, rural, remote students?

- Specialist services - speech, OT etc.
- Interacting with other students from other schools on a regular basis (eg. 10-30 mins a week - story time etc).
- Professional development where staff members are unable to get away from the school or it is not viable to travel.

What are the main barriers to regional, rural and remote schools realising the full potential benefits of ICT?

- Having the technology available and the coverage (download quality/quantity) to use it to its full potential.
- Cost in providing the technology.
- Teacher's willingness to implement and use it.
- Enough staff to supervise.

Rating: 7

### Entrepreneurship and schools

Rating:

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

It is my understanding after discussions with a local Principal within the area, that in order for any students to go on a school camp, it is essential that the Principal attend as well. This essentially means that in order for a senior (Grade5/6) student to go on a senior camp, the whole school must go also or a relief Teacher be employed to cover the teaching Principal's absence. If senior students (and parents if applicable) were able to "tag" along with a bigger school in their region without the Principal having to attend, this would help the student both socially and the school financially. In small schools, there is often minimal students in each grade and students rarely get to interact with other kids their age. This provides students with the opportunity to go on a significant camp with kids they may well go to boarding school with.

Rating for enrolments: 7

Rating for clusters: 7

Rating for distance education: 7

Rating for boarding: 7

Diversity

Rating: 0

Transitioning beyond school

Rating: 0

Additional Comments

Some final points that we feels are important to the success of our regional, rural and remote Education are as follows:

We feel as though all student teachers should be obliged to have one practicum in a rural school. It is the fear of the unknown that is the biggest stumbling block. Living and working in rural Australia is a wonderful life experience and should therefore be promoted that way instead of something that is seen as having to be done in order to get ahead.

It is imperative that all teachers who are applying for small school teaching positions are given appropriate training BEFORE they take up the role. Teaching Principals especially need to be made aware of what administration is required so as not to have the stress of learning on the job.

And our final point to note is that the department should not split families when looking for candidates in rural areas. If the partner/family can't stay together it is detrimental to all concerned.