

## **Teach Rural**

Teach Rural is an initiative that involves pre-service teachers being placed in rural areas in government schools across Victoria. PST's are placed in groups. The process is managed by CEP and funded by DE. Below is a summary outlining the key components of the program.

### **Accommodation**

CEP organises and fully funds PST accommodation while on placement. This allows CEP to allocate Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) in groups from multiple locations and multiple universities. Accommodation is reserved the night before and after placement to ensure PSTs are well rested and organised. CEP's experience suggests it is of greater value (both monetary and socially) to lease one house for three or four students rather than separate accommodation for each PSTs. Thus establishing a cluster or community of learners. This would not be possible if an organisation such as CEP were not managing the program, as it requires central coordination of students, schools, staff and universities. The Sunday afternoon 'welcoming' and orientation session between mentor, PSTs and sometimes, the accommodation owner, has become an integral component of the initiative.

*'On the pre-placement survey I did not rate sharing a placement with my peers as being important at all. Now that I have finished, I have changed my opinion completely and know the support of my peers was really valuable in ensuring I had the best experience possible'* Brittany

### **Community of learners**

Accommodation is targeted to ideally cater for groups of PSTs between 3 and 5 students. This provides an opportunity to create a learning environment - a community of learners - which supports, enhances and promotes collaborative decision making and reflection on a day to day basis. CEP has noted the high value of placing like-minded people together in a new situation to support and learn from each other, inevitably increasing their confidence. This is particularly important for PSTs who have had limited experience away from home. We already have one case study where this has led to employment in a rural setting.

### **Mentor**

CEP appoints a mentor to each cluster to support PSTs both socially and emotionally while on placement. The CEP mentor ensures PST stability, achievement, success and community integration and connectedness is achieved through ongoing communications and support both individually and as a group / cluster. The CEP mentor is in addition to the school-based mentor who supports and monitors all academic requirements. The CEP mentor communicates and supports the work of the school based mentor as required.

*'Good mentoring, good guidance and support ... we know when teachers feel professionally supported and feel part of a team and they are engaged in their school they are more likely to stay in the profession.'* Stephen Fraser. CEP Summer Series

### **Community connections**

Connecting PSTs into their cluster communities has and continues to be, a focus of the Teach Rural Initiative. Anecdotal feedback from PSTs who have completed placements, suggests this has been a significant positive influence on some PSTs choosing to return to do another rural placement and/or accepting positions in rural areas.

CEP achieves community connectedness through:

1. A Welcome Event. On this day, PSTs enjoy a welcome event/morning tea to be introduced to staff at school level. PSTs have commented that this event makes them feel included and 'seen / noticed' in the school
2. As part of the Teach Rural initiative in 2024, following post-placement PST data, conversations and feedback from school staff and PSTs in 2023, CEP has introduced an additional strategy to connect PSTs to their cluster communities. Staff are invited to introduce PSTs to their local community based on the interests listed on the PST application forms and the common interests of staff. CEP believes this will provide PSTs with genuine and realistic connections to the community.
3. CEP promotes and provides key contacts/ details in regards to community activities and events prior and during placements.

### **Example of best practice – The Monash Program**

CEP would like to highlight the structure of the Monash University PST placement program:

- The University has a dedicated placement officer who attends CEP organised events
- The Monash placement officer communicated face-to-face with PSTs whilst on location during placement
- CEP mentor was on-site at accommodation for the length of the PST cluster placement
- A CEP representative attended functions and regularly met the students
- Regular online communication between CEP, University and schools which was consistent, timely and effective. Consequently, PSTs were well informed and prepared throughout their placement.

### **April 2026 Update**