

**The Isolated Children's Parents'**  
**Association of Australia**  
**ICPA (Aust)**



**2016 Federal Conference**

**Supplementary Motions**

**August 10 & 11, 2016**  
**Perth, WA**

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **S1. Aramac/Muttaburra Branch (QLD)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications, **nbn** Co and Internet Service Providers to ensure priority internet repairs for Distance Education students residing in rural and remote areas.”

#### **Explanation:**

Currently many students studying distance education via satellite internet (new and old services) are experiencing many technical difficulties and ‘drop outs’. This impairs the children’s ability to participate adequately in class and impacts negatively on their learning. Cases needing a technical support visit are having to wait up to 8 weeks for the FIRST AVAILABLE appointment. This means the students have to use the intermittent services to the best of their ability for over half the school term, severely disadvantaging the children’s education. It is important that internet repairs are completed in a timely fashion!

### **S2. Yaraka/Isisford Branch (QLD)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests **nbn** and the Minister for Communications convene a meeting with stakeholders including the ICPA to review **nbn** location zoning and restoration target times (3 days- Urban, 4 days- Regional, 10 days -Remote, 90 Days - Isolated areas) of Sky Muster services to ensure that they meet community expectations with service times aligned to the Telstra Restoration times of 1 Working Day - Urban, 2 Working Days -Regional, 3 Working Days-Remote, Isolated areas should be 10 Working Days.”

#### **Explanation:**

During the installation program, a number of sites have experienced failures that were not rectified for an extended period.

In one case, one of the reasons for the extended outage was that the service was located in a Remote area by **nbn**’s definition. This service was located 190Km by road from Rockhampton, 11Km from the local town with the majority of the distance on the Bruce Highway. So because it was classed as “Remote” the service target was 10 Working Days not “Regional” which is 4 Working Days.

We cannot have Students / Families who have no other form of internet isolated for these extended periods.

### **S3. Yaraka/Isisford Branch (QLD)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Communications establish a Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) scheme that requires **nbn** Co and its Retail (Internet) Service Providers (RSPs) to conform to published service standards in performance and service restoration.”

#### **Explanation:**

Currently there are no penalties if the service provided by **nbn** and its RSPs do not meet defined minimum standard in performance and service restoration. There have never been published any minimum standards for the performance of **nbn** services and only “targets” for service restoration. Suitable penalties should be imposed if these standards are breached.

### **S4. Yaraka/Isisford Branch (QLD)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Communications require Retail (Internet) Service Providers

who sell **nbn**<sup>™</sup> internet into Legacy network areas (Fixed Wireless and Sky Muster) provide an information pack to potential VoIP telephone users that explains the pros and cons of converting to an Internet based Telephone service. “

**Explanation:**

There should be penalties for RSPs who sell these VoIP services as equal replacement of a Legacy USO service. Some RSPs are advising potential Legacy Area USO phone users that VoIP phones will do everything a standard telephone service will do. They ignore time to service an internet service versus a USO service, e.g. issues due to weather related outages, voice quality, possible double hopping and mains failure are just a few of the potential issues. One user reported that when their data speeds were restricted due to the usage cap, their VoIP phone no longer worked correctly leaving them effectively isolated as they had disconnected their USO phone service on the advice of their RSP.

**S5. Charters Towers Branch (QLD)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies **nbn** and Telstra to provide information on the future of rural and remote landlines and telephone services.”

**Explanation:**

Telstra does not seem interested in repairing infrastructure until they get a commitment from **nbn** as to the future of landlines. Anyone living in regions where their only access to **nbn** internet is via satellite knows that they need an alternative option to using VoIP due to the lag experienced using this as a telephony service as well as this option not being available during power outages that can occur often in rural areas. Their current phone services through RRADIO and Next G Wireless Link (NGWL) are becoming obsolete due to lack spare parts required for repairs and lack of technicians that have experience with these types of systems and solution for those customers’ needs to be developed for the future.

**S6. Alpha Branch (QLD)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests **nbn** to immediately investigate a dedicated rural and remote call centre for rural and remote users.”

**Explanation:**

The roll out of **nbn**<sup>™</sup> Sky Muster installations has been plagued with teething problems. Service provider call centres and the BIRRR team have been swamped with issues that they have no control over. Some of the problems faced include up to 6 cancelled installation appointments, which has led to loss of income and a great deal of frustration.

Many end users were also installed but not connected – in some cases this was for up to 6 weeks with the customer being left with no connection due to the Interim Satellite Service being removed. Children could not log into on air lessons, businesses could not be run and providers had no answers. Other problems have included the wrong size dishes being supplied, faulty modems and NTDs being installed at the wrong addresses. End users who have contacted their service provider are told to contact **nbn** and **nbn** tell them to contact their provider and thus it is a vicious circle with no answers being given.

A dedicated rural and remote call centre would help alleviate some of these issues as well as assisting people who live on the edge of fixed wireless. The BIRRR team have been successful in achieving over 100 fixed wireless connections through desktop studies sent to **nbn**. However, they are volunteers and should not be expected to continue now the need has been clearly demonstrated.

A dedicated rural and remote **nbn** call centre with trained staff that understand rural and remote needs is desperately needed.

**S7. Charters Towers Branch (QLD)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) request Telstra to investigate a rural and remote dedicated call centre for landline and data needs of rural and remote users.”

**Explanation:**

With Telstra being the main telephony company supplying voice communications for much of rural and remote Australia, as well as supplying data communications for those with wireless coverage it has become apparent that there is need for a dedicated call centre to help with any issues that arise. Currently those customers using the RRADIO service have a dedicated number to contact support when they have any technical issues with their phone service. With the Next G Wireless Link (NGWL) as well as the advance in data options available remotely that are different to those available to urban customers, that need has expanded and a call centre with operators that are conversant in all communications options available to rural and remote Australians is now required. This needs to include being able to deal with Billing issues, advise on available plans – both telephone and data, and knowledge about smart and Yagi aerials to assist customers as well as being able to help with technical problems when they arise. Thus being a ‘one-stop shop’ for tech support, billing, products etc. for rural and remote Telstra customers.

**S8. Alpha Branch (QLD)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) supports AgForce in their request for government funding for an independent telecommunications advisory body.”

**S9. Alpha Branch (QLD)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Telstra to immediately provide information on eligible plans for Next G Wireless Link (NGWL) data and phone services.”

**Explanation:**

An increasing number of rural families are being connected through the NGWL for landline/fax/internet. NGWL internet component is only compatible with BigPond Plans, but the discontinuation of BigPond has caused confusion around what internet plans these families can access. There is also confusion around what telephone plans can be accessed through this service, with Telstra sales staff having no information around NGWL whatsoever.

NGWL customers are being left in limbo as they cannot access new plans offered by Telstra nor are there any answers about what will happen in the future with the discontinuation of BigPond.

Families using NGWL services should be able to access the same data plans as other mobile broadband services. This would greatly assist those trying to educate children and study externally whilst living in the data drought.

**S10. Kindon Branch (QLD)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby telecommunication companies, the Minister for Communications and the Minister for Regional Communications to ensure that rural and remote schools are prioritised for expansion upgrades within both 3G/4G cellular services and **nbn**<sup>™</sup> connectivity.”

**Explanation:**

Our community seeks prioritised action from government stakeholders and ministerial members to ensure our level of ‘student protection and children’s safety’ remains paramount in our rural school environment.

Our educators and other staff personnel are required to abide within the 'code of conduct' and ensure all 'Risk Assessments' are well planned, implemented and reflected upon in the event of an emergency or disaster situation.

Due to our geographical location we simply have no access to any mobile coverage and strictly rely on landline technology. Our school's internet connectivity remains a constant complexity in the delivery of curriculum for students and also pedagogically for teaching staff. As a school community we are seeking more consistency and support to ensure student safety remains the number one priority. We thank the ICPA Federal Council in anticipation regarding this work.

**S11. East Coast Branch (TAS)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby all telecommunication companies and governments for affordable mobile and internet service coverage, in rural and remote blackspot areas."

**Explanation:**

For the past 30 years on the east coast of Tasmania our telecommunications infrastructure has been stagnant and remains unsatisfactory. The bandwidth is also inadequate during peak tourism periods, when our rural schools, TAFE and university students undertaking online education studies are affected by the reduction in speed. This results in student not being able to reach their educational outcomes.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE**

### **CHILD CARE**

**S12. Federal Council**

**CARRIED/LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers and authorities to ensure the Review of the Nanny Pilot Programme (NPP) considers the following criteria to ensure the NPP and the incoming replacement programme can meet the needs of families living in rural and remote Australia:

1. That the Nanny Pilot Programme is affordable.
2. Flexible criteria that allows the Nanny to assist in the distance education classroom.
3. Providers do not insist that Nannies employed under the scheme have Cert III qualifications and pass on the costs."

**Explanation:**

The Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning, highlighted the need for a separate program for families living in rural and remote locations where it is difficult to access child care centres. The Nanny Pilot Programme was designed to assist families living in isolated areas.

Despite this program being designed to meet the needs of isolated families, Federal Council struggled to find any families who joined the program after applying for it. Feedback from members was that it was too expensive. The Federal Government has responded by increasing the rebate but more needs to be done to ensure the program is affordable.

ICPA continues to have major concerns around the lack of consideration given to families who have no choice other than to teach their children via distance education. Parents in remote areas cannot 'go to work' while their children attend school lessons as these parents are responsible for the delivery and management of the distance education lessons. Those who have a nanny for their younger children or for out of school hours are unable to utilise that employee for any supervision of

schoolwork making it difficult to juggle the numerous tasks required in the business, household and classroom. This nanny is a live-in position and it would seem sensible that if they continue as the educator through the day into school time, there would be no need to have a second person to supervise the schoolwork.

ICPA (Aust) welcomed the program and the fact that government acknowledged the difficulties families have in finding Nannies, let alone Nannies with Cert III qualifications in child care particularly in remote regions, exempting Nannies from such requirements. Despite this fact many Service Providers are insisting that staff working in the program do have Cert III qualifications and are passing this cost onto families.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE - OTHER**

#### **S13. Tambo Branch (QLD)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) raises awareness with the Federal Government of the effects on rural and remote distance education brought about by the difficulty of fulfilling the payslip requirement for 2<sup>nd</sup> year visa applicants, who have been volunteering in rural and remote locations through WWOOF, HELPX and other organisations where the work program is food and board in exchange for labour.”

#### **Explanation:**

Families in rural and remote locations have been enjoying a win/win situation with backpackers using the model of WWOOFing or HELPXer. Under this labour exchange, model backpackers have been able to access and see a slice of the real Australia, whilst assisting with real farm practice during their time helping families on properties. In exchange for this rural or remote experience property owners/managers are receiving useful assistance from the young people and providing board and accommodation to them.

The current situation is that for backpackers to gain their 2<sup>nd</sup> year visa, they have to provide, award rates, payment slips to the immigration department as proof of work in eligible postcodes. In theory that is fine but in practice the rural industry cannot afford to pay completely inexperienced young people a full wage. As such, the number of backpackers assisting in our areas has declined dramatically. This has impacted on our communities in several ways.

One area where these rural and remote helpers have been valued and essential is in the home classroom setting. Whilst this type of work does not gain eligibility on the 2<sup>nd</sup> year visa it is a key part of running the properties smoothly in more than one way. Home tutors, who are often mothers, who often are struggling to keep pace in the classroom and in the paddock have the opportunity to gain some assistance for a few hours or have the opportunity to drop some or all of their outside farm work commitments to be able to completely focus on the schoolroom activities. Being able to have a willing station hand, who is not putting extra financial pressure on the business, for assisting in the paddock work really allows the mother/tutor to focus and complete all class work within the set times. Schooling and keeping families on properties is essential and these willing workers, under these labour exchange programs, really assist families to keep the school/station work balance in check. To maintain equal standards, having your home tutor available for the whole school day is essential and if willing workers can fill the gap to allow that to occur then this ability to sign 2<sup>nd</sup> year visa working days for volunteers is essential.

### **RURAL SCHOOLS/SCHOOL TRAVEL**

#### **S14. East Coast Branch (TAS)**

**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Minister for Health, Aged Care and Sport to modify the Sporting Schools Program to allow suitable volunteers, not just qualified teachers or endorsed national sporting organisation coaches to run sports where coaches are not available in rural areas.”

**Explanation:**

The current Sporting Schools Program is federally funded to keep kids active before, during and after school to develop other qualities such as commitment, participation and team work. This \$100 million program is to be applauded, however the program discriminates against rural and regional schools. Schools that are not located in towns or cities do not have access to the required qualified national sporting endorsed organisation coaches to utilise the program. The previous 'Active after Schools' Program' allowed community volunteers with a passion and interest to run sports which was fair for rural and regional schools. Sporting schools would be more inclusive if it permitted suitable volunteers.

**SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS****S15. North East Branch (SA)****CARRIED/LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education and Training to ensure all rural and remote students have access to early identification and intervention for learning difficulties."

**Explanation:**

'Today we possess sufficient knowledge regarding the components of reading to diagnose almost every child in kindergarten (Reception) at risk of learning difficulties.' (Professor Maryanne Wolf, 2008). The single most important factor and predictor of successful literacy acquisition is phonological awareness. Screening of phonological awareness by teachers to identify 'at risk' students should be done in their first term at school. Students in rural and remote areas often have little or no access to early intervention services and therefore, no indication of why their child continues to struggle at school. For Distance Education students, undiagnosed learning difficulties leads to stress and frustration in the DE Schoolroom. All the knowledge and research to fix this issue exists – it is time these students were given access to an education that encourages success rather than failure.

**TERTIARY****YOUTH ALLOWANCE****S16. Lakes District Branch (WA)****CARRIED/LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government requesting that a student who qualifies for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) under the Isolation Rule: Rule 1—Distance during secondary schooling automatically qualifies for Independent Youth Allowance when studying at a Tertiary level."

**Explanation:**

A student who has qualified for AIC allowance under the isolation rule during their time studying secondary schooling has been living away from home for a period up to six years with their parent's financial support. Families have supported the cost of education and boarding at school up to the value of \$240 000 per child and quite often cannot continue to support these kinds of education expenses any further. These students should be supported by the independent Youth Allowance at the Living Away from Home rate, giving them an equal chance of success as their city cousins through equitable access to a tertiary education.

**S17. Central West Plains Branch (NSW)****CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant bodies that degrees in Agricultural or Veterinary Science be eligible for HECS-HELP relief as are most other science, maths, nursing and education courses.”

**Explanation:**

HECS-HELP Benefit is a reduction in HECS Debt that is available for up to 5 years after graduation. To be eligible you must have graduated from an eligible course in Maths, Science, Education or Nursing and you must be employed in specific and relevant occupations.

The reduction to HECS debt is significant, for example, in the 2015/16 year the maximum available is \$1 798.48 and the 2016/17 year is \$1 825.46, depending on the number of weeks worked. Agricultural Scientist and Agronomist are both listed as eligible occupations. Animal Science, Wine Science, Environmental Science, Marine Science and just about every other science is listed as an eligible course but not Agricultural or Veterinary Science. How is it possible to be an Agricultural Scientist or an Agronomist without studying an Agricultural Science degree? Agricultural Science as well as Veterinary Science must have been precluded from the list of eligible courses accidentally and some simple lobby to the relevant authority may trigger their inclusion. It is up to the provider, not the Department of Education and Training or the ATO, to determine if the student's details/course details are eligible for the HECS-HELP Benefit so whom to lobby is a bit tricky.

The second reason for bringing this motion to the floor is to bring attention and awareness to a little known tax concession that accelerates the reduction of HECS-HELP for many courses which is only available if it is applied for after lodging a tax return, it is not an automatic reduction.

**TRAINING****S18. Katherine Branch (NT)****CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers for rural and regional students studying a VET course, who need to relocate to complete compulsory work placement, be eligible for Youth Allowance for the period of their work placement.”

**Explanation:**

By way of an example: a remote student wants to undertake a Cert IV Veterinary Nursing. Online courses are available, often have to be completed inside two years, have a considerable theory component and also require 480 hours of (unpaid) work placement. The appalling internet in many regional areas renders online completion of theory units difficult enough. Further, though, it is unfeasible for a remote student to travel to a vet clinic for one day a week over the course of two years to complete the work placement, as their urban counterparts do. There may not even be a clinic, or a clinic willing to accommodate a student, for hundreds of kilometres. Completing the work placement requirement of the course requires the remote student to relocate to the vicinity of an appropriate veterinary clinic, undertaking the (unpaid) work placement in a block of part- to full-time work. The student then necessarily incurs the costs of relocating, transport, accommodation and other living costs whilst working unpaid. The theory and practical components of the course preclude the student from earning much income. A student would ordinarily qualify for Youth Allowance in these circumstances, however, the course is classified as ‘Part-time’ by the university, immediately disqualifying the student from being eligible for Youth Allowance. To encourage the uptake of training of regional youth, especially in northern Australia, we would like the Minister to consider making exceptions to the ‘full-time’ study requirement for Youth Allowance for regional students who have to relocate to complete the work component of a VET course.



**S19. Lakes District Branch (WA)****CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government requesting that students who qualify for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) under the Isolation Rule: Rule 1—Distance during secondary schooling automatically qualify for Relocation Allowance when taking up an apprenticeship or traineeship away from the family home.”

**Explanation:**

Families find it difficult to cope with the financial cost of helping their children relocate; quite often these families live in areas where access to public transport is not possible. The first purchase when trying to help their children prepare for apprenticeships and traineeships is a vehicle to support them getting to jobs and blocks of training at TAFE or similar institution. Being the recipient of the Relocation Allowance at the start of their apprenticeship or traineeship would help these young men and women finance setting up accommodation, purchasing uniforms and tools required.

**MISCELLANEOUS****S20. Midwest Branch (WA)****CARRIED/LOST**

“That in cases where the same or a similar motion is submitted by multiple branches, Federal Council explores the option of presenting one version of the motion on the agenda, with the endorsement of, and noting, all branches that submitted the same or similar motion.”

**Explanation:**

For example, this year there are 8 motions asking for the establishment of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance, most of which will undoubtedly be deemed covered by the first motion of its kind voted upon. If Federal Council were to choose the most appropriately worded motion then forward it back to the branches that submitted a similar/the same motion seeking their endorsement to use it, this ‘primary’ motion could have all branches that submitted a similar motion noted with it. Excerpts from Branches’ original explanations could be included in the ‘primary’ motion explanation where they included specific and useful detail to the debate and if passed, the eventual lobby. Branches would of course have the option to put their motion separately.

E.g.

**A43. Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)****CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) to recognise the importance of the home tutor in providing education to remote and rural students.”

**Alice Springs Branch (NT), Katherine Branch (NT), Walgett Branch (NSW), Kimberley Air Branch (WA), Western Australian State Council (WA), North West Branch (SA), South Australian State Council (SA).**

This year there are 108 Agenda Motions, many of which are repeated. It is somewhat daunting, and quite time consuming, for members to read through so many motions prior to conference. While it is *fantastic* to have so many branches engaged in ICPA, and we certainly do not wish to detract from the importance of branches putting up motions, there may be room to streamline the business of conference and allow more time for either debate, additional speakers or other opportunities to learn from each other and others. It may be that branches submit more motions if they knew conference attendees would not have to sit through so many needing conference’s permission to deem covered.

**S21. Alpha Branch (QLD)****CARRIED/LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the federal Government and relevant bodies to request banks to change their policy regarding the minimum age that a child needs to be to have a debit card bank account in their own name."

**Explanation:**

At present most major banks will allow a child to open a debit card account when they turn 12 or older. For children younger than 12 any debit card accounts can only be opened in the child's name with a parent as trustee and the debit card can only be in the parent's name. With the addition of year 7 in to the secondary sector of schools in Queensland, the boarding school starting for some is now 11 years old. So there are children living away from home without being able to access their own funds easily because they cannot obtain a debit card account in their own name. Parents are having to rely on boarding staff members to hold cash for their children and distribute it when required. Parents are also having to open accounts with separate banks to their own due to some banks not allowing a child under 12 to have an account even with a parent trustee, making it costly and take more time when having to transfer money to their child's account. It would be far more convenient for parents to be able equip their child with the appropriate bank card when they first leave home for secondary schooling and further enabling them to teach their children how to withdraw money safely and independently. It would also save parents having to transfer accounts in to their child's name only 12 months later when they turn 12 years old. ICPA (Aust) could approach the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority who oversee Australian banks to see if the age restrictions can be lowered to allow 11 year olds to have Keycard accounts in their name.