

## **MEDIA RELEASE: FEDERAL POLICY PROPOSAL**

### **FEDERAL POLICY PROPOSAL Regional Education Workforce Incentives**

This policy proposes the creation of a national incentive package designed to attract and retain qualified education professionals in regional and remote schools across Australia. The program would provide financial and practical support to teachers, principals, and school support staff who commit to long-term placements in identified high-need rural and regional locations.

The aim is to address chronic workforce shortages in rural education settings, where schools often struggle to fill positions, maintain staff continuity, and provide students with the same level of opportunity and stability enjoyed by their metropolitan peers. The proposed incentive package would include a combination of relocation grants, subsidised housing support, and partial or full forgiveness of HECS/HELP debts. Eligible professionals would be those who commit to a minimum placement period—proposed at three to five years—in a recognised regional or remote school, as defined by the Australian Standard Geographical Classification.

Support would be scaled based on remoteness and need. For example, placements in very remote areas or schools with significant staffing gaps would attract higher levels of assistance. A performance and retention bonus could be added for those who exceed the initial service term.

Implementation would be managed through a partnership between the Department of Education and state education departments. The federal government would provide direct funding, while states would help administer school placements and determine priority zones based on workforce data and community consultation.

The program would be phased in beginning 2026–27 with pilot trials in priority regions such as western New South Wales, northern Queensland, and regional South Australia. Full rollout would follow by 2028.

By reducing the financial and lifestyle barriers that discourage professionals from teaching in rural areas, this policy aims to stabilise the education workforce, improve continuity for students, and help close the urban-rural education divide.

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