

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



2016 Federal Conference

All Motions
In one Doc

August 10 & 11, 2016
Perth, Western Australia

BOARDING SCHOOLS/HOSTELS

A1. Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government for an equitable increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance and Additional Boarding Allowance to reflect the increasing costs associated with boarding and educating geographically isolated children.”

Explanation:

The 2016 figures brought an increase of only 1.5% or in monetary terms, \$141.00 in the Basic Boarding Allowance further widening the gap between the cost of boarding and the AIC Basic Boarding allowance. Since 2006 we have seen an increase of \$2 302 to the Basic Boarding Allowance. In the same period the average boarding costs in Queensland alone have risen by \$7 488. We are requesting that educational costs for our rural and remote families are addressed urgently. This should include a significant increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children Basic Boarding Allowance and Additional Boarding Allowance.

A2. Western Australia State Council (WA)

D/C by A1

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Social Services and Minister for Education and Training to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance so that it is in line with the increases that have occurred in boarding school fees.”

Explanation:

Thank you to Federal Council for the recent research undertaken and for the continued lobby on this issue in the last year.

For many families, the only option for educating their children for secondary schools is to have them attend a boarding facility. We understand the original intent of the AIC was that it would cover 55% of the average boarding cost. As the cost of boarding and for many the associated tuition fees, have increased steadily by a rate greater than the CPI, the original gap has increased significantly. An increase in the level of assistance is imperative, if rural and remote Australians are to continue to live in the regions and provide for their children to be educated.

A3. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers for an increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance to more closely reflect the increased cost to families with children who must board away from home to attend school.”

Explanation:

Boarding fees are rising every year and the AIC is not keeping up with these rising fees. The AIC Allowance needs to be updated constantly to reflect the increasing financial burden being placed on isolated families to educate their children. We are aware the AIC Allowance is indexed to the CPI, which allows for a small increase each year. However, this increase is nowhere near the actual increase of boarding school fees, resulting in the gap between the allowance and the real cost of educating isolated students widening substantially.

A4. North West Branch (SA)

D/C by A3

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education and Training,

asking for an increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance to more closely reflect the increased cost to families with children who must board away from home to attend school.

Explanation:

The Assistance for Isolated Children – Boarding Allowance is available to geographically isolated parents with children at secondary level who board away from home to attend school. The allowance assists with boarding expenses associated with the education of their children.

ICPA SA has sourced information relating to boarding school costing. The average boarding and tuition costs in South Australia are \$37 000/year. These costs are rising.

It is evident that the AIC Boarding Allowance does not adequately assist families with the ever escalating cost of sending a child away to complete their compulsory secondary schooling. We hope that the current boarding school fees are taken into account and the AIC Boarding Allowance can be increased in order to assist families who don't have any choice but to send their children away to boarding school.

A5. Walgett Branch (NSW)

D/C by A1

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance so that it is in line with the increases that have occurred in boarding school fees.”

Explanation:

When the AIC allowance was introduced, it alleviated the cost of educating isolated students. The cost to families associated with educating children from remote areas during their compulsory secondary years has increased significantly.

The AIC Allowance needs to be updated constantly to reflect the increasing financial burden being placed on isolated families to educate their children.

We are aware the AIC Allowance is indexed to the CPI, which allows for a small increase each year. However, this increase is nowhere near the actual increase of boarding school fees.

The result is, despite the allowance being indexed, the gap between the allowance and the real cost of educating isolated students has widened substantially.

A6. South Australian State Council (SA)

D/C by A1

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education and Training to urgently increase the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance so that isolated families can access compulsory education.”

Explanation:

Families are leaving remote communities to access secondary schooling as the costs involved in boarding are unsustainable. Others are taking out considerable debt. Education needs to be viable for families to remain in these isolated communities and continue to provide resources for Australia.

A7. Hay Branch (NSW)

D/C by A1

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government for an immediate increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children Boarding Allowance to help close the widening gap between the allowance and the cost of educating isolated students and for annual increases in the allowance to more closely reflect the real increases in costs of educating isolated students, than it currently does.”

Explanation:

As many boarding schools have annual fee increases well above CPI, the gap between the AIC and tuition and boarding fees has widened, despite the assistance being indexed. (Even fees at the three public boarding schools in NSW are above the assistance, at more than \$10 000).

This has placed a much greater financial burden on isolated families to educate their children.

An increase in the assistance is essential to ensure equitable access to education for isolated students.

A8. Pilbara Branch (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby both the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education and Training for a 50% increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance to take into account the ever increasing gap between the allowance and the true cost of boarding.”

Explanation:

When the AIC was initially introduced, it was to help alleviate the high costs associated with sending geographically isolated children to boarding school. Since then the gap between the allowance received by families and the true cost of boarding has drastically widened. On average boarding facilities increase their fees by 4 - 8% per annum, which is supported by the recent research undertaken by ICPA (Aust) into the costs of boarding. Our members feel very strongly about this issue and feel the Government have lost touch with the educational needs of rural and remote families.

F3. Charters Towers Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests a review of how the AIC Boarding Allowance is calculated and then continues to be recalculated in a maximum of 3 year intervals from then on.”

Explanation:

Apart from CPI adjustments, it would be at least 10 years since there was a major review of the AIC Allowances. During that time there has been some major increases in the Boarding School costs due to wage increases etc.

A suggested formula for calculating the Boarding Allowance:

‘Average cost of boarding fees- cost of child living at home for 40 weeks = Boarding Allowance’.

A9. Bollon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Ministers for Agriculture, Social Services and Education and Training for an urgent and substantial increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance and to align it with the Education Sub-Index of the Consumer Price Index.”

Explanation:

The only option for many geographically isolated families to access an equitable secondary education is boarding school and the average cost of this is now beyond the reach of many such families. Ordinary Australian families can no longer afford to live in the bush. Our members call for an urgent and very substantial increase in the AIC and to align it with the Education Sub-Index of the Consumer Price Index so the average family can afford to educate their children and remain living and working in rural Australia.

A10. Midlands Branch (TAS)**D/C by A9**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government for an urgent and substantial increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance (both Basic and Additional) with an immediate injection and indexed annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) education sub-index to more closely reflect the real costs of educating and boarding rural and remote students.”

Explanation:

Rural and remote secondary students must have access to appropriate education equivalent to their city counterparts. This means many rural and remote families have no choice but to send their children to a state-run or private boarding school, which, in many instances have high tuition fees. Boarding fees are continuing to increase annually between 6-8% which is at a greater rate than the Consumer Price Index (CPI) by which the AIC is indexed. The CPI has been below 2% since September 2014. The gap is widening exponentially between the AIC allowance and the real cost of educating isolated students. While families are very appreciative of the AIC Boarding Allowance, the escalating cost of educating their secondary school children is unsustainable and is causing financial and mental stress. The AIC Boarding Allowance needs to be urgently reviewed to reflect the increasing costs of educating isolated students. It is imperative that there is an immediate and substantial increase in the allowance and annual indexing in line with the CPI’s education sub-index. These increases in the allowance will enable rural and regional students to continue to have equal access to education.

A11. Belyando/Mt Coolon Branch (QLD)**D/C by A9**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance and to then be adjusted by the Education Sub-Index of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) annually to more closely reflect the real increases in costs of educating isolated students.”

Explanation:

We would like the AIC to be reviewed to reflect the increased costs of educating isolated students. When it was introduced it alleviated the cost of boarding a teenage child. This is certainly not the case today with the allowance covering very little of the boarding fee cost per year. Despite the allowance being indexed, the gap between the allowance and the real cost of educating isolated students has widened.

A12. Alpha Branch (QLD)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and the Minister of Education and Training to increase the AIC Additional Boarding Allowance.”

Explanation:

In the lead up to the election (after this motion was written), the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP announced a 50% increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children’s Additional Boarding Allowance. We would like to give a vote of thanks the minister for this announcement and hope that it makes boarding school more affordable for those on low incomes, struggling to educate their children.

A13. Alpha Branch (QLD)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and the Minister of Education and Training to raise the Parental Income Limit of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Additional Boarding Allowance.

Explanation:

Combined parental income affects the amount of Additional Boarding Allowance you can receive. Currently, if your combined parental taxable income is **\$51 027** or less you are eligible for Additional Boarding Allowance. The amount you can receive reduces by up to 20 cents for every dollar over this amount. If your income is **\$58 649** or more, you are ineligible to receive any Additional Boarding Allowance. However, if there are two or more children in the family pool, you may receive some Additional Boarding Allowance.

According to Seek's annual Salary Review, the average salary in Australia in the 12 months to June 2014 is **\$79 767**. Statistics have shown that those living in rural and remote areas have lower income levels than those in metropolitan Australia. The National Rural Health Alliance stated in October that:

Income inequality is a significant issue for more than 6.7 million people of rural and remote Australia, especially given the pervasive influence of low income on health, education and wellbeing.

The parental income limit for AIC should be increased to enable those on less than average wages to be able to access the Additional Boarding Allowance. Low income families are struggling to send their children to boarding school and this is resulting in them moving to more regional areas so they can access education. We need to encourage families to stay in the bush, not send them away because they cannot access essential services.

F2. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant minister to include a travel and tuition component in the AIC Boarding Allowance, as a separate allowance to any State or Territory Scheme."

Explanation:

AIC Basic Boarding Allowance does not include travel and tuition allowances, which are presently a State/Territory responsibility and quite inconsistent between states and territories. So to achieve fairness and equity for families, regardless of their home location in relation to the boarding school chosen to suit the needs of a family, travel and tuition could be considered as an additional component.

A14. Nyngan Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education and Training for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Second Home Allowance."

Explanation:

Part of the equity of access to education, that the ICPA strive for, includes access to schooling for students in families who choose not to board their children in an educational institution. A family such as this may establish a second home by choice which enables their children to have access to a continuing and appropriate education at a school of their choice. The Federal Government accepts this and the government gives assistance through the AIC, Second Home Allowance.

A second home allowance gives choice and equity in education but must keep up with rising costs.

A second home is a more attractive option than boarding for families with children with learning difficulties or medical issues. Establishing a second home for educating children with learning difficulties or medical issues means that these children benefit from the extra support of a parent being present throughout their education.

A15. Tambo Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the relevant ministers to ensure that any drought relief measures that are introduced by the federal government include an education subsidy component.”

Explanation:

We thank ICPA (Aust) for their effort thus far in lobbying for a drought education subsidy. It is important, however, to continue to highlight how critical this issue is in attempting to retain families in rural and remote locations as currently the population in rural and remote Australia continues to decline. This decline needs to be stopped. One of the key reasons families are leaving rural and remote locations, in particular in town families, is due to the lack of affordable education.

A16. Blackall Branch (QLD)**D/C by A15**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and relevant ministers to establish a Special Circumstances Education Allowance for families in drought-declared areas.”

Explanation:

Families educating their children in rural and remote area face extraordinary obstacles when educating their children from kindy through to tertiary. Research has shown if these children had been able to overcome these obstacles many, would go on to become leaders in their fields helping to grow and shape our great nation. Sadly, given the continuing drought that has impacted on a number of our states in Australia for several years now, some families have exhausted all avenues to finance their children’s education and are left with little or no choice but to cease their child’s education. This should not be happening in the twenty-first century in Australia. Educating children in rural and remote Australia in good seasons leaves families with high out of pocket cost. Families have to come up with thousands of dollars to allow their children a secondary education, this is not taking in consideration the cost associated in primary or tertiary. If Australia is to become a leading world nation, government needs to address the funding shortfall in education costs for rural and remote children in drought-declared areas.

A17. Belyando/Mt Coolon Branch (QLD)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies relevant ministers for the establishment of a ‘Drought Education Fund’ within the AIC Allowance for families in drought-declared areas.”

Explanation:

It is imperative that the Federal Government is committed to keeping rural families on the land in times of exceptional circumstances such as the drought affecting several states in particular Qld and NSW. Geographically isolated children should not be disadvantaged or unable to attend their studies at boarding school due to ongoing long term droughts. Boarding schools have been supportive of rural students during the current drought, but at the end of the day, they must run as a business and many are finding it difficult to continue to carry multiple students whose families cannot pay the required fees over such a long period. Educational expenses are an investment for the future prosperity of all our rural and remote communities and we urge the Federal Government to assist rural families in educating their children in these tough times.

A18. Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Education Council to ensure all state and territory governments adopt a unified approach that supports students who must live away from home to access appropriate schooling regardless of whether or not those students receive education in the state in which they live."

Explanation:

Presently, some States/Territories offer a living away from home allowance to their families needing to access boarding schools to meet the ongoing educational needs of their children.

South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales provide a Living away from Home Allowance (LAFHA) to students who study in/outside of their state. QLD pay LAFHA for students who also board in NSW but not other states and also has a capped travel allowance to cover costs to/from boarding school; NSW pay LAFHA for students who also board in QLD, SA, VIC and the ACT. SA has the State Education Allowance which is paid to families regardless of which state the boarding school is located in addition to a remote component if the place of residence is more than 150km from appropriate public transport.

The Northern Territory Government provides assistance for NT children boarding within the Northern Territory. For isolated primary, middle & senior students boarding interstate, the only assistance available is the Northern Territory Remote Area Travel allowance, which assists in travel from place of residence to the nearest point of public transport.

In Western Australia, only WA students attending schooling within WA can access the WA Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) to assist with the cost of boarding away from home in order to access an education.

Families who choose a boarding school for their child/children do so with their own unique and personal considerations. These considerations might be based on the student, such as abilities and aspirations, temperament and qualities; they could also be very specific to the family, such as support for the student while they are away from home, friends or relatives located nearby who can offer assistance and a family's ability to attend boarding functions during the year.

Rural and remote families of Australia would welcome support from the Education Council to achieve fair and equal support for families regardless of their home location in relation to the boarding school chosen to suit the needs of the student and the family.

A19. New South Wales State Council (NSW)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to seek recognition from government that any tax on day to day living and employment expenses will have an impact on the cost of an equitable education for isolated students if applied to boarding schools."

Explanation:

The members of NSW have, through their representatives at past Conferences, asked ICPA (Aust) to recognise the tax cost burden on boarding school fees. This impact can arise through taxes on day to day living and employment expenses such as FBT, GST and payroll tax. These taxes are increasing the cost of pathways to an appropriate education through boarding schools.

An indication of this cost impact is the application of the Fringe Benefits Tax on residential accommodation for supervisory staff in metropolitan boarding schools. The Australian Boarding Schools' Association (ABSA) estimates that this tax adds an average of about \$1 000 per child per year to the cost for rural and remote families with children at these schools. The current application of Fringe Benefits Tax treats the school provision of boarding staff accommodation simply as a form of remuneration for the staff's employment. However, in a boarding situation, staff accommodation is

necessary for the proper supervision of the students. It is necessary for the proper performance of the staff's job. In what can only be considered as similar situations, we understand that aged-care facilities do not pay this tax on accommodation for supervisory staff. Military establishments do not pay this tax on accommodation for supervisory staff. FBT on this accommodation across different types of institutions is anomalous and inconsistent, but most of all it is a serious cost for parents seeking an appropriate education for their child.

The Federal government charges Goods and Services Tax on boarding school food. We understand in aged-care facilities there is no GST on meals. If the states and federal government agree to raise the rate of GST, as many commentators are beginning to consider is increasingly likely, then the imposition on boarding costs will further increase.

Not only do these taxes currently affect boarding school costs, but also there is the potential for future forms of taxation to be imposed and further impact on the costs of boarding.

We seek that Federal Council raises awareness of these impacts and their effects on isolated families to obtain an equitable education. The Government can then truly measure and understand the burden that taxation policy potentially places on isolated children that attend boarding schools.

A20. Westmar-Inglestone Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant minister to support employers wishing to assist with education expenses of employees' children who reside in geographically isolated areas, by removing the Fringe Benefit Tax on this assistance."

A21. Kimberley Air Branch (WA)

WITHDRAWN

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to provide for boarding fees to be a tax-deductible expense for remote Australian families."

Explanation:

There is no argument that our remote families are in desperate need for further financial assistance in educating our children. Providing tax -deductible education zones in remote Australia would have very minimal effect on the Federal budget overall yet create significant assistance to our already struggling remote families.

With the current push to provide for a tax free special economic zone in the North of Australia, we believe the timing is right to re-ignite the tax reform debate and provide for direct assistance to remote Australian businesses in meeting the hefty cost of in educating our children in boarding schools. It is time for our government to come to recognise that for many of our families, sending our children to boarding schools is the only option, not a luxury and assistance and support is needed if we are to continue to keep and attract families to invest in and remain living in remote Australia.

COMMUNICATIONS

A22. Katherine Branch (NT)

CARRIED

"That Katherine Branch moves a vote of thanks to ICPA (Aust) for their continuous and effective lobbying of the Federal Government, Telstra, **nbn** and other providers on internet issues in the bush.

In particular, the negotiations with **nbn** to provide dedicated ports for education/health under the Sky Muster Satellite.

A23. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) thanks the Honourable Malcolm Turnbull, Honourable Paul Fletcher and the Honourable Bruce Scott for the provision of the **nbn** Sky Muster education port.”

Explanation:

Member for Maranoa, the Hon Bruce Scott, facilitated a visit by the then Minister for Communications, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull, and the then Parliamentary Secretary for Communications the Hon Paul Fletcher. This trip to Western Queensland, in April 2015, demonstrated the absolute inadequacy of the **nbn** interim satellite for distance education use. Minister Turnbull gave a verbal commitment to a priority port for education delivery via the **nbn** long term satellite system.

A24. Alpha Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) thanks Telstra for the un-metering of education sites and the considerable work into establishing this for Distance Education across all states.”

Explanation:

On behalf of all the families who have benefited from this announcement Alpha ICPA Branch would like to thank Telstra Country Wide for un-metering education sites used by Distance Education students. This has had a significant positive impact on students and households using Telstra mobile broadband across Australia. We understand that it was a lengthy process that required many hours. Thankyou Telstra for understanding the impact the #datadrought has on distance education.

A25. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications, **nbn** and Internet Service Providers to ensure that priority installation of the **nbn**[™] satellite service, now and in the future, be given to regional and remote students who do not have access to mobile internet or ADSL.”

Explanation:

The internet is an essential commodity for educating rural children, especially those who are schooled through the Distance Education arena at home and not a main stream school environment. More emphasis needs to be placed on rolling out the **nbn**[™] in these remote settings where no other form of communication or connectivity is accessible.

While **nbn** and many ISPs are boasting about the number of households they have hooked up to the **nbn**[™], a large number of those households already had access to other forms of internet. There are people who have access to both mobile data and ADSL, who have not had issues with speed, data or service reliability, who have now been hooked up to the **nbn**[™] with 300GBs of data per month when there are still remote students hooked up to the Interim Satellite Service with limited monthly data and no other options for internet.

A26. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications, **nbn** and Internet Service Providers to ensure that all Australian students have adequate internet access with regard to speed, quality, capabilities and cost of the service.”

Explanation:

Most students and families living in rural Australia will not have access to the **nbn**[™] fibre optic cable and will still be reliant on the fixed wireless or satellite networks for their e-learning through email and internet. Because the internet has become an essential commodity in our lives and learning, we need assurance from the Government and relevant companies that we will not be faced with exorbitant charges to maintain reasonable access for our children's education and that speed and quality will not be compromised.

A27. Katherine Branch (NT)

D/C by A26

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications and **nbn** to ensure that all Australian students have adequate internet access with regard to speed, quality, capabilities and cost of the service. "

Explanation:

We acknowledge and thank ICPA (Aust) and the Better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia for their continuous and effective lobbying of the Federal Government, Telstra, **nbn** and other providers on internet issues in the bush. In particular, the negotiations with **nbn** to provide dedicated ports for education/health under the Sky Muster satellite is potentially an important breakthrough.

In the transition from existing services to the Sky Muster satellite, the prioritisation of installations required for education is paramount.

While expected data speeds, plan sizes and service reliability should be superior to current experiences, concerns are emerging about the data allocations in plans being heavily loaded towards unreasonable off-peak times. The Mb/\$ continues to fall extremely short of those available to our urban counterparts, thus ensuring maintenance of the internet divide between regional and urban areas.

A28. Western Australia State Council (WA)

D/C by A26

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications, National Broadband Network and Internet Service Providers to ensure that all Australian Distance Education Students have comparable internet access, with regard to speed, quality, cost and data allowances, to those in metropolitan areas."

Explanation:

Distance Education Students who cannot access the internet by any other means than via the Long Term Satellite Service (LTSS) need to know that they will not be disadvantaged by second class data allowances or speeds. The **nbn** promised to deliver comparable speeds and data allowances to that of metropolitan areas. Currently available fixed line **nbn**[™] plans offer data, at 4 times the speed of the maximum LTSS, for as little as 10 cents per gigabyte with a 1000GB data allowance per month. The LTSS offers around 100GB of data per month for approximately 60 cents per gigabyte with a large portion of this allowance only available between 1am and 7am. The **nbn** is not delivering metropolitan speeds and data allowances to remote and rural students via the LTSS.

A29. Nyngan Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications to guarantee the availability of bandwidth to communities who are losing access due to the growth of mining villages and increasing demand on current available bandwidth."

Explanation:

At Nymagee, when the miners change shift and commence using their computers and other devices, the data speed slows significantly. It is laborious and often pointless to attempt to access the Internet in the evening when the shift change occurs.

This unsatisfactory drop in data speed affects school, TAFE and university students, as it occurs when most students are conducting their evening study routine and completing compulsory assessment tasks and homework. As we are paying extraordinary amounts for our internet every month, we expect reasonable speeds and a reliable service at all times of the day and night.

Telstra should be able to state that a certain speed will be guaranteed for rural customers and deliver when charging for a particular speed.

A30. Alpha Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies **nbn** and the Federal Government to establish an education port on Sky Muster satellite for tertiary students studying externally.”

Explanation:

Students studying on campus at Australian universities have access to some of the highest internet speeds and data allowances available in Australia. Those studying externally are often located in rural and remote areas and only able to access satellite connections. These students are severely impacted by the #datadrought. In some cases, students are forced to quit their studies as they are unable to access enough data to meet their online study needs. In other cases, students have had to move away from their homes to more metropolitan areas to access the data needed for them to continue their studies. This creates a significant financial and emotional cost to these students. Many are supporting their families during times of drought and thus it is critical that they be given the opportunity to continue to further their education.

The BIRRR Facebook page tells of many stories highlighting the need for a tertiary education port, their recent survey highlighted that 30% of respondents had a member of their household attempt tertiary studies externally. These are just two stories we chose to share.

MARY is completing a graduate diploma in Nursing in the N.T, she spent \$1000 on text books because she couldn't rely on having enough data. She is close to giving away her studies as the speeds are frustrating and the data limits prohibitive. The solution given by her provider was to study at 3am so she could use off peak data.

TARETA S.A: Attempted to complete a Bachelor of Arts externally, there were times that she was unable to access the internet due to dropouts. Her data usage was extremely high thus she often couldn't watch online lectures or download all the required readings because she was shaped. She would never video conference due to the higher impact on the data allowances. Tareta dropped out of school in Year 11 due to a family need, external study was the only further education she could afford. She could not continue due to lack of data and thus was forced to move 4500km for her tertiary studies due to the #datadrought.

The Hon Barnaby Joyce, MP stated on the 23rd June this year, that *“The Coalition will conduct an independent comprehensive review into equity of education access for rural and regional students to seek fresh ideas and fresh thinking to bridge the divide.”* We urge the Coalition to consider the data needs of tertiary students when conducting this review.

A31. Yaraka/Isisford Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Communications and the **nbn**, to conjointly investigate technologies such as the “QANTAS in flight Wi-Fi project” to evaluate if a scaled down version of this equipment can be provided for itinerant Distance Education families, who, due to the nature of their work, do not have a fixed abode.”

Explanation:

Earlier this year, it was announced the **nbn** and QANTAS were working on a project that would allow passengers in QANTAS aircraft flying over Australia to access Wi-Fi broadband sourced from the **nbn** satellites.

The aim is to allow up to a 100 or so passengers to access internet fast enough to work or watch movies etc. As a movie takes at least 1 Mbps potentially the link back to the satellite could be 100 Megs or greater.

Due to the motion / direction of the aircraft and due to the nature of the **nbn**[™] spot beam system, the characteristics of the satellite signal changes as the location changes. The equipment has to be continuously re-tuned & re-pointed as the aircraft moves on its route.

If families could access a “scaled down” version of the equipment that delivered say 5Mbps speed or greater and that automatically adjusts the installation for its current location, it would allow for a simple to operate portable broadband service.

Itinerant families who are constantly on the move and have children studying via Distance Education are disadvantaged by poor or no internet access for DE and general business/personal use. Use of equipment which will automatically operate would be a great advantage to these families and also have wider application for the Royal Flying Doctor Service, other Emergency Service providers and business and tourist operators who need Internet access in the Outback.

S1. Aramac/Muttaburra Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“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

“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

"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

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Communications require Retail (Internet) Service Providers who sell **nbn**[™] 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 long worked correctly leaving them effectively isolated as they had disconnected their USO phone service on the advice of their RSP.

S6. Alpha Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

"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**[™] 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.

A32. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government for the continuation of the Universal Service Obligation (USO) for fixed telephone services in rural, remote and isolated Australia.”

Explanation:

While the need for, and relevance of the current USO has been questioned by consumer and telecommunications industry organisations, including the 2015 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee, for the inhabitants of many remote areas the mandated right to a fixed telephone service is extremely important. Most who question the relevance of the USO have referred to the availability of mobile service as outdated current legislation. Approximately 70% of Australia is not covered by the mobile footprint, and the suggestions that USO funds could be better used to provide mobile coverage for all of Australia ignores the simple maths that this would take, at today’s figures, approximately 100 years to achieve blanket coverage. The 499 base stations announced in round one of the Mobile Black Spot Programme will increase coverage by slightly less than one per cent in terms of land mass. Figures courtesy of (<https://www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/phone/mobile-services-and-coverage/mobile-black-spot-programme>).

A33. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Minister for Communications and the Productivity Commission that the data speeds stipulated as a minimum within the Universal Service Obligation (USO) be increased to a speed sufficient for the requirements of education.”

Explanation:

At present, the USO stipulates a minimum data speed of 64 kb/s (Telecommunications Act, July 1999). However, the current USO contract does not require Telstra to provide this. Access to reliable internet services is a necessary component for education, health, business and social interaction. While the **nbn** is often touted as providing a de facto data USO, it does not have regulated minimum standards. While governments and organisations speak of peak performance speeds, those dependant on the interim satellite can attest to realities far below these standards, as can many consumers dependant on congested mobile phone based systems. A trigger point must be established at which point intervention is guaranteed.

A34. Balranald Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the relevant Federal Ministers to ensure that rural and remote schools are prioritised for any expansion of the mobile coverage footprint into regional Australia."

Explanation:

Balranald Branch is of the view that the selection of priority regions for the implementation of Mobile Phone coverage should include a priority for rural and remote schools that are currently without mobile phone service.

Most rural and remote schools are evacuation points in the event of emergencies occurring within the area and surrounding communities. Clare Public School is 155km from Balranald and consists of a school only. It is not part of a town. In the event of bushfires and other natural disasters, Clare Public School is the emergency evacuation point and, as the centre of the community, holds the Royal Flying Doctor medical chest and a defibrillator in case of a medical emergency. Unfortunately, Clare Public School has no mobile phone coverage and coverage cuts out about 120kms away from the school if travelling by road from Balranald. As there is also a teacher's residence at the school and a visiting teacher's residence, mobile connectivity would enhance access to online services for travelling staff and also for teachers who live on site. By default, students would benefit from enhanced mobile connectivity.

Balranald Branch seeks the support of ICPA (Aust) to ensure that the Commonwealth Government prioritises Rural and Remote Schools for future expansions of the mobile footprint.

A35. Monaro Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

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

Explanation:

While it is appreciated that the government's Black Spot Programme rolling out will provide better mobile coverage for rural families, it is primarily going to benefit more regionally placed families rather than the remote families. Remote families often do not have the choice of a landline as they rely solely on mobile phone and internet communication and many do not have the access because they are in a black spot area. This affects not only children's education but also the livelihood of families and acts as a disincentive for people to move to remote areas.

A36. Kinson Branch (QLD)**LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications and the Minister for Regional Communications to investigate national mobile roaming to ensure that all Australians can access quality mobile coverage all of the time, regardless of geographical location."

Explanation:

We welcome further funding for the mobile black spot program and we thank the government for this initiative. These newly funded and previously existing base stations could potentially be further used for national roaming, which is almost non-existent in Australia. While overseas visitors to Australia can utilise international roaming and quality mobile service across much of Australia, local mobile phone users cannot. If the technology is there why are we not embracing it?

A37. Alice Springs Branch (NT)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Telstra and other relevant Telecommunications Providers to ensure that rural and remote students experiencing phone outages and faults are attended to as a matter of urgency.”

Explanation:

There have been several instances where landlines have taken over 6 weeks to repair. It is not uncommon to be without a landline for weeks on end. When the phone lines are not working most remote families have no access to a mobile network and have no other form of phone contact at all. On top of this issue is the frustration of alerting the network providers that the phone is not working via the painfully slow, limited data internet service; often you have no way of knowing if your email has actually reached the correct place or person to help fix your phone line. You become reliant on getting other people to try and report the fault for you – often this is not adequate as they are not privy to your account details, GPS coordinates, reference numbers and fault history, not to mention the use of their time sitting on hold. The frustrations with an ongoing faulty phone line are raw and real. When your phone is not working you cannot call the service provider every day until it is fixed, hence why these issues can easily be forgotten or pushed to the side by our phone providers for weeks on end. This means that students are unable to receive essential Private Lesson Time (PLT) or contact their teachers when assistance is needed. Not to mention the serious implications because of the inability to contact the Flying Doctors or other emergency services when needed. Not only does it impact schooling but also the ability to be an active member of organisations such as ICPA so we can make a difference to our children’s education. We ask that when distance education students are involved, the repair time on faults be urgently prioritised and the phone providers **MUST** be accountable and take action when a remote fault is reported.

A38. Alice Springs Branch (NT)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Telecommunications Providers to ensure that all rural and remote students have consistent access to continuous and reliable telephone communications through the upgrade of obsolete technology.”

Explanation:

Extended periods without phone access due to obsolete technology are impacting student’s education through not being able to contact their teachers or their teachers being able to conduct the student’s for regular private lesson times (PLT).

Australian Telecommunication Providers state that they are committed to upholding the legislated Telecommunications (Customer Service Guarantee) Standard 2011 ("the CSG Standard"), as amended and issued by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). The Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) Standard specifies certain requirements to which carriage service providers (including Telstra) must adhere to in relation to the provision and repair of Standard Telephone Services and appointments associated with these activities.

One family of our branch was recently without a Telstra landline for 4 weeks. A year previously they were without it for over 6 weeks due to the obsolete technology of radio repeaters failing. Telstra’s service agreement states that they’ll repair faults and service difficulties within specified time periods based on the service location with ‘Remote’ issues being resolved by the end of 3 full working days after being reported. When obsolete technology is being used often components have to be remade as they are not ‘on the shelf’ and therefore falls outside the jurisdiction of the guidelines.

A39. Yaraka/Isisford Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Communications to carry out an investigation into the declining telephone service fault restoration standards being experienced in Rural and Remote Australia.”

Explanation:

Reports of long delays in the restoration of telephone services are becoming common place. Seven weeks for a High Capacity Radio Concentrator (HCRC) customer; many weeks for a cable fed customer as there was no cable available to fix the fault and it would have to be manufactured; three weeks for Next G Wireless Link Customers and so on. Excuses of lack of staff, lack of qualified staff, lack of material, multiple rescheduling of appointments, do not build confidence in infrastructure and the ability of its operator to maintain the aging Legacy Telephone system in the long term.

A40. Alpha Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) urges Telstra to immediately address the way fault reports on landlines in rural and remote areas are handled and to prioritise a solution to address ongoing outages.”

A41. Yaraka/Isisford Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Communications to strengthen the penalties for failing to meet the Customer Service Guarantee timeframes to restore telephone service.”

Explanation:

There are many reports of lengthy delays restoring faults on services. The existing Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) penalties were set many years ago and are no longer effective. It is cheaper for service providers to pay the penalties than to restore service within the CSG Guidelines. Revised penalties that increase with the length of the delay are needed. e.g. for Remote areas (CSG currently 3 working days) 3 - 6 working days penalty rate x 1; 6 - 9 working days penalty rate x 2; 9 – 12 working days penalty rate x 4 and so on. The entire penalty would be calculated by the working days from report x Penalty Rate x highest multiplier for the delay.

A fault that takes 15 working days to repair would be 15 x Penalty Rate x 8 so if the penalty rate is \$10, the penalty would be \$1 200.

A42. Yaraka/Isisford Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests Telstra to improve its processes in its Network Management Centre so that multiple outages can be grouped and restoration commenced on the common cause.”

Explanation:

Recently there have been examples when Telstra has not recognised that multiple outages could be related to a common cause.

E.g. eleven bush mobile base stations lost data capability for a week, it was not until ICPA raised the issue that it was found this was due to a common cause.

A whole area lost fixed lines and mobiles but these failures were not treated as urgent as the overall effect had not been appreciated by the Network Management Centre as the individual faults had not been linked.

S5. Charters Towers Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“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.

S7. Charters Towers Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“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

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

Explanation:

There is currently a gap in understanding, individual problem-solving and knowledge broker services for telecommunications in rural and regional Australia. Rural users were struggling to keep up with changing telecommunications, infrastructure, plans and providers. Regional telecommunication users require support for understanding new internet and phone options and a ‘third-party’ problem-solving resource to identify best solutions, best providers and best plans in different locations. The better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote (BIRRR) Australia team have been filling this role for the past 2 years. Their experience has identified a need for resources to be properly allocated and their learnings along with others, to be developed into a ‘bush internet toolbox’ to solve connection, speed, bandwidth, reliability and data usage issues.

The voluntary work BIRRR undertakes with individual people through contacts in **nbn**, Telstra and other service providers, as well as government, continues to deal with # Data Drought issues and have identified the advocacy work needed to meet the broadband needs of rural Australians.

These four women cannot, however, sustain the level of voluntary labour required by BIRRR. Current estimates are over 1000 individuals and families have been assisted without support and governance, the BIRRR group are unable to capture this information or bring about the policy and system change required to reduce complexity in the future.

AgForce Qld proposes a Telecommunications Innovation Project to service Australia's disparate and urgent telecommunications solution requirements. Regionally located extension officers can conduct the learning, knowledge broker and problem-solving functions needed to meet current gaps in knowledge between available technology options and access to the best packages. This project will focus on the delivery of telecommunications support services, including advocacy, education and problem solving with technology issues and opportunities, in regional Australia. AgForce have worked with ICPA in the past and have further information available on the project. They have already been in discussion with **nbn**, Telstra & Minister Nash on the need for funding to provide support.

S9. Alpha Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

"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

"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**[™] 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)

WITHDRAWN

"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.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

A43. Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

CARRIED

"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."

Explanation:

The service provided by Home Tutors in the delivering of education to the students in rural and remote Australia who have no choice but to be educated via the distance education mode of delivery, needs to be acknowledged. Home Tutors provide what the government cannot cost effectively supply and as such should be recognised and remunerated fairly.

A44. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

D/C by A43

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) in recognition of the role the home tutor in educating students via distance education."

Explanation:

For many young people living in remote regions, their only access to education is to study by distance education. It is clear that distance education provision is provided on the assumption that all children have ready access to a person able to deliver the program in the geographically isolated classroom. This person is the distance education tutor who must be available and able to provide the practical, day-to-day supervision and support required for the effective delivery of a distance education program. With the responsibility of the distance education tutor position often falling on the mother, fulfilling this position further compounds her workload. This can place increased pressure on other family members and may necessitate the employment of additional staff. When a family member (often the mother) takes on the responsibility of being the Home Tutor, they are effectively unable to gain employment within the family business, ranger station, remote community etc. Therefore the income for that family can be halved. This has a detrimental effect on the families living remotely and

schooling with Distance Education. The costs involved with remote living and schooling is often a monetary pressure that is placed on one of the parents as the other is teaching the children. Remote families often have no access to after school care or day care for under school age children, so there is no opportunity for the home tutor (mother) to seek employment to relieve the burden of a sole income family. Travel expenses are high, fuel costs are high and there are many other expenses that remote families encounter while educating their children, not to mention the looming expense of secondary schooling.

A45. Katherine Branch (NT)

D/C by A43

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) in recognition of the role the home tutor in educating students via distance education.”

Explanation:

For many young people living in remote regions, their only access to education is to study by distance education. It is clear that distance education provision is provided on the assumption that all children have ready access to a person able to deliver the program in the geographically isolated classroom. This person is the distance education tutor who must be available and able to provide the practical, day-to-day supervision and support required for the effective delivery of a distance education program. With the responsibility of the distance education tutor position often falling on the mother, fulfilling this position further compounds her workload. This can place increased pressure on other family members and may necessitate the employment of additional staff.

A46. Walgett Branch (NSW)

D/C by A43

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) in recognition of the role the home tutor undertakes when educating students via distance education.”

Explanation:

Thank you to Federal Council for their ongoing lobby for this allowance.

For many young people living in remote regions, their only access to education is to study by distance education. It is clear that distance education provision is provided on the assumption that all children have ready access to a person able to teach the program in the geographically isolated classroom.

This person is the distance education tutor who must be available and able to provide the practical day to day supervision and support required for the effective delivery of a distance education program. With the responsibility of the distance education tutor position often falling on the mother, fulfilling this position often compounds her workload. This in turn potentially places pressure on other family members and can necessitate the employment of additional staff.

The vital role of the distance education tutor must be recognised through the payment of an allowance which acknowledges the essential work they perform. Recognition is well over due.

A47. Kimberley Air Branch (WA)

D/C by A43

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance in recognition of the role the Home Tutor undertakes when educating students via distance education.”

Explanation:

It is time that the government acknowledges the service provided by Home Tutors in the delivering of education to the students in rural and remote Australia who have no choice but to be educated via the distance education mode of delivery. Home Tutors provide what the government simply cannot and as such should be recognised and remunerated for it. The acknowledgement and support of this important role links directly with government interests in regional development across the country, particularly Northern Australia, and will deliver both social and economic benefits to these regions. The support of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance will encourage young families to live remotely and embrace all the challenges that come with it for the long-term, including the provision of education in a remote setting. This encouragement of people to lay down roots in regional areas rather than the current situation that relies on transient workers, will contribute to flourishing regions. If we want regions to thrive, we need educational support, particularly in remote situations where this relies on distance education models.

A48. Western Australia State Council (WA)**D/C by A43**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) in recognition of the role the home tutor undertakes when educating students via Distance Education.”

Explanation:

Thank you to Federal council for the work done in the last year to highlight to policy makers the work done by the Home Tutor and for the continued lobby for the need for a tutor allowance.

For many young people living in remote regions, Distance Education is the only option. The role played by the Home Tutor is essential and provides a service that the government cannot.

In Western Australia, the Schools of the Air have commenced a 5 year budget reduction, which will see a 25% cut to the 2015 budget allocation for these schools. ICPA WA is concerned that this will result in less support being given to the student and hence more responsibility being placed onto the Home Tutor in the day to day education of each child.

A49. North West Branch (SA)**D/C by A43**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education and Training requesting that a Distance Education Teaching Allowance be provided to families who reside in rural and remote Australia, who educate their children via distance education, due to lack of other options available.

Explanation:

Rural families supervising their children at home via distance education are finding themselves torn between the want to give their children the best education they have available and the need to support their family financially. The parent who has to supervise their children’s schooling is sacrificing a minimum of 25 hrs a week of either paid employment or being able to fulfil their duties on the family property. The financial burden occurs when the family must then employ someone to fill that on property position or employ a Governess to prepare, deliver and supervise the home student’/s curriculum because the parent must continue in their current working role to sustain the family income. Why does our government not recognise nor compensate for the financial sacrifices our distance education parents are making to ensure their children receive a fair education?

A50. South Australian State Council (SA)**D/C by A43**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education and Training to provide a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) for geographically isolated distance education supervisors.”

Explanation:

The distance education supervisor provides full-time daily support to school aged students studying via distance education. This important role needs to be acknowledged.

A51. Pilbara Branch (WA)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government for an increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance in order to assist families with increasing costs associated with educating children in an isolated location via distance education.”

Explanation:

Families educating their children via distance education incur significant costs to ensure their children’s learning environments are safe and well maintained. This involves in most cases supplying a building, providing ongoing building maintenance, air conditioning, heating, power and water, all of which are supplied to children attending mainstream schools. In addition, isolated families incur significant travel costs in order for their children to experience face to face opportunities such as camps and in-school sessions which are imperative in motivating students and developing essential social skills. Increasing the existing allowance would assist families with the rising costs of educating children in isolated areas.

A52. Walgett Branch (NSW)**D/C by A51**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government for an increase in the AIC Distance Education Allowance.”

Explanation:

The AIC Distance Education Allowance is designed to assist families to establish and maintain the school room. There can be a high cost associated with classroom set up and maintenance, travel to integration days and classroom materials.

We are asking for an increase in the allowance to more closely reflect the out of pocket costs for families associated with the delivery of the distance education program.

A53. Queensland State Council (QLD)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) include geographically isolated non-government distance education students when dealing with all levels of equity to education for rural and remote students.”

Explanation:

The roll out of the Sky Muster LTSS and the Education Port has raised awareness that many students access distance education via a non-government Schools of Distance Education or through an individual home education program. In Queensland there are six non-government SDEs. It is imperative that these students are considered equally when deliberating with government Departments regarding access to education for geographically isolated students.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

EARLY LEARNING

A54. Katherine Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government for the AIC Distance Education Allowance to be extended to include all pre-compulsory school students enrolled in a distance education program.”

Explanation:

The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program; all states and territories have signed up to the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education for 2016 and 2017. Universal Access has a focus on participation by Indigenous children, vulnerable and disadvantaged children ... in a range of settings ... in order to meet the needs of working families, and will be accessible to all Australian children, regardless of their location. Extract from: www.education.gov.au/universal-access-early-childhood-education.

Setting up the classroom for distance education delivery for Pre-schoolers costs the same, if not more, as for the first year of compulsory schooling. The number of children accessing this pre-compulsory year by distance education is not huge. For example: Katherine School of the Air (KSA) has had a structured Pre-School Program in place for over 20 years and currently (Sem 1 2016) has 15 enrolments. On average KSA enrolments have been around 20-25 each year. The NT Government already recognises this cohort of students by making available half of the “NT Correspondence Site Allowance – Preschool” to assist all four year old children that are enrolled in pre-school with the Alice Springs and Katherine Schools of the Air. Extending the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) distance education allowance to include these students will ensure greater and more equitable participation in Early Childhood Education by rural and remote students. Distance education students could benefit enormously from a minute portion of the \$40 billion allocated to Early Childhood education and care over the next four years, including more than \$3 billion to ensure the system is more accessible, affordable and fairer for families.

A55. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

D/C by A54

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government for the AIC Distance Education Allowance to be extended to include all pre-compulsory school students enrolled in a registered, distance education program.”

Explanation:

The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program. For most rural and remote children this means enrolment in preschool from when they are 3 ½ years old. Setting up the classroom for distance education delivery for Pre-schoolers costs the same as for the first year of compulsory schooling. Rural and remote families have no other day care options for pre-school age children and it becomes the families’ responsibility to set up these learning environments for their young children to cover all aspects of early child development. Extending the AIC distance education allowance to include these students will ensure greater and more equitable participation in Early Childhood education by rural and remote students.

A56. Western Australia State Council (WA)

D/C by A54

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to extend the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance so that it includes all pre-compulsory school students enrolled in a distance education program.”

Explanation:

Currently, pre-compulsory school students (4 year olds) are ineligible for the Distance Education component of the AIC scheme. However, for the majority of students of this age, it is in fact, their first year of education. Sound early education programs are important to enable successful educational outcomes for students as they progress through their primary schooling. The cost of materials for pre-compulsory students, such as art and craft materials, are often more expensive than those required for older students. Extending the AIC Distance Education Allowance to include 4 year olds will ensure greater and more equitable participation in early childhood education by rural and remote students.

A57. Monaro Branch (NSW)

LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to allocate funding for 600 hours of pre-schooling as per the Universal Access to early childhood education but made available over a two-year period rather than the current one-year policy.”

A57. (2) (Foreshadowed motion) Monaro Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant minister to allow rural and remote communities where early childhood services are provided, to allow universal access funding to be spread over a one or two-year period at the parents’ preference.”

Explanation:

No one can deny the overwhelming evidence for quality early childhood education on a child’s social, emotional and cognitive development. The Universal Access to early childhood education provides 600 hours of pre-school for all children in the year before they attend school. This equates to 15 hours a week. In the rural and remote areas, it often not possible for parents to get their four-year-old to pre-school for 15 hours a week either from the distance from the centre or simply because there is no centre. Monaro Branch would like to see some flexibility in the 600 hours of funding so that three-year-olds could attend pre-school and the allocated 600 hours could be spread over two years. This would make rural services more viable and children would be able to attend more pre-school and gain the associated benefits. This would be cost neutral to the government and would greatly benefit rural and remote families and communities. The 15 hours per week was a city based figure and has no bearing whatsoever on what is feasible in the bush.

A58. New South Wales State Council (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education and Training to collaborate with States and Territories to create practical access for all four year olds to attend pre-compulsory schooling, irrespective of the State or Territory and demographical location in which they reside, so that they are not excluded from the Universal Access to early childhood education, as is currently the situation for a large percentage of children – particularly in NSW.”

Explanation:

Current policy settings are still not extending educational opportunity equally to all children. This means we are missing out on chances to maximise the potential of all children to thrive, participate in and contribute to our society. <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/reports/quality-early-education-for-all/>

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) **4240.0 - Preschool Education, Australia, 2015** March 2016 highlights NSW's lag in providing the mandatory 15 hours of access to pre-school for four year olds. NSW has a 65% rate of children accessing 15 hours a week. In all the other states and territories 90% of pre-schoolers are able to access rate 15 hours per week.

An extreme example of this inequality is in the far west of the NSW where three and four year olds without an adult to facilitate their Distance Education pre-schooling, definitely have no practical access to pre-schooling.

The pilot Distance Education pre-school at Wanaaring in far western NSW, which was initiated by ICPA-NSW in Term 4 2015, has virtually been withdrawn. This is due to the education department's realisation that the children are not legally able to be 'signed over' into another's care; that instead each four year old must have a parent/carer with them all through their school day. In theory it is still running but as the children do not have access to an adult who is able to attend with them, only the Student Learning Support Officer's (SLSO) daughter attends.

ICPA NSW believes a practical and sustainable remote pre-school model is one which;-

- is attached to state schools, thus utilising existing infrastructure;
- employs community members;
- provides at least twelve hours a week but preferably fifteen;
- includes three year olds to allow time before the first year of formal schooling for any necessary intervention strategies to be successfully applied;
- uses an Australian pre-school program;
- is able to be collapsed and reinvigorated. For example, is accessible even if there is only one eligible student.

Queensland Education developed an eKindy program run from their Distance Education Centres in answer to the provision of access for their remote four year olds. This year they have altered that model to 'satisfy legislative and regulatory requirements'. Remote Queensland schools need to be identified as a 'prescribed' school by physically being fifty kilometres from a pre-school and the prep (kindergarten in NSW) teacher writes their program. Facilitators (SLSO's in NSW) work with the children for some of the day joining the prep (NSW Kindergarten) class too and are able to have up to four children in their care at any one time.

The attention of ICPA-NSW has been brought to the fact that as of Term 2 2016, just across the NSW-QLD from Wanaaring at Thargomindah, four year olds have practical access to fifteen hours a week of pre-school. South of the border, four year olds do not have that advantage.

Relative to the extremely low population in the far west of NSW, there is a substantial amount of children whom ICPA-NSW had hoped would have had pre-schooling in 2014, 2015 and 2016. A veritable river of children who have, to some extent, missed the opportunity to start kindergarten on a footing which would prevent them from being at the bottom end of the literacy gap, which widens insurmountably by the Year 3 NAPLAN assessment.

It is vitally important that all children benefit from early learning and development – yet currently, those who would benefit most, are least likely to be able to afford it, **access it** or participate.

<http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/reports/quality-early-education-for-all/>

For the above reasons ICPA-NSW implores the Minister for Education and Training, to work with his State and Territory counterparts to address this gross inequity.

CHILD CARE

A59. Kimberley Air Branch (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to amend the current guidelines to include distance education as an allowable activity for Nannies with the Department of Education and Training Nanny Pilot Programme.”

Explanation:

Our branch would like to acknowledge that we are aware that the ICPA has worked tirelessly on the Distance Education Allowance arena however there is still no means of funding the employment of a nanny/tutor for distance education. It is not the kids’ fault where they live and it’s our most remote working parents who need the support for their kids in the classroom. It’s not like the kids can teach themselves. If our government wants to retain families in the bush they need to get behind the ICPA on this one. We’re not asking for more money or more places, just allow our kids access to help with their learning while their parents sweating it out on the land. The existing program is a pilot, why not include a distance education component to the pilot to see how it goes?

S12. Federal Council

CARRIED

“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.

A60. Belyando/Mt Coolon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers for the reassurance that the Australian In Home Care Scheme will remain and run simultaneously with the Nanny Pilot Programme with adequate ongoing funding to cover both schemes.”

Explanation:

It is imperative that the Federal Government is committed to guaranteeing that every child has access to quality child care in geographically isolated areas where no other child care options are available. The In Home Care scheme is a vital program for families across regional areas that need child care; the longevity of the scheme must be safeguarded. We would like to seek assurance that the Nanny Pilot Programme and IHC scheme would provide child care to their specific target groups in geographically isolated areas and neither program would be detrimental to the other.

A61. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) seeks assurance from the Federal Government that the In-Home Care Scheme will remain beyond 30th June 2018.”

Explanation:

The Nanny Pilot Programme, the proposed replacement for the In Home Care Scheme, has failed to meet expectations for rural and remote families in Australia. The criteria is not flexible, care is expensive, and the programme does not take into account the unique needs of this demographic. It is therefore imperative that the In Home Care Scheme remain beyond June 30th 2018 to ensure that rural and remote families are not disadvantaged by having no other option than the NPP, which is, in its current form, not a viable replacement.

A62. Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld Branch (QLD)

D/C by A61

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to seek assurance that the In Home Care Scheme will remain beyond June 30th 2018.”

Explanation:

The In Home Care Scheme provides a huge support for parents on rural properties. Early Learning facilities are limited in remote areas, as are mainstream child care and this Scheme enables working parents to employ a carer for their home. This care is supported and monitored through guidelines to ensure the child care is safe, nurturing and educational.

In Home Care is worked out on approved **working status not income** which differs from the Nanny Pilot Programme.

The Nanny Pilot Programme has not provided any useful care in rural and remote areas so it is imperative that the In Home Care Scheme continues to service this group.

A63. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education and Training to increase In Home Care places in regional areas.”

Explanation:

We acknowledge the Nanny Pilot Programme however there are still many families in the NT and other parts of regional Australia in need of In Home care placements. There is an urgent need for places to be increased to meet demand, specifically for remote families on waiting lists who have no other child care options available to them. Distance education families are spending long hours in the schoolroom and need this service to provide care for younger siblings. Increased financial pressures also see families needing an ‘all hands on deck’ approach to keep the properties running with less staff. For families unable to secure a place with In Home Care, the cost of child care is prohibitive and many have no other option than to have babies and toddlers in the schoolroom all day to the detriment of students or have children with them when working on the station.

A64. Alpha Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services to allow unused funded In Home Care places to be reallocated to other In Home Care providers.”

Explanation:

In Home Care is an essential service for rural and remote families. It provides before and after school care for working families as well as care for under school age children. It is a vital child care tool for families who currently home school their children and due to a challenging curriculum need care for the younger siblings. In Home Care is often the only child care option available to many rural and remote families.

Currently, there is no allocation of unused In Home Care places. Over the last three years this has resulted in many families being placed on a waiting list for care. In order for In Home Care (IHC) to operate to its best potential and often flexible care to families, these unused places need to be allocated to already approved service providers to decrease waiting list times for families in need.

The ICPA 2016 portfolio on child care states that the uptake of the Nanny Pilot Scheme has been low in remote areas as it was found to be ‘unaffordable’. IHC is a vital service that is relied upon for rural and remote families due to its flexibility and affordability. All available funding for IHC should be able to be used by families in need, there should not be a waiting list in one area and unused funding in another.

A65. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA Federal Council lobbies the relevant bodies to ensure that affected Early Childhood services are not forced to close due to the cessation of the Budget Based Funding Programme (BBF) in 2018.”

Explanation:

The BBF Programme currently provides a contribution to the operational costs of approximately 300 child care and early learning and school aged care services in approved locations. These services are

predominantly located in regional and remote communities where the market would otherwise fail to deliver services to meet the needs of the children and their families. Many are the sole provider of early childhood services in their community and include mobile kindergartens and playgroups across regional Australia. The BBF Programme will cease to exist in July 2018 and as a direct result we will see the closure of a number of mobile services to these areas. At this stage, the Department of Education and Training offers support to transition to the new programme, "Jobs for Families Child Care Package" or to move to alternative funding arrangements. Unfortunately for many of these services there are no alternative funding arrangements available to them and families have been informed that their service will cease to operate from July 2018. Early Childhood education services are vital to those families living in rural and remote areas of Australia who otherwise would have only distance education options available. We need the Department to provide alternative arrangements under their new program which allows for the continuation of these such services.

A66. Westmar-Inglestone Branch (QLD)

D/C by A65

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant bodies to ensure that affected Early Childhood services are not forced to close due to the cessation of the Budget Based Funding Programme (BBF) in 2018."

Explanation:

The BBF Programme currently provides a contribution to the operational costs of approximately 300 child care and early learning and school aged care services in approved locations. These services are predominantly located in regional and remote communities where the market would otherwise fail to deliver services to meet the needs of the children and their families. Many are the sole provider of early childhood services in their community and include mobile kindergartens and playgroups across regional Australia. The BBF Programme will cease to exist in July 2018 and as a direct result we will see the closure of a number of mobile services to these areas. At this stage, the Department of Education and Training offers support to transition to the new programme, "Jobs for Families Child Care Package" or to move to alternative funding arrangements. Unfortunately for many of these services there are no alternative funding arrangements available to them and families have been informed that their service will cease to operate from July 2018.

Within our own branch, one of our kindergartens has been informed by C&K that it will close when the BBF ceases to exist due to their reliance on that funding. Another teacher lost and the job becomes part-time which proves more difficult to fill.

A67. Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to revise aspects of the proposed new Child Care System which adversely affect the delivery of remote area services."

Explanation:

ICPA needs to lend their support to mobile resource units who are currently in negotiations with mobile children's service associations and the Department of Education and Training. These groups are endeavouring to negotiate the best outcomes possible for families within their regions. The problem stems from the changeover from the Budget Based Funding program to the new system due to be implemented by July 2018. None of this new system of funding allocation recognises the geographical location of remote families.

For example, the distance travelled by the families to access the Outback Mobile Resource Unit (OMRU) for every family is at least 60 kms one way and up to 120km one way for some. The

OMRU, based in Broken Hill cannot possibly operate under a regional or metropolitan model such as is being offered. This model will entirely disadvantage any face to face and social interaction in any pre-schoolers' or younger children's experiences.

Given the remote and scattered location of the families in our area, they are used to travelling long distances to participate in the valuable education and social experiences provided by the OMRU. The present system utilises the rare community gatherings to give these disadvantaged youngsters use of their facilities e.g. Gymkhanas, Field Days and School of the Air functions. Also, it is able to negotiate the timing of visits to homesteads so they can maximize attendance, i.e. when the neighbouring stations can also participate. This makes sense to people who are used to juggling activities for the least distance to travel and the maximum number who can participate. On top of this the unsealed roads in the area are closed by the authorities when rain has fallen in the area which makes the set timetable unworkable.

Attending any of the educational and social children's services in this area requires a big effort on behalf of the parents. The OMRU has provided rare opportunities, with far ranging benefits for children in this remote and sparsely populated area for over thirty years. It would be a shame to see it reduced greatly or disappear altogether because of the new regulations. We can understand they may offer more opportunities and be more accessible and flexible in some areas, but not this one.

How does the criteria of the Activity Test apply to a mother of young children not actually residing within the townships of Tibooburra, White Cliffs or Menindee? Our branch respectfully suggests that the Department get out a map of the area. Tibooburra has a population of less than 100, White Cliffs and Menindee similar and Milparinka is nine. The nearest business centre for any of these townships is Broken Hill, 331 kms from Tibooburra, 288 kms from White Cliffs, 118 kms from Menindee and 290 kms from Milparinka.

There is nothing in this proposal more flexible or accessible for any families within the areas north, west or east of Broken Hill. Parents who presently make use of OMRU services are dismayed to find that under the new system a set timetable of visits has been proposed, no school aged children will be welcome to participate, a minimum number will be needed for each session and Long Day Care will be the only option. Also the Child Care Subsidy that helps pay for the fees will be available only to those parents who meet the Activity Test.

A68. Paroo Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Australian Government to continue full financial support of 'out of scope', 'mobile services' such as Paroo Contact Children's Mobile Inc (PCCM) and Outback Mobile Resource Unit (OMRU) which will not be able to operate under the Jobs for Families Childcare Package."

Explanation:

Mobile services such as Paroo Contact Children's Mobile Inc. (PCCM) and Outback Mobile Resource Unit (OMRU) provide quality early childhood education in very remote and geographically isolated communities where sparse populations and great distances prohibit the delivery of child care on a fee for service basis. Sessions, generally of a three hour period, are programmed to be delivered at venues in small communities and on private properties and are often the only access families have to trained early childhood professionals.

To aid socialisation, families will often travel long distances via unsealed roads to gather together at a venue. In most instances, the time it takes to travel to and from a session makes the notion of a 'drop & run' child care service impractical for parents and therefore unwarranted.

That model would also prove financially unsustainable due to the high logistical cost of servicing such vast areas under such extreme conditions. For instance; in 2015 PCCM serviced an area greater than Tasmania, providing 2,154 hours of quality face-to-face, early childhood education to just over 100 children, at a cost of almost \$300,000. That equates to approximately \$140 per hour. If PCCM were to charge the capped child care subsidy rate of \$11.55 per hour they would raise only \$24,878 leaving a deficit of some \$275,000 per year or 91% of their annual operating costs.

Quality early childhood education can and does occur in many situations other than through child care, and the unique service offered by mobiles is vital to the education of children in remote areas. That same isolation and remoteness that often disadvantages the children also impacts heavily on the services that support them, and will render organisations such as PCCM & OMRU unable to successfully transition into the Jobs for Families Childcare Package.

We therefore urge the Australian Government to provide adequate funding specific to needs of mobile services, thereby ensuring quality early childhood education for remote children into the future.

These families do not associate the Service with the delivery of child care and it is not a service they are asking for. Very few, families would utilise child care, especially for school aged children which comprise about 50% of the 100 or so children currently attending Paroo Mobile Sessions.

Without significant, guaranteed, operational funding, recognising travel time, associated costs and the many variables mobile services face, very remote Budget Based Funding mobile services we believe, will not successfully and sustainably make the transition to child care funding.

A69. Katherine Branch (NT)

D/C by A67

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant minister regarding the Federal Government Budget Based Funding to Early Childhood services and the loss of this funding to early childhood mobile services nationally.

Explanation:

The Budget Based Funding (BBF) was due to change over to the Child Care Scheme as of June 2017. Due to the impending election this date has been extended to June 2018.

The difficulty is that Katherine Isolated Children's Service (KICS) is a mobile playgroup service that does not provide child care but they do provide a very important early childhood, educational experience for the remote and isolated children that they visit in the Northern Territory.

A70. Central West Plains Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers for Education to reconsider the changes to mobile children's services funding for services in rural and remote areas."

Explanation:

The Bogan Bush Mobile has operated a fortnightly mobile service visiting 11 communities plus a service in their hometown of Nyngan for the past 24 years. Two Hour sessions are conducted in a "Play Group" style, with children birth to school age benefiting from social interaction, craft activities, motor skills, singing and book reading, whilst parents benefit from valuable time to socially interact

with other parents, which is especially valuable for first time Mums who live on properties that are long distances from town. It is also a chance for staff to discuss any child related issues that arise with parents, as all children are assessed in vital skills and milestones during these sessions.

These are families that can be otherwise outside the social network of preschool/school/sporting groups, as children are still very young and opportunities for them to interact with others are scarce. Also there is only a minimal cost to families and no requirements for the parent to be working/seeking work/training to access the service at a reasonable cost. To change the basis of these services to a Long Day Care model, would mean that many parents will not find it viable to drive babies and young children to town, drop them off at care and wait for several hours to collect them and return home, all without the valuable interaction with other parents and the whole experience that the current model offers.

Bogan Bush Mobile estimates that a change to their services of this nature will result in all but two of the communities they currently serve not being viable to operate a service in, either due to not having minimum numbers required for whole day care, or because dedicated long day care services already exist in some centres.

A71. Wentworth Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to reconsider the migration of all rural services under Budget Base Funding (BBF) model to the new Child Care System."

Explanation:

At a recent government meeting in Sydney, mobile early childhood education services were advised that they would not fit the new child care system and will therefore need to find alternate funding sources. Some suggestions included philanthropic funding or approaching other government departments. Mobile education services should not have to compete year in, year out for funding. These mobile services are providing the only access remote children have to early childhood education. They provide invaluable social interaction and school readiness to isolated children as well as providing an important outreach and learning environment for parents. If we lose remote mobile services, we are sending an entire demographic of children off to school not having experienced any formal early childhood education.

A72. Balranald Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to include a rural and remote disadvantage criterion under the new Child Care System and to create a funding model that ensures the viability of mobile children's services delivering to rural and remote children."

Explanation:

Balranald Branch are concerned about the funding changes for Early Childhood Services and the impact on mobile children's services that visit isolated and geographically disadvantaged children in Western NSW.

There are children in the Balranald area who do not have regular access to pre-school and for many, the services provided by mobile children's services is their only access to structured activities.

Hay Mobile Children's Service and Broken Hill Outback Mobile Resource Unit (Toy Library) both service families in the Balranald Area. The Hay Mobile Children's Service travels two hours one way to provide daytime structured care to seven children aged six months to five years old. The service is provided at Clare Public School, utilising a second classroom once a fortnight. The children travel from a 70km radius. Hay Mobile provides these children with five hours of activities which aim to promote different outcomes such as creativity, role play, social interaction, fine and gross motor skills, just to name a few. Hay Mobile is providing an excellent foundation for education from a very early age. To quote one Balranald Branch member: "Hay Mobile has been extremely beneficial to our children (particularly my two-year-old who has been using the service for 18 months) as he is now more confident with people he doesn't know, he looks forward to going to 'school' and has learnt to cope with separation from me. If the service is no longer funded, our nearest Early Learning Service is 130km away and it is unlikely our children would attend regularly if Hay Mobile ceased operating."

Hay Mobile Services nine venues within a 200km radius. For many of these children, this is the only access they will have to early learning as there is no pre-school in many of the locations.

Balranald Branch members also utilise the services of the Broken Hill Toy Library at different times during the year. For more than two decades, the service has capably built a relationship within bush communities, significantly adding to the wellbeing and capacity of isolated families to deal with the challenges of remote station life. The additional services provided at Field Days, Campdrafts and Swimming Lessons play an important role in building the capacity of an event by allowing organizers, usually non-profit community groups, to appeal to families who may otherwise not attend.

The mere fact that many isolated children will not have access to the recommended 600 hrs of pre-school reiterates the importance of Mobile Children's Services as a fundamental facilitator of Early Learning in the bush.

The early childhood statistics in the Balranald area taken from the 2012 Australian Early Development Census, show we need more, not less engagement at early childhood level.

Evidence indicates that participating in a quality early childhood education programme can significantly increase positive educational and life outcomes for children, especially those from a disadvantaged background.

Balranald branch therefore seeks a remote disadvantage criterion that ensures the viability of mobile children's services delivering to rural and remote children.

A73. Broken Hill Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to include rural and remote as a category of disadvantage under the proposed Child Care System funding model

Explanation:

Our members face many difficulties in accessing early childhood programs within their area. Families who live more than an hour's drive from a service, don't find it feasible to drop their children to an early childhood service for several hours before collection and returning home. The Broken Hill Outback Resource Unit offers these remote families the opportunity to access beneficial early childhood programs enabling the children to be school ready.

A74. Paroo Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to include in the Early Childhood Education and Child Care Services’ terms and conditions, a flexibility to allow these services to best support early childhood education, as well as family and community wellbeing in geographically isolated areas.”

Explanation:

Quality early childhood education can and does occur, in a holistic approach, alongside and in conjunction with the provision of family and community social and emotional wellbeing. Organisations such as Paroo Contact Children’s Mobile Inc. (PCCM) and Outback Mobile Resource Unit (OMRU) strive to provide a holistic service where children and families benefit from inspired learning experiences while fostering friendships through social opportunities, in an inclusive environment. The benefits that these services provide reach far beyond that of providing early childhood education and care. Early intervention and the relationships developed between children, families and communities are invaluable.

The social inclusion, benefits and flexibility provided by Paroo Mobile is of far greater value to our families and community than the perceived value of childcare. The ability to provide immediate responses to community needs is one of Paroo Mobile’s most highly valued attributes. Paroo Mobile services utilise qualified, experienced staff, with an extensive understanding of the educational, social and emotional needs of children, families and communities, in its very remote, geographically isolated service region.

Since 1987, Paroo Mobile Services, has been the only one to have been providing services, to very remote areas, provide a network of connections and links to many other community services including the Royal Flying Doctor Service and other health services, CentreCare, Legal Aid, Rural Financial Counsellors and Rural Resilience Officers, schools and other education and early intervention services. Families often gather together at venues, providing valuable social inclusion opportunities for that community but this is not always the case; at some venues Paroo Mobile Services are providing a session for a single family. These long standing services enhances opportunities for social inclusion which supports the emotional wellbeing of children, families and communities in very remote and isolated areas.

“PCCM works hard to relieve the isolation felt by families; staff are usually the first contact new families in the region have with the local community. They play a vital role in drawing people together and strengthening communities.” (Wanaaring parent)

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE - OTHER**A75. Katherine Branch (NT)****CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant minister to nationalise a “Working with Children” certification.

Explanation:

In remote areas, people working with children include teachers, VISE tutors, Distance education tutors and In Home Carers. Often these people travel between states and may be backpackers or grey nomads. The current state-specific ‘Working with Children’ certification requirements hamper timely employment or act as a deterrent, further increasing the difficulty already experienced in sourcing such employees in remote areas. In Qld a ‘Blue Card’ is required and in the NT an ‘Ochre Card’ for example. Families require an assurance their children will be safe and a National system of criminal history check would presumably be more reliable than state-based certification and reduce

duplication across jurisdictions. NTICPA could assist by garnering the support of the NT Department of Education to represent this issue at National education meetings.

A76. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

D/C by A75

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant minister to nationalise a “Working with Children” certification.”

Explanation:

In remote areas, people working with children include teachers, VISE tutors, Distance education tutors and In Home Carers. Often these people travel between states and may be backpackers or grey nomads. The current state-specific ‘Working with Children’ certification requirements hamper timely employment or act as a deterrent, further increasing the difficulty already experienced in sourcing such employees in remote areas. In Qld a ‘Blue Card’ is required and in the NT an ‘Ochre Card’ for example. Families require an assurance their children will be safe and a National system of criminal history check would presumably be more reliable than state-based certification and reduce duplication across jurisdictions. NTICPA could assist by garnering the support of the NT Department of Education to represent this issue at National education meetings.

A77. Walgett Branch (NSW)

D/C by A75

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant minister to nationalise the ‘Working with Children Check.’”

Explanation:

The Working with Children Check is a federal check but administered by each State. Currently if employment with children is being considered between states then although there is clearance from one state, clearance has to be obtained from the next state before taking up employment. This just adds to the difficulty in sourcing employment in remote areas either by a deterrent or hampering employment whilst waiting for the certification.

A78. Kimberley Air Branch (WA)

D/C by A75

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to improve access to Working with Children Cards by removing the burden and often duplication from the State processes across to a National system that would enable people to work across the nation without requiring multiple cards.”

Explanation:

There is no one who would disagree that Working with Children Cards should be mandatory to work with our children within the school and child care systems. However, we are finding that as soon as people transfer employment from one State or Territory to another, they are then required to complete the process again and again and so on. This places a burden on the system creating wait times for processing of up to eight weeks in some States, whereas others are able to provide the results within three weeks. These inconsistent processing times also impact the availability of potential staff, placing great stress and often financial burdens on those of us in rural and remote areas who rely on programs such as In Home Care. We would ask that the Federal Government reduce the duplication, improve processing times and assist us in providing quality educators in rural and remote areas across the country.

A79. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government and support the state ICPA organisations to each lobby their respective State Governments, to implement changes to the Working with Children Card (WWCC) so that it is nationally recognised.”

Explanation:

At present, a person working with children, be that an In Home carer, a teacher or a volunteer for Isolated Students’ Education (VISE) tutor to name a few, must have a current WWC Card. This police clearance, specifically about children, is a national check, but is administered on a state level. If a person moves between states, and even though they may already have clearance from one state, they need to get another for the state they are in.

A80. Broken Hill Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection requesting that child care and governessing for remote families satisfy eligibility criteria for a second year holiday working visa.”

Explanation:

Foreign travellers gain a second year holiday working visa by participating in rural work. Governessing and child care are not deemed to be rural work under current regulations. It would be very beneficial for the education of remote children if governessing and child care were recognised as rural work so as to qualify travellers for the second year of the holiday working visa.

A81. Belyando/Mt Coolon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection to include foreign teachers, working for rural and remote families, on the ‘Specified Work’ listing for the 417 VISA.”

Explanation:

Thank you to Federal Council for once again taking this to the Minister of Immigration and Border Protection, we appreciate your efforts.

The Minister however, has failed to recognise the intent or backgrounding for this request. In situations as specific as teaching on rural and remote properties there is no impact on local labour market as referred to by the Minister. There is simply a huge shortfall of qualified Australian teachers that want to come and teach in rural and remote areas.

Many foreign teachers are willing to come and teach in these areas and if this could qualify them for their 2nd year VISA under the ‘Specific Work’ list, it would open up the opportunities for more families to have their children taught by qualified teachers.

Our children’s educations are just as important to us as those of our city families, allowing a special inclusion or something of the like on the ‘specified work list’ would at least give families the choice of being able to provide a qualified teacher to their children. This in turn would only be for the betterment of our children’s educations.

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

“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 2nd 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 2nd 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 2nd 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 2nd year visa working days for volunteers is essential.

RURAL SCHOOLS/SCHOOL TRAVEL**A82. Aramac / Muttaborra Branch (QLD)****CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to address the inequities faced by families who live in or near rural and remote communities, where secondary schools are not able to meet the educational needs of individual students by allowing them to access the Assistance for Isolated Children’s Boarding Allowance or the Second Home allowance.”

Explanation:

“The greatest educational disadvantage faced by many families in remote and isolated locations is the lack of access to an appropriate secondary education compared to those residing in urban areas.” (ICPA (Aust) Boarding School Survey Results April 2016). In the case for equity of financial support for appropriate education, “geographical isolation” should not just be determined by distance from a government school. Poor student outcomes, insufficient teaching resources, core tertiary eligible subjects only offered through distance education, totally inadequate internet and limited sporting &

cultural opportunities all contribute to significant educational disadvantage for students in rural remote locations as compared to less remote and metropolitan schools.

While secondary government schools in remote locations provide communities with a local educational option, they should not be deemed as meeting the needs of all students. "Education is a much broader issue than just basic academic subjects. It encompasses life skills, cultural experiences, sporting opportunities and exposure to experiences beyond those available in a local environment. Most of these cannot be accessed by extension programs via video-conferencing or virtual classrooms. There may be a need for a culture that offers more challenges or greater opportunities for particular students to develop a sense of self-worth and confidence in choosing career pathways. These surely are vital ingredients for young people in an ever-changing and challenging world in general and particularly in rural and remote Australia." (ICPA (Aust) Boarding School Survey Results April 2016).

"It is in the national interest to ensure isolated children are not disadvantaged in terms of educational and social development and to make sure their educational outcomes are not compromised" (ICPA (Aust) Boarding School Survey Results April 2016). According to a report compiled by the GRATTAN Institute "*Bright kids in disadvantaged schools show the biggest losses, making two-and-a-half years less progress than students with similar capabilities in more advantaged schools.*"

There is substantial evidence that academic achievement to a standard which meets tertiary entrance requirements is less likely as locations are less urbanised. There is also significant evidence that state secondary schools located in rural and remote Australia have significantly poorer student outcomes than their city counterparts. These factors contribute to extremely low percentages of remote students transitioning to tertiary education.

Given all the data, the government should recognise the educational disadvantage experienced by students in rural remote locations and therefore support individual applications for AIC allowances where the student does not meet the distance rules.

S14. East Coast Branch (TAS)

CARRIED

"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

A83. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Minister for Health and the Federal Treasurer for a Medicare rebate item number attached to relevant Telehealth providers."

Explanation:

At present no rebate exists for Speech Language Pathology (SLP) via Telehealth delivery. However, research into one on one sessions for Allied Health appointments via Telehealth suggests it is as effective as face to face sessions.

Currently parents can claim \$52 per session for 5 sessions a year for face to face consultations, but no rebate exists for Telehealth sessions. As Telehealth web conferencing is growing exponentially as a recognised mode of delivery especially for rural and remote students, a Medicare rebate must be assigned to Telehealth appointments as a matter of urgency.

A84. Queensland Lone Members Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to provide funding for the delivery of workshops for parents of gifted students living in rural and remote areas of Australia.”

Explanation:

In 2005, the Federal Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST - as it was then called), provided funding for the delivery of fifty workshops for parents of gifted children, living in rural, remote and regional areas throughout Australia. This project was conducted by the Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC) at the University of New South Wales. Almost 2500 people participated in fifty workshops provided for parents of gifted children during 2005 – 2006. Parents attended forty-six of these one-day workshops (many driving for many hours in order to participate) and four workshops were provided online. Because of the lack of availability of professional development for teachers at schools located in rural areas, many teachers also attended these workshops to learn about gifted students and how to address their needs.

This project was initiated because two bi-partisan, Federal Senate Select Committees (1988 & 2001) identified gifted students as the most educationally disadvantaged students in this country and because the ICPA recognised the heightened disadvantage for gifted children and parents living in rural and remote areas of Australia. Reports delivered by the Senate Select Committees on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children stated that gifted students “*need more support at a national level, to overcome the disparities in the standard of provision from locality to locality*” (p177, 1988), and emphasised that it was essential “*to dispel misconceptions about gifted children, misconceptions which are held because contrary research findings are not widely known*” (p 83, 2001). The ICPA Federal Executive advocated on behalf of gifted children and parents in rural communities and remote locations. The Federal Government responded by developing and funding this project to address geographic and educational disparities, providing access to resources for families with gifted children who could not access programs usually located in major metropolitan centres.

This project was a resounding success on many levels; however it was conducted ten years ago. There is now a new group of gifted students; another generation of parents; an additional level of educators who need access to information about the personal and educational needs of gifted students.

S15. North East Branch (SA)

CARRIED

“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

ACCESS ALLOWANCE

A85. Blackall Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government for the introduction of a Tertiary Access Allowance that will enable tertiary students from rural and remote areas the financial ability to attend a tertiary institution of their choice.”

Explanation:

We thank the Federal Government for the recent changes to the eligibility criteria of Youth Allowance which has enabled more students from remote areas to be eligible however there is still a large financial burden placed on families trying to afford to send their children to a tertiary institution. Many of these families have spent between 5 and 7 years paying boarding school fees so their children can complete school. It is wonderful when they are accepted into a Tertiary institution but another financial burden as there is much less financial assistance available. Although there are many scholarships offered, many of these are for specific areas, health or agriculture and many are only offered for the first year of study. Many students do take on casual work but they must balance their work/study commitments.

There is also the emotional cost of being away from family for long periods and often having no family nearby to where they are studying.

A86. Tasmanian State Council (TAS)

D/C by A85

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to establish a Tertiary Access Allowance for rural and remote students who must relocate for tertiary education.”

Explanation:

A tertiary education must be accessible to all Australians regardless of where they live. One significant barrier that the majority of rural and remote students face when accessing tertiary education is relocation and the associated financial cost. Most rural and remote students cannot live at home while undertaking a tertiary education and incur high upfront costs of travel, accommodation and living expenses not incurred by many of their urban counterparts. This can place a significant strain on these students if they are not in receipt of dependent Youth Allowance and the Relocation Scholarship.

A Tertiary Access Allowance would provide financial support to assist in the cost of relocation, for those ineligible for the Relocation Scholarship. This allowance will help to address in part the under-representation of rural and remote students at university and will assist rural and remote students to attend their chosen tertiary course and institution and contribute to the relocation expenses including securing accommodation, travelling to their institution and facilitating travel home during the year and ongoing tertiary and living costs.

A Tertiary Access Allowance will increase the number of students from rural and remote areas studying at Tertiary Institutions. The Federal government wants the younger generation to be earning or learning so here is an opportunity to help students from rural and remote areas to learn.

A87. Western Australia State Council (WA)

D/C by A85

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government for the introduction of a Tertiary Access Allowance that will help provide students from rural and remote areas, the financial ability to attend a tertiary institution of their choice.”

Explanation:

Rural and remote students who have to move away from home to study their chosen course, do this at great personal cost to themselves and their families. It is not simply the cost of the course fees and text books but also includes the cost of accommodation, set-up and living expenses and travel. The provision of a Tertiary Access Allowance that all rural and remote students can access if they need to relocate to attend a tertiary course of their choice, would provide them with some financial assistance to do this, independently of their parents’ income.

If the student is to be regarded as dependent, then the parents’ income are taken into account. Primary producers may have very different income levels from year to year. Rural students are grossly under-represented in tertiary courses and an allowance such as this would be invaluable.

A88. Walgett Branch (NSW)

D/C by A85

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby relevant ministers for a Tertiary Access Allowance.”

Explanation:

Walgett Branch acknowledge and thank Federal Council for their continued work in this area.

Rural and remote students who have to move away from home to study their chosen course, face high upfront costs such as accommodation, living expenses and travel. In many cases, this places a strain on students as they juggle casual work around study and lecture times.

A Tertiary Access Allowance will allow rural and remote students to have equivalent access to tertiary education that is available to students in urban Australia, to attend their chosen tertiary course and institution and assist in the relocation expense and ongoing tertiary and living expenses.

A89. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education and Training to introduce a tertiary equity allowance for those students who need to live away from the family home to access tertiary education and who are not eligible for the Relocation Scholarship.”

Explanation:

Currently only recipients of dependent Youth Allowance are eligible for the Relocation Scholarship although some independent Youth Allowance recipients with special circumstances are also eligible. This is inequitable as all students who need to move away from home to access tertiary education incur the same costs. The government cannot simply say that just because a student has worked hard to qualify for independent Youth Allowance they are deemed to have already moved out of the family home and cannot therefore relocate. It is very simple to find the family home address of an

independent Youth Allowance recipient. It has to be recorded on the Youth Allowance application to prove that the student lives more than 90 minutes away by public transport from the tertiary institution of their choice.

YOUTH ALLOWANCE

A90. Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) thanks the Federal Government for the recent changes to the dependent Youth Allowance brought about by the passing of the Social Services Legislation Amendment (More Generous Means Testing for Youth Payments) Bill 2015 which included the removal of the Family Assets Test and Family Actual Means Test.”

A91. Louth Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) thanks the Federal Government for the changes made to the Family Actual Means Test and Family Assets Test in relation to students applying for Youth Allowance.”

A92. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) thanks the Minister for Social Services for the recent changes made to the Youth Allowance criteria that now allow more rural and remote families eligible for the dependent rate of Youth Allowance.”

A93. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Federal Ministers to change the criteria of the Relocation Scholarship so that students from remote and rural areas, who are not eligible to receive dependent Youth Allowance, still receive the Relocation Scholarship if they are leaving home to study the following year after completing Year 12.”

Explanation:

As the dictionary states, the meaning of relocate is to move or to establish in a new place. Why should it matter if they receive Youth Allowance or not – they are still relocating? This allowance was established to ensure students, who had to undergo a process of relocation, would not have the unfair financial burden of a move compared to those who are able to live locally and study. It would actually appear less just as they are unable to access Youth Allowance and they are also not eligible for the Relocation Scholarship.

A94. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to raise the parental income limit criteria for rural and remote dependent students to access Youth Allowance.”

Explanation:

Currently, to be eligible to receive dependent Youth Allowance, the combined annual income of the parents of the applicant can be no more than \$105,000. Under these circumstances, families from rural and remote settings are severely disadvantaged.

The costs of relocating the student to a metropolitan or regional centre, paying for accommodation, with the associated set-up costs and supporting them financially while they are studying, are in many cases unaffordable for families in this income bracket. The only alternatives are for the student to put off study until they can become classified as independent or be forced to try to find considerable work whilst studying. Both options jeopardise the student's tertiary studies.

As a comparison, families in this income bracket who live in metropolitan areas or even regional centres, generally have some tertiary education options available to them locally, enabling their children to continue to live at home.

A95. New South Wales State Council (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) thanks the Minister for Human Services for acknowledging the number of siblings in a family to increase to parental income limits, allowing families to be eligible for an increase in allowances."

A96. Midlands Branch (TAS)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to change the independent Youth Allowance criteria for students living in a regional, rural or remote area applying under the earnings or part-time work independence criteria by removing the parental income limit."

Explanation:

Students who have fulfilled the earnings or part-time independence criteria, either minimum threshold of \$23 479 in an 18 month period or worked part-time (minimum 15 hours per week) for at least 2 years and have been independent of their parents, should not have their parent's income included to determine their eligibility. They have proven their ability to live independently of their parents through working and should not be denied independent Youth Allowance and the chance to obtain a tertiary education.

The parental income limit of \$150 000 is not indexed annually (and has not increased since its inception) nor does it take into account the number of children in the family being supported at university or educated at primary or secondary level. Rural and remote students, who are under-represented at university, are excluded from Youth Allowance if their parents earn over \$150 000 even marginally.

The government should remove the parental income limit for rural and remote students who have proven their independence and have to live away from home to attend university so that those students who have fulfilled the work criteria, are eligible for independent Youth Allowance

A97. Monaro Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby for changes to Youth Allowance regarding the \$150 000 Parental Income Threshold limit."

Explanation:

Students from rural and regional Australia can only access preferential criteria for Independent Youth Allowance if the combined parental income is below \$150 000. When the parental income is above \$150 000, even marginally above, then the students face harsher criteria to gain independence. This often means that they often have to take two years off prior to starting tertiary education. Mid-year enrolment is a possibility but some courses do not allow this, for example, dentistry. Deferment is a

possibility for some students but not all courses allow deferment, for example, vet science and dentistry.

This makes access to university very difficult for regional students, the very students who are most likely to bring their professional skills back to the bush. The absolute cut-off for parental income provides a disincentive for families to work full time. It has been known for nurses to work one less shift and for teachers to work one less day in order to bring the combined income marginally below \$150 000 in the interest of gaining Youth Allowance and all the benefits that go along with having Youth Allowance, for example, eligibility for other university scholarships, as well as Health Care Card, etc.

This reduction in work hours is detrimental to the government's plan to encourage people to move into regional areas. \$150,000 cut-off also fails to take into consideration the number of children in the family attending tertiary institutions at any one time and it has also failed to recognise CPI increases since it was introduced. The government should either increase the parental income level or introduce a sliding scale for combined parental income limit taking into consideration the number of children in one family attending a tertiary institution or, even better, abandon the parental income test for students who prove their independence and have to live away from home to attend university.

A98. Hay Branch (NSW)

D/C by A96

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Federal Ministers to change the Independent Youth Allowance criteria for students living in Inner and Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote Australia by removing the existing parental income limit, so that those students that satisfy the self-supporting criteria may gain the Independent Youth Allowance."

Explanation:

Students, who have worked hard to earn the minimum threshold, currently \$23 479 in an 18-month period, should not be assessed eligible/ineligible due to their combined parents' income. These students have established their independence by their proven ability to work and therefore should not then be denied support for a tertiary education due to parental income. The parental income limit of \$150 000 in no way proves that the parents have the means to support their children living away from home for tertiary studies.

The \$150 000 is not disposable income - the figure is not CPI indexed and no family pool calculation is taken into consideration. There is no consideration for the number of children being educated at primary, secondary, or tertiary levels. Some families have multiple children living away from home attending secondary school and/or university at the same time. There is no consideration if the family has children with special needs.

If the student attends university without being eligible for Independent Youth Allowance and the parents are unable to support the student, the student often ends up either spending more time working and less time attending lectures/studying or drops out from university. This is not good for anyone's mental and physical health let alone a young person a long way from home. The cost of living anywhere other than at home is expensive to a student - aren't we about an equal playing field for all Australian students?

A99. Balranald Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services to recognise students from rural and remote areas who, upon completing their secondary education, have to live away from home to access tertiary education, as eligible for the Independent Youth Allowance at the Living Away from Home rate.”

Explanation:

Currently Students are eligible for independent Youth Allowance under the part time work earnings rule for rural and remote students if, since leaving secondary school they have:

- earned at least \$23 479 in an 18 month period or
- worked part-time (at least 15 hours each week) for at least 2 years and
- their parents earn less than \$150 000 in the base tax year

To use an example, a young person from the Balranald area, immediately after completing year 12 is offered a University placement in Melbourne, four hours away. The young person has to leave home, live separately from their parents, set up another home with necessary furniture and whitegoods, pay bills and by all accounts live completely independent of their parents. Despite this, the young person is still classified as dependent under the Youth Allowance criteria. Using the rural and remote student rule previously stated, in order for this student to be classified independent, they must first take 18 months to earn minimum earnings of \$23 479, which often means leaving Balranald to gain employment for 18 months, exhausting their earnings on daily living expenses, when during all this time they could have been living away studying and half way through their tertiary course.

On top of this, the combined parental income for the base year needs to be less than \$150 000, in order for the young person to receive independent Youth Allowance, under the rural and remote student rule. It is certainly very hard to understand why a young person from a rural or remote area who moves away, earns the minimum earning required, is by all accounts living independently from the parents and then has to satisfy an additional criteria of a parental income limit of less than \$150 000.

Compare this to a metropolitan young person, living with their parents, in the family home, in the city with a university nearby.

Under the Independence through full time work rule, the young person may be considered Independent if they have worked at least 30 hours per week throughout an 18 month period. Under this rule, parental income is not tested. That student, by all accounts, can become eligible for independent Youth Allowance and can still live at home with their parents whilst accessing their course on a daily basis. That student can continue to have all the family support they need around them, their childhood bed and meals at the family table. In no way does Balranald branch wish to take anything away from a Metropolitan student in this situation but it is important to make this comparison in order to have equitable access to Independent Youth Allowance for rural and remote students.

Put simply, a rural and remote student who, after immediately finishing school must move away from home to commence their tertiary studies, should automatically satisfy the independence criteria and qualify for the Independent Youth Allowance at the Living Away from Home rate.

A100. Bourke Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to change the criteria for gaining independent Youth Allowance so that all rural and remote students who have to leave home to study at tertiary level are eligible for independent Youth Allowance once enrolled.”

Explanation:

Moving 600 kilometres or more away from home is a fair indication that these children are the very ones that have to be considered for eligibility for independent Youth Allowance. Students who have chosen not to have a gap year and have been declined dependent Youth Allowance because they have failed to meet the Parental Income Test, have to then financially somehow support themselves until they are eligible to apply for Independent Youth Allowance. These students should be putting their efforts into studying their chosen degree, not stressing about finding a job in a new environment.

A101. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services to change the criteria for gaining independent Youth Allowance so that, once enrolled, all rural and remote students who have to live away from home to access tertiary studies are eligible for the Away from Home Rate of independent Youth Allowance.”

Explanation:

Students from rural and remote areas have no choice except to move away from home to access Tertiary studies. Once these students move away, they, of necessity become independent of their parents as home can often be hundreds of kilometres away. Families struggle and find it very difficult to cope with the financial costs of supporting their children while they study and work to gain independence. The eligibility requirements to gain independent Youth Allowance place significant obstacles in the way of students and their families, particularly the required parental income limit of \$150,000. Rural and remote students who live more than 90 minutes by public transport, if such a thing even exists, from the tertiary institution of their choice should be able to access the away from home rate of independent Youth Allowance from the time they leave secondary school.

S16. Lakes District Branch (WA)**CARRIED**

“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.

There are a number of motions presented today which are of a more general nature regarding the independent YA eligibility and the introduction of a Tertiary Access Allowance.

It is not our intent to dismiss the significance of these motions, however we believe that if we can create a process where those students already assessed and recognised as isolated become automatic recipients of independent YA on tertiary commencement. This would allow ICPA to continue to fight for other isolated students, 'Sow the Seed'.

A102. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services to deem students automatically eligible for independent Youth Allowance from the beginning of the calendar year of their 22nd birthday."

Explanation:

Students that qualify for Independent Youth Allowance should be eligible to start receiving payments in January of the calendar year that they turn 22, not the month that they turn 22. Students that are turning 22 in later in the year, for example October, November have missed out on almost a whole year of being able to claim their payments. Other allowances are paid throughout the whole calendar year, so why not Independent Youth Allowance?

A103. Monaro Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to make sure that Centrelink Staff are trained to provide correct information around allowances – particularly Youth Allowance."

Explanation:

The Quang Lea Dow review into student income support in 2011 made recommendations around training of Centrelink staff. Following many submissions into that review detailing incorrect advice provided. This continues to be the case. Families are having to wait for long periods of time on the phone only then to be given incorrect and conflicting advice. Many people find the website confusing and frustrating so have to resort to phoning or visiting the local office if you have one. One mother who has four children attended the local office for assistance to be told she had two children not four. The mother stated, "I have four children." and she was told, "No, you only have two."

A104. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to reconsider discontinuing the Higher Education Contribution Scheme- Higher Education Loan Program (HECS-HELP) upfront discount and the HELP voluntary repayment bonus."

Explanation:

From 1 January 2017, there will be no incentives for students to repay their HELP loan any faster than the compulsory repayments taken out of their pay when their salary reaches a certain threshold. Currently, students may receive a 10% upfront discount if they pay their fees before the census date. They can also receive a 5% bonus on any lump sum voluntary repayments (paid to the ATO) made of over \$500. If the Federal Government is serious about collecting the money owed to them by graduates and students, they should re-introduce these incentives for those who can afford them.

S17. Central West Plains Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“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.

TERTIARY – OTHER

A105. Walgett Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant minister to provide financial assistance to all tertiary students who must relocate from their tertiary institution to complete compulsory work experience in their selected courses.”

Explanation:

Many students have to complete a compulsory practical component as part of their chosen course of study. In many of these cases students need to relocate to complete the practical component of their course. Although some tertiary institutions offer financial assistance to their students, it may only be offered to some students and does not cover the cost of relocating.

Students who need to relocate to complete the practical component of their courses look for placement where they have accommodation support, thereby restricting their options. Or in some situations they have to go where the tertiary institution nominates.

Students who are already paying rent or accommodation costs at their chosen institution are then expected to cover travelling and accommodation costs to complete compulsory practical components. It has been shown students often return to areas they have completed their prac work. We ask the Minister to assist these students with financial support in the way of assistance with travel and accommodation.

A106. Tambo Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant bodies to ensure that Australian universities which provide teacher education courses offer a major in rural and remote education.”

Explanation:

A rural and remote education major for teachers can only be of benefit to all. This major could include topics that are unique to rural and remote teaching positions such as multi-age classrooms, multi-age curriculum tools, web conferencing and other online learning skills and additional administration responsibilities. It would be envisaged that this major would include rural and remote practicums for the students as par for the course. It should also explore the unique dynamics that exist in small rural and remote communities and provide strategies for coping in an isolated environment. Beginning teachers can then start their career at a rural/remote/DE school job ready and not having to learn on the run as well as arriving in a new community for their first teaching position. Rural and remote students can only benefit by having a beginning teacher classroom ready from day one.

A107. New South Wales State Council (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to ensure that universities that provide teacher training include modules such as Autistic Spectrum Disorders in their curriculum.”

Explanation:

With the alarming rate of increase in the diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) the chance of a newly graduated teacher having a student with ASD in their class is significant, therefore knowing how to manage this condition with an appropriate level of skills and knowledge in behaviour management strategies for ASD would provide beneficial outcomes for all students in the class.

This early training could also lead to a reduction in the high level of early ‘burnout’ with between 40% - 50% of teachers leaving in their first five years of teaching because they feel that they don’t have the skills to deal with the challenges of having children on the Autism Spectrum in their class.

Educating teachers at the undergraduate level would be more cost effective than having to provide post graduate training during the first few years of teaching. This could also reduce the amount of time teachers need to take out of the classroom for Professional Development.

Very little learning happens when children are not engaged. Teachers need the training to recognise when a student’s coping skills are not working. They need to recognise the signs and be able to avoid the melt-down before it happens. They need to be proactive so that they won’t have to be reactive. Dealing in a reactive way when a student has lost the ability to cope creates a stressful situation for everyone. But with adequate training a teacher learns to create the environment that will reduce the likelihood of a melt-down.

A teacher can learn these things the hard way over many years, but by then, coupled with the complex curriculum and extra curricula activities expected of them, they’re looking for the door. The cost of the four year degree is wasted, not to mention the toll on the teacher’s health. But the biggest cost is in the damage that is done to the students, not only those with an ASD, but to every child whose education was impeded by a teacher, through no fault of their own, who didn’t have the necessary skills and support to teach the wide variety of students who are now in every classroom.

TRAINING**A108. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)****LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education and Training to make Certificate II Metals and Engineering VET subjects available in Years 11 and 12.”

Explanation:

Currently students are able to gain a Cert II qualification in a number of Vet subjects such as Primary Industries, Hospitality & Business Services, however, students studying the VET course of Metals and Engineering are no longer able to gain a Cert II qualification as was the case up until 2013.

We understand that it has been the industry body, Manufacturing Skills Australia (MSA) who has lobbied for these changes, however, one could argue that it is in everybody's interests – both student and employer – to be able to gain a more meaningful qualification whilst still at school rather than the current Engineering Pathways certification that is only available to the students now who do not have the opportunity to be part of a school based apprenticeship or traineeship program.

For example: The son of one of our members took the Metals and Engineering VET subject for Years 11 & 12 in 2013 and, with the help of a State Training organisation in Wagga and the recommendation of his employer, lobbied the Wagga TAFE on his behalf to have his qualifications recognised as the TAFE were going to make him repeat all the competencies again. This enabled him to begin his welding apprenticeship at the second year level even though it was only his first year working since leaving school after his HSC.

It is a known fact that the first couple of years of an apprentice actually costs the employers more than they gain due to the early learning phases of the apprenticeship. There is a significant financial benefit to the employers to employ people who have gained a Cert II qualification whilst still at school as, in the long run, the employer benefits with less down time during the course of the apprenticeship and the employee enters the industry as a qualified tradesperson at an earlier rate than would be achievable if they began their apprenticeship upon leaving school after completing Yr. 12. And the Trade Training Centres that have built in schools are not being used to their potential. Attention to this issue would also help address the skills shortages we are seeing today.

In a letter last year from Sharon Ford, Director, Secondary Education, advised that the Department of Education was establishing a joint stakeholder working party to address the challenges that may present themselves in 2016 for our schools and students resulting from this nationwide decision. Sharon also advised in this letter that the Metal & Engineering training package would be redeveloped and submitted for endorsement by June 2015.

Perhaps the Department of Education could advise the progress of reinstating the Certification II qualification for the Metals & Engineering course as soon as possible.

A109. Monaro Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the national bodies to ensure that all training organisations which provide training for staff in Early Childhood diligently require students to meet the appropriate quality standards and competencies for their level of accreditation.”

Explanation:

In recent months there has been much media and public attention on private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) providing grossly inferior quality training and assessments of students. The Commonwealth Government administers a national regulator on training quality, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, or ASQA, which is charged with ensuring approved quality standards are being met. Why has this been permitted to occur? Where is ASQA going so wrong?

The Monaro Branch is particularly concerned that students are being awarded accreditations in the early childhood field by some RTOs without ever having reached the true standards and competencies that should be expected of their level of accreditation.

In our local area, the Monaro Branch is aware of a student who has completed a placement at a pre-school in training to obtain an early childhood accreditation, who has been deemed incompetent by the pre-school director but who has been awarded a Certificate by the RTO regardless. The Monaro Branch is also aware that many RTOs never visit the pre-schools where their students do work practice and never observe the students or indeed, never meet the director whose reports they are relying on. Monaro Branch would be interested to know if there are any new developments, new measures or even new intent of ASQA and others to ensure that RTOs give a quality training and assessments to students undertaking training in early childhood education.

There is little point having a National Quality Framework for the early childhood workforce, if the system is defeated back at the point of training. Even the Early Childhood Directorate of the NSW Department of Education concedes that poor quality training and dodgy RTO's are an issue very much on their agenda. However, this is an issue of national importance and the regulator, ASQA, is a national body. It therefore needs a national response. We need to ensure that the next generation of workers in our early childhood services are provided with high quality training and realistic and diligent assessments, so our kids have the chance at a better start in life.

S18. Katherine Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“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)

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 Scholarship 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

A110. Tambo Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the federal government to form and manage a National Rural and Remote Education Alliance similar to that of the National Rural Health Alliance.”

Explanation:

There are a number of groups in this country with a keen interest in and a passion for rural and remote education. These groups include SPERA, Science, ICT and mathematics education in rural and regional Australia (SiMERR), gifted and talented interest groups, state government education departments for example and of course ICPA. By forming an Alliance these groups will have a common platform to share the results of studies, research and coal face knowledge. This collaborative approach can only mean an improvement in the learning outcomes for rural and remote students.

S20. Midwest Branch (WA)

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)

“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)

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.

AGM

A111. ICPA (Aust) Federal Council

CARRIED

"That the Federal membership fee remains at \$22.00 per member family."

A112. ICPA (Aust) Federal Council

CARRIED

"That Horizon Accounting, Toowoomba be appointed as auditor for the 2016 – 2017 financial year."

A113. ICPA (Aust) Federal Council

CARRIED

“That the 2015-2016 Audited Report and the 2015-2016 Regional Student Engagement Strategy 2016 – 2019 Grant Acquittal Audited Report be received and accepted.”

A114. ICPA (Aust) Federal Council

CARRIED

“That Federal Council investigates a corporate membership category to facilitate the membership needs of national organisations.”

Explanation:

Federal Council has been approached a number of times by national organisations regarding membership that offers access to across the board information from all states and our federal body. Federal Council is proposing this new membership category would be in addition to our single/family membership. Corporate membership would allow members in this category access to all State and Federal information and publications including Pedals however would not entitle them to a vote at Conferences. The corporate membership fee would be reflective of the cost of subscriptions to the various state publications and Pedals.

F1. Federal Council and all State Councils

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) perform necessary changes to adopt an online membership process which is an additional membership tool for members.”

Explanation:

All State and Federal Councils have noticed that the current membership process does not give flexibility for renewal of membership or encourages new memberships. With an increased number of our membership embracing technology an additional membership tool needs to be implemented to allow an online membership process to coexist with the current one. This form of membership WILL NOT replace the existing membership process but will be in addition to it.

An online membership process development has been looked at, which will integrate with the existing website and the current database. However, some minor changes to some ICPA Constitutions will need to be implemented before this process can proceed. All State and Federal Councils have agreed that this will be a great additional tool for the current system.

It is envisaged that this system could be adopted and in place for the 2018 membership year.

A115. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That the Alice Springs Branch on behalf of ICPA NT host the 2017 Federal Conference in Alice Springs on the 2nd and 3rd of August 2017 at the Convention Centre.”

A116. New South Wales State Council (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA-NSW host the 2018 Federal Conference.”