

Rural and Remote Education Strategy Implementation Plan

Final report

December 2024

Our focus this year has been on ensuring our regional, rural and remote schools have the teachers they need to provide quality education to our students.

Securing and supporting teachers has been at the centre of this plan, and we have seen strong progress throughout the year. Development of a cross-government Education Housing Strategy and Action Plan, expansion of the Priority Recruitment Support model and successful delivery of a suite of professional connection events are just a few of this year's achievements. Together this work has addressed some of the key issues impacting the attraction and retention of teachers in our rural schools. This is vital to ensure we are providing our students with the learning environment they need to excel.

This report marks the end of both the 2024 Rural and Remote Education Implementation Plan, and the broader Rural and Remote Education Strategy. Moving into 2025 we will continue to build on this work to improve learning outcomes for regional, rural and remote students. Ensuring equity for our regional, rural and remote learning communities is

a priority under **Our Plan for NSW Public Education** and will continue to be a focus for the department.

We consulted widely throughout the delivery of this plan to ensure we were meeting the needs of our schools, and to inform our future direction. This included reviewing close to 3,000 inputs from our schools, stakeholders and education partners to understand the top priorities moving forward. We have set our strategic direction for the year ahead based on this feedback.

In 2025 our focus will be on **teacher and leader retention, rural equity** and **inter-agency support**. As part of this work we will be expanding the delivery of connection events, which have been so highly valued by our teachers and leaders this year. We will be continuing to champion rural equity, working across the department to drive systemic improvements in the areas our schools have identified. And we will be scaling up our work with Homes NSW around teacher housing and extending this to transport and health.

We look forward to working with our schools to deliver improved outcomes for our regional, rural and remote students, staff and communities both in 2025 and into the future.

Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we learn, work and live, paying respect to Elders past and present as teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories. We strive to ensure every NSW Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander learner achieves their potential through education.



Key initiative

Tailored housing support

This year we have

- ✓ Appointed the Deputy Secretary, Public Schools to the Teacher Housing Authority Board
- ✓ Provided clearer guidance about repairs and maintenance processes for current tenants
- ✓ Hosted an Education Housing Roundtable
- ✓ Increased participation in the annual Teacher Housing Survey
- ✓ Improved communication around teacher housing for new and prospective teachers
- ✓ Developed an Education Housing Strategy and Action Plan

Latest progress



Driving future direction

Developed an Education Housing Strategy and Action Plan in collaboration with Homes NSW for release in 2025.



Promoting teacher voice

Increased survey participation to over 52%, more than double that of 2022.



Improving communication

Published new webpages with clearer information to help new and existing teachers navigate teacher housing.

Pictured: Attendees at the Education Housing Roundtable in Orange.

Under the spotlight

Education Housing Roundtable

An Education Housing Roundtable was held in August to drive a new approach to teacher housing in NSW. Attended by both the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Housing, the session built on work-to-date to strengthen cross-government collaboration on teacher housing. Outcomes of the session included a commitment to develop a joint strategy and action plan.

“The roundtable was extremely productive and demonstrated a genuine commitment to take action-I am confident that positive outcomes will follow.”

- Michael Spora, Principal Gulargambone Central School



Key initiative

Strengthening professional connections

This year we have

- ✓ Continued delivery of Principal Connection Days across regional locations
- ✓ Delivered a new series of Early Career Teacher Connection Days across regional locations
- ✓ Hosted Rural and Regional Executive Roadshows across 9 regional locations
- ✓ Launched a professional development program for middle leaders working in regional, rural and remote schools

Pictured: Participants at the South Coast middle leaders session in Nowra.

Latest progress



Connecting school leaders

Delivered further face-to-face Principal Connection Days, as well as a supplementary online event, reaching close to 250 school leaders in total.



Building leadership capacity

Delivered a tailored middle leaders development program across 12 principal networks with a further 8 networks planned for 2025.



Supporting new teachers

Delivered further Early Career Teacher Connection days, providing support to a total of 132 new teachers from over 70 schools.

Under the spotlight

Developing leaders on the South Coast

Phase 2 of the Regional, Rural and Remote Middle Leaders Program was delivered to 27 middle leaders, deputy principals and principals from across the South Coast Network in November.

Delivered by the School Leadership Institute, the tailored program provides practical, evidence-informed strategies and networking opportunities to develop the capabilities of assistant principals and head teachers. The program includes professional learning sessions for both middle leaders and the school leaders who support them.

“The sessions have equipped my middle leaders, who are both relatively new to the role, with the tools to establish a clear purpose when collaborating among teams.”

- Michelle Watkins, Principal Callala Public School

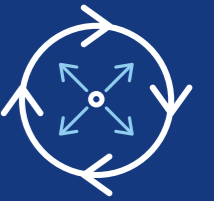




Key initiative

Rural and remote staffing support

Embedding a whole-of-system approach



This year we have

- Expanded the Priority Recruitment Support program to include an additional 26 regional, rural and remote schools
- Reduced teacher vacancies in regional, rural and remote schools by over 20%
- Launched the Grow Your Own – Local Teacher Pipeline
- Consulted on the proposed Action Plan for rural and remote financial incentives
- Worked with school leaders to inform context-specific recruitment resources

Latest progress

- Boosting priority recruitment**
Planning underway for further expansion of the Priority Recruitment Support program in 2025, continuing to support regional, rural and remote schools.
- Tailoring school recruitment support**
Implementation of an enhanced model of school recruitment support, assigning schools a dedicated recruitment officer based on location, to commence in 2025.
- Attracting and supporting new teachers**
Continued investment in the Beyond the Line, Rural Professional Experience and Grow Your Own Principals Choice program for Priority Recruitment Support schools.

Throughout the year we have been tracking the performance of the 14 programs listed below to ensure they are delivering meaningful results on the ground for regional, rural and remote learning communities.

Key area 1: People

Rural and Remote Incentives

Incentives are an important tool to attract and retain teachers at regional, rural and remote schools. Stamp duty relief payments of up to \$10,000 and relocation payments of up to \$8,000 were introduced in 2023 to encourage teachers to relocate and settle in rural communities.

These incentives are available to teachers and school counsellors working at 4-point, 6-point and 8-point incentive schools, of which there are close to 150 across the state.

335 relocation payments and **35** stamp duty relief payments as at Term 4 2024, exceeding targets of **255** and **23** respectively. Corresponding satisfaction ratings of **78%** and **88%** as at November 2024.



RRR Middle Leadership Development Program

214 participants across **12** principal networks took part in the program in 2024.

Satisfaction rating of **95%** as of November 2024.

Rural Experience Program

28 participants undertaking placements in rural schools in 2024 across **11** Principal Networks.

Satisfaction rating of **90%** as of November 2024.

Rural and Remote Financial Incentives Review

1,425 rural teacher incentive payments made in Term 3 2024 to attract and retain teachers against a target of **1,400***.

*Payments made in Term 3 2024 for service in Term 2 2024.

Teachers in the Field – Classroom Cover Stream

63 teachers provided relief teaching to **287** schools in 2024, against targets of **80** teachers and **287** schools.

Satisfaction rating of **39%** in Term 1 2024 in relation to the travel reimbursement guidelines.

Grow Your Own – Local Teacher Pipeline

In the 2024 program intake, **19** of the **60** participants are from regional, rural and remote areas.

Satisfaction rating of **79%** among participants.#

#Satisfaction rating is based on all participants, regardless of location.

Pictured: Students at Corowa High School.

Under the spotlight

Recruitment support in Wellington

Wellington High School in the state's Central West has greatly benefited from accessing Priority Recruitment Support in 2024. The school has successfully filled several vacancies with the support of a dedicated team who have tailored recruitment requirements to their specific needs. With the continued assistance of the team, the school is optimistic they will be able to transition off the program by the end of 2025.

“The greatest advantage of the program is having direct access to a dedicated team that truly understands our unique context and needs. This team not only provides personalised support but also takes on the majority of the administrative burden associated with recruitment.”

- Adam Mckeown, Principal Wellington High School



Pictured: Teachers who have joined Wellington High School this year.



Key area 2: Practice

Innovating Careers Education

Innovating Careers Education is an initiative of the Educational Pathways Program. Led by Head Teachers Careers, the initiative introduces students to a range of vocational training and employment options, and supports staff through Career Immersion Teams meetings and professional learning opportunities.

In 2024, the initiative expanded to include schools in the Far West, co-designing services to best support the needs of students at each school.

215 staff attended Career Immersion Team Meetings and **362** took part in Innovating Careers Education Professional Learning in 2024, against targets of **180** and **80** respectively, and recorded satisfaction ratings of **98.6%** and **85.5%**.[^]



[^]Based on data obtained in December 2024.

Rural Learning Exchange

97 teachers and **500** students supported in 2024, against annual targets of **100** and **500** respectively. Over **88%** of teachers felt their students were more supported as a result of the program, as of October 2024.

Key area 3: Participation

National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Program (NASCA)

The department partners with NASCA to deliver wellbeing and mentoring support to over 1,000 young Aboriginal women in years 7-12 across 16 NSW public schools. Of these, 11 are located in regional, rural and remote NSW.

The Girls Academy Program empowers students to succeed, fostering pride in their culture and providing wrap-around support including academic assistance.

95% of funded places filled against a target of **80%**.
74% of students have a post school plan in place⁺.



⁺Data collected biannually, last collection July 2024.

Clontarf Academy Program

86% of funded places filled against a target of **80%**. Over **86%** of students have a post-school plan in place⁺.

⁺Data collected biannually, last collection July 2024.

Supporting the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce

Over **21%** of scholarship applicants in the 2023-24 ECEC Scholarship Program were from regional, rural or remote areas.

55% of the 489 scholars surveyed were from regional, rural or remote areas.

Note: There has been no change to data since the July progress report.

Supporting early childhood education service provision in regional, rural and remote locations

77.8% of 3- to 4-year-olds enrolled in an early childhood education program for 600 hours per year in the 2 years before school, against a target of **77.5%**.[~]

[~] Based on annual data released in March 2024.

Note: There has been no change to data since the July progress report.

Key area 4: Partnerships

Support for Country Universities Centres

Country University Centres provide facilities for students to pursue higher education without the need to relocate. This includes access to high-speed internet, study spaces, and tailored learning and wellbeing support.

A new campus in Mudgee opened in March 2024, making a total of 11 centres in NSW. A recent evaluation of NSW's centres found that over 50% of students are the first in their family to undertake higher education studies.*

Total of **1,836** student enrolments across Country University Centres in NSW, against a target of **1,500**.⁺



Over **88.5%** overall satisfaction rating of students.

*Based on data from the Country Universities Centre Evaluation Final Report undertaken by the UNSW Social Policy Research Centre.

⁺Data collected biannually, last collection July 2024.

Regional Industry Education Partnerships

53.5% of total opportunities undertaken by regional, rural and remote students against a target of **50%**.

Over **86%** overall satisfaction among students, as of December 2024.