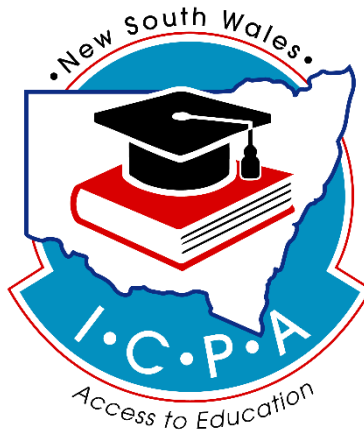


**The
ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION
OF NEW SOUTH WALES INC**



52nd Annual Conference

Dubbo 2024

Minutes

6th & 7th March 2024
RSL Club
Brisbane Street
Dubbo NSW 2875

This is a transcript of the 2024 Annual Conference of ICPA-NSW Inc.

Hosted by Central West Plains Branch

Participants

Tanya MITCHELL	President
Bree WAKEFIELD	Vice President and Allowances Convenor
Robin BECKWITH	Vice President and Tertiary Convenor
Libby McPHEE	Secretary and Communications Convenor
Nathan KITTO	Treasurer
Georgina LUCKRAFT	Assistant Treasurer
Gabie LE LIEVRE	Assistant Secretary and Special Education Convenor
Britt ANDERSON	Publicity Officer, and Webmaster
David BUTLER	Committee and Travel Convenor
Laura STALLEY	Committee and Distance Education and AHVISE convenor
Kirsty WILSON	Committee and Early Childhood Convenor
Myfi KELLAHAN	Committee and Health and Wellbeing Convenor, Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools & Hostels
Annabel STRACHAN	Committee and Rural Schools Convenor
David SHRIMPTON	Merchandise Manager
Kerrie JOHNSTON	Top Wire Editor

FEDERAL COUNCIL

Louise Martin	ICPA Australia President
Ali Alison	ICPA Publicity Officer

FEDERAL LIFE MEMBERS

Judy Sinclair-Newton	Federal Membership Officer
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STATE LIFE MEMBERS

Rory Treweeke	Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch
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BRANCH LIFE MEMBERS

Judith Bryant	Central West Plains Branch
Heather Druce	Central West Plains Branch
Sally Quigley	Central West Plains Branch
Lindy Kitto	NSW/VIC Lone Member
Ellen Walker	Rankins Springs
Judy Sinclair-Newton	Walgett Branch

BRANCH DELEGATES

Patricia Bates-Canty	Bourke Branch (Day 1)
Amanda Bell	Bourke Branch (Day 1 & 2)
Lilly Hand	Bourke Branch (Day 2)
Liarne Mannix	Brewarrina Branch
Terissa Angel	Brewarrina Branch
Rebecca Pearce	Broken Hill Branch
David Shrimpton	Broken Hill Branch
Fiona Aveyard	Central West Plains Branch
Vanessa Gibson	Central West Plains Branch
Michelle Spence	Hay Branch
Kate Treweeke	Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch
Tegan Barton	Louth Branch
Rachael Nielsen	Louth Branch
Pam Fletcher	Monaro Branch
Tim Fletcher	Monaro Branch
Nicole Piper	Namoi Branch
Gail Knight	Namoi Branch
Lindy Kitto	NSW/VIC Lone Members Branch
Laughlin Ross	Nyngan Branch
Kate Yabsley	Nyngan Branch
Bronwyn Johnston	Quambone Branch
Marie Youngusband	Quambone Branch
Kerrie Johnston	Rankins Springs Branch
Sally Argent-Smith	Rankins Springs Branch
Bernadette Maxwell	Tibooburra-Milparinka Branch
Cath Deshon	Walgett Branch
Karen Ricardo	Walgett Branch

OBSERVERS

Anna McCorkle	Bourke Branch
Prue Ritchie	Bourke Branch
Lilly Hand	Bourke Branch (Day 1)
Patricia Bates-Canty	Bourke Branch (Day 2)
Caroline Robinson	Brewarrina Branch
Sandra Hewett	Central West Plains Branch
Sue Nicholls	Central West Plains Branch
Simone Berryman	Central West Plains Branch

Joan Treweeke	Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch
Lani Grace	Louth Branch
Anna Fullarton	Namoi Branch
Jessie Donoghue	NSW/VIC Lone Members Branch
Nicole Donnelly	Nyngan Branch
Kellie Turnbull	Nyngan Branch
Alison Campbell	Nyngan Branch (Day1)
Linda O'Brien	Quambone Branch (Day 1)
Alan Johnston	Rankins Springs Branch
Geoff Walker	Rankins Springs Branch
Phillipa Beckwith	Walgett Branch
Francesca Collins	Walgett Branch

FEDERAL MINISTERS & SENATORS

Hon Mr Mark Coulton MP	The Nationals' Federal Member for Parkes
Senator Mrs Perin Davey	Deputy Leader of the Nationals

NSW MINISTERS and SHADOW MINISTERS

Hon Ms Prue Car MP	Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning
Hon Mr Dugald Saunders MP	Member for Dubbo Electorate

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ben Ballard	Executive Director, Regional Rural and Remote Education Policy Unit
Jacynta Moylan	Acting Director Partnerships
Megan Walsh	Senior Policy Officer Regional DOE
Kate Wootten	Department of Education
Angela Profke	Business Support Coordinator RRREP
John Fisher	Acting Coordinator Engagement RREP
Megan Buttsworth	Business Support Coordinator RRREP
Sacha Perram	Senior Communications Officer DOE
Charmaine Johnston	Rural and Distance Education DOE
Tony Gadd	R/Executive Director, Public Schools, Regional North and West Directorate
Mark Skein	Rural and Distance Education Coordinator
Charles Dwyer	Director Education Leadership
Debbie Murray	Principal of Dubbo School of Distance Education
Wendy Hay	Principal Bourke Walgett School of Distance Education
Serena McLean	NSW Centre for Effective Reading
Lynne Young-Dwarte	NSW Centre for Effective Reading Dubbo Office

TRANSPORT FOR NSW

Janice Dexter	Customer Scheme Team Leader
Lee Wallis	Customer Service Officer
Steven Tonkes	Director Customer Operations
Holly Davies	Director Regional Community Partner, TfNSW
Michael Harrison	Rural and Distance Education Advisor
Belinda Roberts	Senior Manager Community & Place Partner, TfNSW

ORGANISATIONS

Justine Campbell	Arana Inland Regional Hub
Richard Stokes	Australian Boarding Schools Association CEO
Jared Daunt	Australian Boarding Schools Association General Manager
Jordan Swepson	Australian Boarding Schools Association Director of Member Experience
Jenny Branch-Allen	Australian Parents Council
Karen Robertson	Australian Parents Council Vice President
Amanda Ferrari	Boarding Schools Expo Australia Director
Adelaide Vivers	Boarding Schools Expo Australia Head of Content
Sue Kingwill	Contact Inc CEO
Mr Josh Black	Councillor Dubbo Regional Council
Catherine Garrett-Jones	Council of Catholic School Parents
Anne Fehon	Council of Catholic School Parents
Jan Kerr	Country Women's Association of NSW Vice President
Ms Joh Leader	Leader Life
Mr Rod Crowfoot	Macquarie Homestay
Tom O'Dea	Head of NSW NBN Local .
Erica Tudor	Regional Development and NBN.
Ellen Day	Regional Tech Hub Regional Partnership Officer
Claire Taylor	Royal Far West C & F Services
Michael Marom	Telstra Northern NSW Regional General Manager
Ian George	Telstra Regional Engagement Manager
Douglas Melrose-Rae	The Association of Independent Schools NSW Associate Chief Executive
Ruby Reithmuller	Woman-Kind App

SCHOOLS

Jo Neilson	Armidale
Tim Hughes	Armidale School
Courtney Coe	Calrossy Anglican School
Sue Lancaster	Kincoppal-Rose Bay
Kate Kovacs	Loreto Normanhurst

Eli Kinscher	Macquarie Anglican Grammar
Lyn O'Neill	NEGS
Carolyn Burgess	Pymble Ladies College
Nicole Devlin	St Hilda's College
Amanda Rigby	St Hilda's College Head of Boarding
Tim Sedgwick	St Ignatius' College Riverview Assistant Director of Boarding
Greg Thompson	St Joseph's College
Nick Byron	Toowoomba Grammar School Director of Boarding
Brad Allen	Head of Mackintosh Boarding House Toowoomba Grammar
Nonie Ayling	Wenona Head of Boarding
Tom Giles	Wesley College Melbourne Head of Learning in Residence

GUESTS

Aunty Margaret Walker	Dubbo Lands Council
Nicole Bladwell	Rabobank Rural Manager
Sally Roche	Rabobank Rural Officer
Michelle Butler	Nyngan Branch
Mitchell Butler	Nyngan Branch
Jacqui Butler	Nyngan Branch
Rachel Butler	Nyngan Branch
Jenny McClelland	Nyngan Branch
Bruce Yabsley	Nyngan Branch
Paul and Sarah Weston	Nyngan Branch
Darren Stokes	Nyngan Branch
Mish Mckilop	Nyngan Branch
Hiram Marr	Nyngan Branch
Jill Elder	Nyngan Branch

Special Thanks

ICPA-NSW also extends a special thank you to the following: -

- The Hon Mark Coulton MP for generously donating the printing of our conference documents through his Moree and Dubbo Offices.
- Miss Zanthie Hewett for the National Anthem Solo Performance
- Emily Turnbull the Conference dinner speaker
- Central West Plains Branch Convening Committee

Tanya Mitchell, President, ICPA-NSW**Welcome to conference.**

I am very pleased to see 18 branches and over 70 members represented here this week. Thank you for giving up your precious time to represent your branch. We are all nervous, but we will get through this together, and please remember that there is always someone to help you out over the next two days and you will learn from one another. So, I encourage all attending to take the opportunity to engage in robust, passionate debates over informed conversations. Even off the floor and into this evening. On the conference agenda, there are portfolio reports to be presented and due to time constraints so many of the reports you will hear will be condensed, but you will find the full report in your registration paperwork, and they are on the ICPA website. Many of the departmental people here today are crucial to the work that we do in advocating for our members. We also have many other people, groups, and schools with whom we often work closely and who are great friends of our association. Many boarding schools are in attendance, and we thank you all for your support for educating rural and remote students. We are all stakeholders in rural and remote education and thank you for your presence here today. Last year, our conference was held during election week, which saw a change in government and our department and ministerial staff were unable to speak to many of the issues that we raised. You may hear from some of these people today if they can, they will add to any of the discussions, but also be aware that they may be unable to answer a query that arises. You will be taken on notice and addressed when more information is to hand. I especially want to thank the Central West Plains Branch Conference Conveners, who have taken on the amazing task along with their team, to organise this year's conference. And I think with the start, the event that we had last night, they did an amazing job. It looks like we're off to a pretty good start. So, thank you ladies. They have a great couple of days lined up and I have no doubt we're in for a memorable time. Our dinner tonight is being held at the zoo, which attracts almost 40,000 visitors and has over 5000 animals across 350 species. It is a fantastic asset to the region and community of Dubbo, and I strongly suggest that if you haven't been around the zoo or if you haven't been for a while, it's something you should do if you can while you were here. In the normal order of events branches approach our State Council wishing to convene a conference and we encourage any branches wishing to host a conference to speak to one of the state councillors as it not only presents the opportunity for a branch to highlight their community, but it can be a good way to raise funds as well. I would like to thank our federal representatives, President Louise Martin, and Ally Allison for being here today. Your perspective on all matters and particularly those of a federal nature is very much appreciated. I would also like to acknowledge Mrs. Lindy Kitto, one of our Trustees, our Life Members, as well as our sponsors, without whom this wouldn't be possible. It is an honour to have you all in attendance and reassuring to know that we are all here because we want the best possible education for rural and remote students. To date, there are over 67 conference motions to be debated and decided on. Only delegates can vote on the motions, but we encourage guests and observers to take part in the discussions and the debate. State Council has found over the years that guests might have some knowledge that, when shared with the conference, makes for better decision making for State Council. Every motion that is carried here over the next two days will become policy. That means we escalate each one to the relevant Minister, Department, or stakeholder organisation. It has been directed to. It is first directed in writing form and then followed up personally in face-to-face visit during our two deputations throughout the year. The motions become our issues paper which is distributed not only to those it is directed to, but is also forwarded, forwarded to other relevant departments, stakeholders, local members and opposition or shadow ministers. Unless the motion is presented and lost at the conference, it remains in policy and is an issue that we continue to advocate for and pursue until there has been a successful outcome. You may notice that some motions have been

around for some time, but if the matter is still relevant, we will continue to address it. A reminder that delegates are given three minutes to read out their branch's explanation of their motions and at the two-minute mark a bell will be rung by our secretary, and again at the three-minute mark. Each motion's full explanation is required by State Council to help follow up actions that will take place after the conference. So please don't think that your issue won't be heard. Please make sure that if the explanation read out on the floor has been added to, or if it has been changed, that it is handed to our assistants on the technical table. So, we've got Gabby and Britt over there doing a wonderful job. All conference proceedings are recorded to assist in the process of creating the conference minutes, so please use the microphones provided. They're scattered throughout the room and provided by Brian Cox, so we thank you very much, Brian from Rent Fast, who helps us out each year with our conference. Whenever you are either presenting a motion or making a comment, please make your way to the microphone so that we can make sure that conference proceeds smoothly. I ask you to clearly identify yourself for recording purposes. If presenting a motion, could you please read the motion from the screen provided? When you filled in your registration forms, you were required to tick a box alerting State Council if you did not want to have your photo used for ICPA media purposes. So, I hope everyone has done this, but if our official photographer asked you for a photo and you're not prepared to be in that just politely let her know that you don't want your photo taken. Could I please ask that all phones be switched off or switched to silent. I know our host, central West Plains Branch members and convening committee have been looking forward to this day for quite some time and on behalf of State Council, I congratulate you on your preparation for the 52nd Annual State Conference. I wish you all a very enjoyable and exciting conference, so let's get underway.

Tanya Mitchell, President, ICPA-NSW.

Adoption of the minutes and attendance of the 2023 conference that were circulated electronically.

I, Libby McPhee, State Council, move that the minutes of the 2023 conference be accepted as circulated.

Seconded by Robin Beckworth, State Council. Carried

I, Libby McPhee, State Council, move that. The apologies as received be accepted.

Seconded by Robin Beckworth, State Council. Carried

Tanya Mitchell, President, ICPA-NSW

Zanthie Hewett finished Year 12 last year and was a boarder at Calrossy in Tamworth and she has done solo and group performances while at Calrossy for six years and in 2023 Zanthie was the recipient of the Tamworth Regional Conservatorium of Music and the and Vocal Scholarship. This year Zanthie will be playing the lead role in the Young Regional Theatre production of the Addams Family playing Wednesdays and next year Zanthie is planning on undertaking a Bachelor of Science degree. Zanthie is one of our ICPA students and I think very well rewarded, and we thank you so much for being here today. Zanthie is also said that if anyone would like to join in the National Anthem please do so if you could all stand for the Anthem.

Zanthie Hewett, A 2023 Calrossy Year 12 Boarder.

Zanthie led conference in singing the Australian National Anthem.

Dougal Saunders, MP, Member for Dubbo.

Thank you so much and it is great to be with you here this morning and to welcome everyone officially to beautiful Dubbo. You might be aware that the National Rugby League took the opening rounds of the NRL to Los Vagas last week and this week we are in Dub Vagas with ICPA, and I know where I'd rather be. So, well done for being here in Dub Vagas and thank you very much. I know there is a process to go through with the motions that you'll put forward and I thought the motion you put forward by some of the state councillors were excellent and that's partly what this is all about. It's about getting the heart and soul, the ideas, the realistic visions that you have for education in your region brought up on the floor, discussed, debated and the put forward to the government of the day and the opposition. On that note I do want to recognise today that we are joined by the former Minister for Education and now Shadow Minister for education and early learning, The Hon Sarah Mitchell, and our Federal Minister for the Parkes electorate, which is basically 95% of the state these days, The Hon Mark Coulton, Nationals Federal Member for Parkes. I also acknowledge the former senator, Fiona Nash, the Commissioner for Education, and the Minister for Education and the Hon Prue Car, MP, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning. So you have people in the room who want to hear what you have got to say and want to hear about some of the ideas you have got, some of the needs you have and from the perspective from being in government, we know how important that is and I think governments in all shapes and sizes from local councils through to state and federal governments look to groups like you to come up with ideas which are sometimes slightly outside the square but if no one ever talks about some of these ideas from outside the square then you don't ever have the ability to change the situation. When it comes to education in remote parts of our state and our country, we need people like you. We need to hear that voice and it is incredibly important that you do what you need to do here today but then you do provide that voice to government into the future and we are absolutely more than keen to be involved on that front and hearing what you have got to say and making sure your voice continues to be heard in the way that it has been and needs to continue to be heard. It is great to have you here in Dubbo. I know you had your opening dinner at Creo's at the cultural centre last night and that was only opened a few weeks ago and then you are heading to Down the Lane and that is another great example of a regional city that can host different functions in different places and support our regional communities so it is great that you have been able to come to Dubbo to do that. Enjoy the next couple of days and I'm sure you will and I'm looking forward to hearing some of the motions that come forward and get placed forward into the future. So, have a great couple of days. Thank you.

Josh Black, Councillor, Dubbo Regional Council.

Thank you, Madam President, and welcome to Dubbo everyone. It is good to see some familiar faces out in the crowd today. Thank you for choosing Dubbo and not choosing the easy option of going to Sydney for the conference. It's great that everyone has come here to Dubbo and there is so much to

offer in town. As a high school teacher for the last 22 years, I applaud your efforts in advocating for equity of access to education for rural, remote, and geographically isolated students and their families and I hope that this is a really productive conference and on behalf of Dubbo regional council and the mayor, thank you all for being here today.

Sally Quigley, Central West Plains Life Member.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, federal and state councils, federal life member, Judy Newton, NSW life member, Rory Treweeke, fellow Central West Plains life members, Judith Bryant and Heather Druce, members, delegates, and friends, welcome to Dubbo and our 52nd State Conference. I'm honoured and excited to be standing here to have been invited to open the 2024 NSW State Conference. Working together for equity of access to education for children in rural and remote Australia. This statement summarised my journey in this wonderful organisation and my reason for having been involved in the first place. Our boys were lucky enough to have their primary education in a small country school and go to school in a school bus. Five families drove to the bus stop and some qualified for the Assistance for Isolated Children's allowance and others not. For this reason my lobby began as these children were spending the same time on the bus and going to the same school, but some families eventually had an easier path to access the AIC allowance all because of a few hundred meters. I asked myself, "How is this equitable?" My journey has seen me a branch member for nearly three decades. A Federal Councillor for seven including being Federal Vice-President and Treasurer of the Central West Plains NSW Branch for approximately 22 years. I led the Federal Council Tertiary Portfolio for many years which I really enjoyed, and I'm pleased to say that we had some success with easing the criteria for Youth Allowance, the introduction of the Living Away from Home Allowance, and the Tertiary Access Allowance amongst many others. Again, in the current news, the government is talking about getting more regional and remote students to university. It's a good time for our Federal Council to voice our opinions and to continue the lobby for equity. I've been to many, many state and federal conferences and have made so many friends from all different parts of the country. My idea of what isolation was rapidly changed at my first ever conference in Hobart in 2003 where I met far more isolated members from throughout the nation. These gatherings have broadened my perspective and deepened my appreciation for the collective strength of the network. We are all aware that education around the world is the biggest equaliser for all walks of life. It transcends boundaries, empowers individuals, and opens doors to endless possibilities. A rounded education gives a person the opportunity to take with both hands and learn and run with and be whatever they wish to be. Being with other people who have ambition and drive can foster ambition and drive and can allow a child to realise their dreams. Kids anywhere can, once given the opportunity, can grab it and work with it and it can lift the outcome of their lives dramatically. City children have opportunities that simply do not exist in the bush. Education is much more than just being good at the scholastic side of things. It is about opportunity. Being able to be part of a team. Opportunity to play sport, be involved in music, sing in a choir, have friends, be social, learn to be independent, and have peer groups. A holistic education not only imparts knowledge but nurtures ambition, fosters resilience and cultivates a sense of community and belonging. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that every child, regardless of their postcode, can realise their full potential. Distance means more expense to access and more isolation. Being alone. Unfortunately, our federal government has such a narrow

view and still thinks that an appropriate education is one that solely provides student availability to a number of subjects and gives no validity to other criteria. I asked myself why this is so that such ignorance could form part of the criteria needed to be eligible for the AIC Allowance in this day and age. Access to a rounded education is not available in this country to all children. Children who live in regional, rural and remote areas simply do not have the same educational access and opportunity that metropolitan children do. We are all here sitting in this room because we believe that there is a better way. That equity needs to exist. That the children from the bush never miss out. The Isolated Children's Parents' Association is a forum that politicians recognise, and respect and politicians listen when we lobby. We must continue to push for that equity that is so important to keep our rural dreams and communities educated and smart. We need to keep the lobby for bypassing for small country schools where there is no such thing as a team sport or enough of a cohort to make friends. Schools that are doing the very best job that they can to provide an education, but once children get to secondary school most need more peers, more competition, more opportunity and choices and the ability to participate to get together. An appropriate education should be recognised to be so much more than just allowing a student study a particular subject over a computer screen. The criteria needs to recognise that subjects alone do not form the basis of an appropriate education. Families need the ability to make the choice of school which suits their children. Appropriateness should also include numbers of peers. Many of these small schools simply do not have enough children to give a rounded education. We need to lobby for changes for the meaning of an appropriate education. We live in a nation where there is so much discrimination and some sectors of the community are encouraged to bypass but are not offered the help to do so. I love that there is this opportunity, but this leaves behind the kids whose families cannot afford to access better opportunities for their children simply because of distance. The regions contribute such a huge basis to the fabric of our nation and many of the kids who leave the regions for education do then return but many, many families pack up and leave our country towns when their oldest child reaches Year 7. This creates a huge drain on the regions and these families rarely return. The bush is the backbone of our country and politicians need to recognise how important the education of these children is to the nations. We cannot keep losing families who relocate because they cannot afford better choices for their kids schooling. Lack of choice to an appropriate education rips a community apart when these families do leave the regions. I implore you to continue the lobby to keep the intellectual property in the bush by easing the criteria for AIC and allowing more families to send their children away without relocating the whole family so the doctor who lives in the small town, or the nurse or the schoolteacher who lives on the edge of town, can access the AIC Allowance as well. Perhaps the AIC Allowance should be broadened to include the children of first responders to keep these professionals in regional areas. The AIC Allowance is as well as criteria needing to be broadened, should also be increased to reflect the cost of education today and the appropriateness of the small school based on scholastic opportunity alone. The ICPA lobby is, as you are all well aware, so much more than just high school aged children needs, and the lobby also needs to continue for all our portfolios. I would like to sincerely congratulate all of those who volunteer their time and sit of state and Federal Councils and continue to lobby for and to believe in the future of regional education. I would now like to declare the 52nd Annual State Conference open.

~~Her Excellency, The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC Governor of NSW.~~

Her Excellency, The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC Governor of NSW.

Via video message.

Good morning. Dennis and I, as patrons of ICPA-NSW, have fond memories with you and I am delighted to be able to speak with you today as part of the opening ceremony of this the 52nd conference in Dubbo. In October 2019 was where I first met your members at the Cobar Bowling and Golf Club. We left that meeting with no doubt that the ICPA was a force to be reckoned with and most certainly a force for good. I'm pleased to say that our interactions since then have only confirmed that initial impression. You are consistently friendly, effective, and determined, I might even say relentless, in advocating for children and young adults in rural and remote areas of NSW. During the pandemic our engagement was restricted to zoom meetings demonstrating that ICPA effectiveness was not in any way diminished. I also became an avid reader of Pedals and Top Wire and indeed was inspired to provide a couple of contributions for which I thank the editors for their generous acceptance. Over the next two days over one hundred ICPA delegates from across the state will consider more than 60 motions. Those motions can capture the issues that various branches face in their region and surely your advocacy remains focused and relevant. These motions along with important conversations that you will have will also provide representatives from the Department of Education, Transport for New South Wales, Telstra, NBN, and others, with the information and insight necessary to understand what and why action is needed to ensure education for rural and remote children and young people is equitable. Finally, I acknowledge the efforts that have been made to make the conference possible and congratulate your hosts the Central West Plains Branch. Dennis and I wish you all the very best for a productive and invigorating conference.

President's Report

Distinguished Guests, Members, Ladies and Gentlemen. ICPA has taken the role over the last fifty-two years of being the voice of rural and remote parents - opening pathways for students and keeping them accessible to families. It has been an absolute privilege to be part of that work, together with your State and Federal Councils over the last 12 months. The much-anticipated ICPA-NSW 51st State Conference was held in Moree on 22nd and 23rd March last year and it was wonderful to have over 120 registrations. We had to cancel the previous conference that was to be held in Moree in 2020 due to Covid, so it was fantastic for the branch to finally be able to showcase their community. It was great to have 14 branches represented and over 46 members attend during the week but as you would have heard me mention earlier, today we have 18 branches represented and over 70 members present. It is pleasing to see so many members and stakeholders come together to meet in such a great rural community and to once again discuss and debate our concerns and issues surrounding access to education for our children.

Our last conference fell two days before the NSW State Election which saw a change in Government and a sense of uncertainty as to how the change would impact our issues and the motions that members brought to the conference.

Some updates from the year have been:

- Continuation of the School Drive Subsidy Trial for Preschoolers which has now closed, and we are waiting to hear if this will be made a permanent form of assistance for those parents transporting their preschool-age children to access early education.

- A \$250 fuel travel card for Apprentices and Tertiary students was implemented by the previous NSW Government (however this has since been removed by the new state government) so we still seek to have a tertiary travel subsidy implemented.
- Bus NSW submitted a proposal to the NSW Government to install safety devices to prevent students from being left on buses. We are now seeing a gradual rollout on some new buses of safety devices that we will hear about later in the Travel Portfolio.
- Early Childhood Wage Review - 5.75% Increase to Children's Services Award and Educational Services Teachers Award From 01 July 2023.
- NBN rollout for all NSW Distance Education families.
- Continued monthly meetings with the Department of Education Regional, Rural & Remote Education Policy (RRREP) Unit.
- All 12 satellite schools in NSW have been transferred to Fibre Optic connections.

Some may recall the Balranald branch communications motion back in 2013 at the Federal Conference which related to these connections was lost, but a year later carried, so please do not get disheartened if you lose a motion today, as this is what can be achieved if you stay focused and not take no for an answer. Sometimes we may have to look at an issue and present it differently. Many thanks to ICPA (Aust) for their advocacy for these small remote schools.

To follow on from the Moree conference and how we implement your motions, State Council attended a deputation to Sydney. We were able to meet with the new NSW Deputy Premier and the Minister for Education, Prue Car. Minister Car had been the Shadow Education Minister, so she was well aware of our issues and is now in a better position to make the needed changes. This also highlights the need to meet with Shadow Ministers so they can question those in power but then be fully aware of the issues when they find themselves in Government. We arranged 39 meetings with Ministers, Shadow Ministers and other stakeholders, local members and partners. The solutions offered by ICPA-NSW are pragmatic and discussions have been positive, however, it is a continued frustration for our members that things take years to be implemented and that means for many children, the gaps in their learning and development remain.

ICPA is of course an organisation seeking equity of access to education for all students living in rural and remote geographically isolated areas. But what is it that we are seeking? We want to start opportunities early making sure that any children that are likely to fall through the cracks get the special support they need. Our goal, our mission should be to endeavour that no rural or remote child misses the opportunity to have an education that embraces all of these factors. This is the base level of education all our children deserve.

While advancements in education and technology are making the task of providing an appropriate education easier, these are also some of the forces making it more difficult. The demographic story of remoteness is that populations in remote and regional NSW continue to decline, and only the largest regional centres grow. The consequent reality is that many small schools will continue to lose populations, and the pressure is on the Government and Department to provide resources to metropolitan areas when new schools are needed to cope with population growth. This should not be to the detriment of rural and remote students or cloud the fact that every child, no matter where they live, deserves an appropriate education.

The future of our children is a subject that captivates every parent's mind. Envisioning their lives, careers, and the challenges they might face is a shared concern. As parents and as a community, our responsibility is to equip them adequately for the unfolding future. Central to this preparation is their education – a holistic approach that goes beyond standardised testing, catering to various aspects of their development. ICPA-NSW recognises the need for rural and remote children to have equal access to diverse educational opportunities. In rural and remote areas, the one-size-fits-all approach to education is impractical. The diverse needs of students demand a flexible and multifaceted system. These remote populations and large distances make it impossible for a singular type of schooling to cater to every student. Therefore, the emphasis should be on creating and maintaining pathways for various endeavours so that parents can make informed choices about which educational setting suits their child best.

Acknowledging that a formal education system exists is not enough. Disparities in benchmarking, NAPLAN testing, and tertiary participation rates highlight existing inequalities. The evidence suggests that, despite the system's form, some rural and remote students face significant disadvantages due to their geographical location. Advocacy efforts need to focus on ensuring every child has an equal chance to reach their potential.

ICPA-NSW emphasises the importance of recognising and addressing these disparities. NAPLAN and AEDC results, while providing a snapshot of academic performance and developmental domains, should not be the only metrics for evaluating the success of education in rural areas. The association calls for a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by students, taking into account geographical and socio-economic factors that impact their performance and development.

ICPA-NSW recognises the importance of collaboration with non-government stakeholders, local communities, and businesses. While acknowledging the constraints faced by government departments, we actively engage with them to address challenges. Monthly meetings with the Rural Regional and Remote Education Policy Unit within the NSW Department of Education have proven invaluable in addressing longstanding issues and emerging concerns. In the past year, ICPA-NSW has actively supported and promoted innovative solutions to address pressing issues within its membership. For instance, the introduction of new preschool options at Wanaaring demonstrates a proactive approach to early childhood education in remote areas. The collaboration extends beyond the education sector, sometimes involving various stakeholders committed to improving the overall well-being of rural and remote communities. By working together, ICPA-NSW aims to create a network of support that goes beyond the confines of formal education, addressing the broader challenges faced by families living in remote areas.

Parents and families play a crucial role in shaping a child's education. Recognising that students who attend small rural schools or are educated by distance education spend much of their time being influenced by the community around them, ICPA-NSW emphasises the importance of schools engaging deeply with families in our rural and remote communities. A united approach involving P&Cs, Parent Associations, local governments, and other community partners is deemed essential for the success of educational initiatives and the success of staff teaching in small rural communities.

This goes for our boarding partners as well. When a child leaves home to attend boarding school or hostel, they are effectively leaving home and will spend more time at their place of education for the majority of their teenage years than in their family home. Fortunately, we have partners like Amanda

Ferrari of Boarding Schools Expo to help families navigate this emotional and financial investment to find the best possible home away from home for our students. We also work closely with Richard Stokes and his team at the Australian Boarding Schools Association to support our schools and their staff to bridge gaps and understand the perspectives and needs of both families and boarding schools. Working with philanthropic organisations to promote the financial and emotional support that they provide, can help families access assistance that they may otherwise not have known about.

I would like to briefly remind everyone that ICPA as an organisation is run by volunteers. Your Federal and State Councillors all have day jobs, businesses and properties to run, and families, some supervise school at home, are carers for others, sit on committees and hold other positions within the communities in which they live. We somehow manage to fit in ICPA as well. So, if not to be paid then why? Because we are passionate and believe in all children having the right to access an equitable education. By working together, we can support our children to reach their aspirations and be strong future contributors to their communities and wider society. Every child, no matter where they live, deserves an appropriate education.

Tanya Mitchell. President, ICPA-NSW

Secretary's Report

Madam President, invited guests, Federal Councillors, State Councillors, Life members and members, it gives me great pleasure to present the Secretary's Report for the 2023 year. It has been another busy year attending to the secretarial work for the organisation. State Council had a very successful week in Sydney in June for our main deputation. Forty meetings were attended to take the organisations policies, and the issues that have come to make these policies from you, the members. These meetings were with the State Government, Departments, and other stakeholders. In October the Executive spent a day in Sydney following up on the issues with some of the Government representatives and stakeholders that we had seen in June. Letters for all the motions carried at last year's conference were written. We are trying to keep you abreast of the responses to these letters by our motions update in each Top Wire. I do hope you are reading this piece and finding it helpful, especially when it comes to thinking about branch motions for the next conference.

Throughout the year many submissions have been sent to relevant inquiries. The handbook for State Councillors, and especially for anyone joining State Council is still a work in progress, unfortunately. All branches that asked for promotional banners should have received them in the mail. It was truly an honour back in November to be able to celebrate the Walgett Branch's 50 plus years of service to their members. There is so much to celebrate when you think of the volunteer capacity throughout the branches and what has collectively been achieved. Well done, Walgett. The ICPA flyer in your folders explaining the organisation's structure hopefully will be a useful tool to assist with fully understanding the structure of the organisation. We have plenty of ICPA-NSW flyers and branches are encouraged to take these back to their branches to assist with gaining new members. We are only as strong as our membership, and we want to represent you all. ICPA-NSW members are very lucky to have the current team on State Council. They are a dedicated team with a passion to improve equity of access to education for all rural and remote students from Early Childhood to Tertiary. We have been working on developing and organising Governance, Management and Microsoft training for the State Council

and I am pleased to report that we are all staying back on Friday to do this training. We did receive a small amount of funding from Connellan Airways to assist with this training. Many branches have assisted the organisation by donating funds to assist with our activities.

Throughout the year we have attended many virtual meetings. Apart from our monthly meeting with the RRREP, we meet with CWA of NSW and NSW Farmers, Telstra, NBN and ACCAN, Parents Experience, Disabilities Strategy Group, Bursary and Scholarship panels, just to name a few. The year ahead looks very busy, and I look forward to assisting you all. Thank you very much to you all, for all that you do, either on State Council or at a branch level. A special thank you to the Dubbo Conference convening committee who have delighted us and looked after us magnificently for the past few days in Dubbo. All the best.

Libby McPhee, ICPA-NSW Secretary

Treasurer's Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Treasurer's Report for the 2023 Financial Year. These audited financial statements, with accompanying auditor's report, have been prepared by Audit & Risk Solutions Pty Ltd.

Statement of Income and Expenditure:

- **Income:**

Total Income for the 2023 financial year was \$158,000. This is on par with last year.

This amount consists of:

- Sponsors & Grants \$74,000
 - Telstra \$5,000
 - NBN Co \$4,500
 - Connellan Airways \$4,500
 - Department of Education \$60,000
- Conference income \$33,000

As noted last year, while income from the state conference is recognised as income in the financial reports the net result to State Council is minimal to nothing (this is because at the conclusion of a state conference the balance of the conference account (less \$1,000), which is now included under the umbrella of ICPA-NSW, is expensed to the convening branch). This means that of the \$33,000 received by State Council, for the 2023FY, State Council recognised total conference expense of \$31,000. Noting a portion of the conference revenue recognised in 2023FY (\$8,000) relates to this current conference due to timing.
- Memberships \$9,000

At the end of the 2023FY, ICPA-NSW had 25 financial branches (not including Lone Members). Membership numbers for 2023 are included in the Membership Officer Report.

The 2024 memberships are currently still coming in, with a large portion of the 2024 memberships not coming in until after the end of the 2023FY (Jan & Feb 2024). Considerable improvements to the renewal process have been achieved and a sincere thanks to Judy Newton for her tireless efforts in this regard. We continue to strongly encourage all members renew online as the utilisation of technology is an important step in enhancing the efficiency of the organisation. It's also a timely reminder that Branch AGM's need to be held in October or early November as this really helps with ensuring that all members are financial at the close of the financial year (December). It also ensures that Branch fees are set prior to the opening of the next membership year.

- Merchandise sales \$2,700
Merchandise sales have remained stable. We thank David Shrimpton for his diligence in managing the merchandise.
- Other sales \$40,000
This category in the financial statements includes all other income received by ICPA-NSW during the 2023 FY including:
 - o Interest \$1,700
 - o Donations \$5,370
This amount reflects donations to State Council. Individual members or local Branches can donate. We've had some very generous donations to State in 2023 and thank you all for your support big or small.
 - o Advertising \$16,500
This amount has increased significantly compared to last year which, as reported last year, was due to a delay in the issuing of the 2022 advertising invoices. Of the amount received (16,500) \$8,700 (approx. 50%) pertains to the 2022FY.
 - o Affiliation fees \$16,000
This is the portion of memberships that relates to Federal ICPA and the relevant Branches. What this means is that, although ICPA-NSW recognises these fees as income, we do not hold any of these funds as they are all expensed out to the relevant Branches and Federal ICPA. Total affiliation fees paid out for the 2023FY was \$17,600. The difference between affiliation fees received and paid out (\$1,600) is due to a timing difference between when the fees are received & when they are paid out.

- **Expenditure:**

Total expenditure for the 2023 year was \$141,500. This is down on last year (\$25,500).

Of note are following:

- State councillor expenses \$66,700
This represents the cost associated with councillors attending meetings such as deputation as well as the costs associated with attending State & Federal conference, including state conference expenses incurred by State Council. State councillor expenses have increased by 11%. Like all of us, State Council has not been immune from inflationary pressures. The costs associated with moving bodies around the country has not reduced.

- State conference \$31,000
This expense has been addressed previously in this report (see conference income).
- Newsletter \$9,800
Top Wire costs have reduced by 33%. This is a pleasing result, and we acknowledge Kerri Johnston for her ongoing efforts as Top Wire editor.
- Subscriptions \$3,300
Subscriptions to Zoom, Dropbox, Mailchimp, QuickBooks, Microsoft and Survey Monkey have continued this year. These are vital services that enable State Council, which is geographically diverse, to meet and function administratively. State Council continues to monitor the services we have subscriptions to ensure they continue to meet our ongoing and evolving needs.

- **Net Profit/Loss:**

The net result for the 2023FY is a profit of \$16,500.

Assets and Liabilities Statement:

As at the 31st of December 2023 ICPA NSW has:

- **Assets**

Total assets for the 2023 year \$251,500

This amount consists of:

- Cash and Cash equivalents \$243,400
Included in this amount is:
 - Lone members account \$15,500
 - Unexpended Donations \$14,700
The Unexpended Donations Account received no deposits this year apart from \$183 in interest.
- Plant and Equipment \$871 (after depreciation)
There were no new items of equipment purchased during the 2023FY.
- Accounts receivable \$2,800
- Merchandise on hand \$4,400

- **Liabilities**

Total liabilities for the 2023 year \$59,500

This amount consists of:

- Accounts and other payables \$32,400
Included in the amount is:
 - o Lone Members Trust \$22,800
 - o Unexpended Donations \$9,500
Both these accounts have not been utilised this year. As such the balance remains the same.
- Net GST payable \$7,100
All ATO obligations have been met and paid.
- Grants received in trust \$20,000
This is an amount was a FRRR grant received on behalf of the Walgett Branch. These monies have been dispersed to the Walgett Branch for utilisation per the grant agreement. As the responsible body for this grant ICPA-NSW does have reporting obligations under the grant agreement which will be reported upon next year upon the conclusion of this grant by Walgett Branch.

NSW/Vic Lone Members:

As outlined in last year's report Lone Members are now amalgamated with ICPA-NSW. Whilst Lone Members can make independent decisions, from a financial standpoint, their activities form part of and are included in ICPA-NSW overall financial performance. Having the Lone Members under the ICPA-NSW umbrella ensures that all Lone Member funds are accounted for correctly, including any GST obligations. All income to the Lone Members is recognised as income to ICPA-NSW. All expenses incurred by Lone Members to external parties will be recognised as expenditure to ICPA-NSW. The distribution of Lone Members Branch affiliation fee be a transfer and no expense is recognised. I thank Claire Butler, our Lone Member officer for her diligence and Irene Lund for her offers of support as need be, it is greatly appreciated.

Sponsorship:

ICPA-NSW acknowledges the continued and valued support of Telstra, NBN Co, Connellan Airways & The Department of Education. We also acknowledge the generous donations made by families, branches, and organisations, whether it be financial, in kind or time. Our organisation does not exist without your continued support and so we offer our deepest thanks for all that you do to ensure we can continue to support you in the things that matter most to you, your families, and the communities within which you live.

Summary:

In summary the 23FY has been a pleasing financial result. With a \$25,000 reduction in total costs ensuring a positive outcome. What this highlights is that for organisations such as ours, where revenue

generating opportunities are relatively limited, the continual monitoring and management of expenses is key to our ongoing success and viability. We can confirm the ICPA-NSW has sufficient funds to cover immediate obligations and operations for the current (24FY) financial year.

ICPA-NSW note the need to secure additional revenue. As is the case for all community-based not-for-profit organisations, funding security is an ever-increasing challenge for both ICPA-NSW and the broader community.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to those on State Council with whom I have had the privilege of serving alongside. Your commitment and diligence, both individually and collectively, is to be commended.

I would personally like to thank our President Tanya Mitchell and Secretary Libby McPhee for your ongoing support and confidence.

To Judy Newton our Federal Membership officer. Thank you for your diligence, attention to detail and long hours you commit to ensuring the effective operation of our membership program. I have deeply valued your support.

To the many Branch Treasurers, thank you for the vital role you play with each of your Branches. The role of Treasurer is often a difficult one to fill, so your continued commitment and hard work is greatly appreciated.

I hereby request that this report and the audited financial statements be accepted. I also recommend that the state component of a Branch Family membership remain at \$18.00 for the 2025 membership year.

Nathan Kitto, ICPA-NSW Treasurer.

Publicity Officer and Webmaster's Report

Madame President, distinguished guests, fellow State Councillors, ICPA members, ladies, and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I present to you the Publicity Officer and Webmaster Report. The 2023 – 2024 period saw opportunities for me within the Publicity Officer role that has been invaluable. The 2023 conference held in Moree was my first conference in this role and my first hands on experience managing the technology for the conference to run smoothly. Although a daunting and stressful task, with a room of people watching, I also found this experience to be very enjoyable and humbling. Like all conferences, it was an incredible experience to meet new people, learn new things, understand positions and policy, and be inspired with a newfound enthusiasm to take home to my branch. But attending conference as a state councillor and in the publicity officers' role also brought a sense of accomplishment. In June, state council attended deputation in Sydney and the learning continued. I have been navigating how our members would like to see these updates and progress via social media and by attending deputation, it allowed me to have a deeper understanding of processes and insights on how I can distribute information to our members. The contacts gained and meetings held during deputation allowed me to create a bigger 'watch and report' circle through social media.

The names of departments, businesses, and organisations that ‘come up’ in conversations in these meetings provided great resources, research, and connections, and I am then able to pass this information along via the ever-evolving world of socials.

Federal Conference was held in July of 2023 in Darwin and again, I had the privilege of attending in my Publicity Officer role for NSW State Council. It was particularly wonderful to meet Publicity Officers and Webmasters from other states and form friendships to negate future development on a national level. Federal Conference in Darwin also saw NSW State Council pass a motion to host the 2024 Federal Conference and a highlight for me, was creating the logo and promotional video for conference. Nervously, I watched the room view the video and I was thrilled to have that opportunity as creating videos is a very new skill. Other highlights from this past year have been working with Kerrie Johnston and Hannah Calcino, the editors of Top Wire and Pedals magazines respectively and look forward to working with them in the future. The creation of the Publicity Officer’s meetings has been fabulous also. Our zoom meetings have been well attended by all states and the experience between all the ladies has formed a sounding board and unity with our social media posts. Facebook and Instagram continue to be the main sources used for social media. However, through the Publicity Officers nationally, LinkedIn is being explored as a possible addition, especially in terms of key stakeholder as this program is proving to have very up to date information and in real-time. It was around this time, that the role of Webmaster began to intertwine with the role of publicity. There has been an enormous amount of work going on in the background at a federal level as the ICPA website and databases continues to develop. This in turn with provide our members with a more user-friendly and up to date website. The gallant effort by Federal Council is to ensure that the glitches and problems we have seen in the last year or two are eliminated. As I wrap my head around the website and the webmaster role, I ask that people are patient with me and please do not hesitate to contact me if you notice something that isn’t quite right.

I have been blessed by having both Gabie Le Lievre and Nikki Macqueen on speed dial as there is much to learn! I hope our members have enjoyed looking at the 2024 calendar photo collages, and I have tried to represent all branches through the months and to demonstrate how diverse NSW really is. I am looking forward to further developing my role within Publicity Officer and Webmaster and I am especially looking forward to bringing our members together through social media as we share educational opportunities, resources, and connections. #ittakesanicpavillage.

Britt Anderson

ICPA-NSW Publicity Officer and Webmaster

Membership Officer’s Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Membership report. There is no doubt that 2023 will be known as the year of change in the memberships space. ICPA (Aust), under the steady guidance of Federal Memberships Officer Judy Newton, has created a more secure online system for both the payment of memberships and storage of personal information. This new platform has protections in place to ensure that members’ information is safely stored separate to the main ICPA website and only trained and authorised ICPA officers can access this information for the purposes of membership business. Each membership now runs for a 12-month term from the date of payment, to enable members a full twelve month membership regardless of what time of year they join or renew. The new database sends auto reminders to members when their renewal date comes around. There is also a rolling memberships option being built into the platform for members who simply want to set and forget their annual

membership by authorising an auto payment. Membership fees are made up of a portion for the branch, a portion for the State and a portion for Federal ICPA. Branch, State and Federal ICPA decide their fee portion at their individual AGMs. ICPA (Aust) has increased the 2024 Federal component from \$22 to \$25. The NSW state fee remains at \$18, whilst branches set their own portion at their AGMs each year. We therefore have a legacy issue whereby members pay different fees depending on which branch they belong to. We need to think about how we navigate through our branch fee structures to bring consistency. I recommend branches think about how we can move forward with a consistent branch fee to reduce confusion and harmonise the fee structure. This will take some consideration from individual branches because some may need to reduce their fee and others may need to raise it to get that consistency, State Council is very open to ideas or ways that we can help. I urge all of you to consider the benefits of having the same fee across all branches.

Historically, the membership fee was received at branch level and the branch kept their component and forwarded the State and Federal components on to ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) respectively. With the new online payment system, it is now the reverse. Federal receives the fee and then distributes to the State and Branch their portions. Whilst this process has significantly increased workload on the Federal Memberships Officer, it has reduced the workload on branches. An unintended consequence is that branches have to adjust to new ways of connecting with their members - whilst joining online is now quick and easy, we need to find ways where we can still connect on a personal level with our members and that is a focus, we can prioritise for 2024. I look forward to working with all branches to ensure we are still connecting on a personal level with our members because without personal connection, we don't get the important face to face and social interactions that are the fabric of our organisation. Membership renewals have really started to roll in since the new platform was set up in January and we have not removed anyone from the database to give members time to adjust to the new system.

With this in mind, there are currently 711 NSW members. I would ask that members refrain from posting me cheques in the mail and instead join online. We all live remotely, so to get to a bank is difficult and impacts your membership because it is just not an efficient process. Change in any organisation involves consistent team effort to get things done, it requires flexibility to adapt to unforeseen issues and a vision that the desired outcomes will make all our roles easier and more efficient. It also requires a momentum that can sometimes be hard to keep when we consider all the things we have to do in our days and this momentum is certainly something I have struggled with. I would like to acknowledge the supportive networks within ICPA that have helped work through unintended consequences of our changes and maintained the momentum required to 'get there'. The intent has always been to reduce workload on our branches, to make it easier to join ICPA and easier to keep members and I would like to personally thank all branch executives for putting up with my random text messages or phone calls during this time. I will say, it has been nice to speak to so many of you though.

On behalf of ICPA-NSW I would especially like to thank Judy Newton, Federal Memberships Officer for the absolute power of work that has been undertaken in this space and we look forward to enjoying this streamlined system – a bit like when you leave the corrugated gravel road and hit the bitumen, the journey is a lot smoother and I think we have finally hit the bitumen! I would also like to thank Top Wire Editor Kerrie Johnston for her patience and understanding – you might wonder what the Top Wire Editor has to do with memberships, but we have labels to print and other things that happen in the background like the schools advertising and Kerrie is always so understanding every quarter when it is time for me to download our membership list and print the labels! Kerrie then rallies the troops at Rankins Springs, and then they package up the Top Wire, it all comes together nicely but I am always

in awe of the work that goes on in the background. To Tanya and the team on State Council, you all do a remarkable job for our member families, often at the sacrifice of your own family time.

To Nathan, thank you for your trusted stewardship as treasurer and Georgina for bouncing ideas and pragmatic solutions – you make the memberships role much easier at the expense of your own roles growing larger. I cannot thank you enough. I am sorry that I cannot attend conference in person, however I look forward to continuing to work with you from afar as we think of unique ways to encourage memberships of ICPA! Remember – to improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often!

Claire Butler

ICPA-NSW Membership Officer

Top Wire Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I present The Top Wire Report for 2024. Firstly, congratulations to ICPA-NSW State Council for another year of writing reports and providing portfolio and motion updates for The Top Wire. Members love reading about where things are up to after motions are passed at State Conferences and what transpires throughout the year on the advocating front. Thank you for taking the time to help me with the proof-reading process of each edition which ensures we keep The Top Wire at the premium level we strive for and for never complaining about the sometimes ridiculous turnaround time frames that I keep you to, in order to get The Top Wire publications out to members in a timely manner.

I'd like to acknowledge the organisations that have regularly supported The Top Wire throughout last year with useful information for parents. These include the Gidget Foundation with perinatal/postnatal and coming articles, Royal Far West and their focus on early intervention services such as speech pathology/occupational therapy, Tresillian who offer several 'first stop' options for parents with general concerns over their baby or toddler, NSW Centre for Effective Reading with their helpful phonological awareness/phonics/vocabulary and reading fluency articles and the Department of Education with their tips on accessing the NSW Education Parent App, Distance Education for preschoolers, the National Student Wellbeing program, Telstra & NBN have also been consistent with contributing articles regarding the up and coming 3G closure, new satellite plans and communication updates for which we thank you.

During last year's conference the wonderful Jess Donoghue of The Empowered Muse (aka the Conference Photographer) collared a number of conference attendees to be models for an updated ICPA Merchandise section of The Top Wire. The May edition was the first edition to include this spruced up Merchandise section and we will continue to use these models throughout future editions. Throughout 2023 the following branches have contributed to The Top Wire: Hay, Boomi, Monaro, Rankins Springs, Wenworth, NSW/VIC Lone Members, Broken Hill, Central West Plains, Louth, Walgett, Lord Howe Island and Nyngan branches. I thank these branches who have contributed, and I note that it is a 70% increase on last year's branch contributions so now we just need to have the remaining 17 branches jump on board for 2024 and share with our members something that is happening in your branch. It mightn't be anything especially significant but whatever it is doesn't matter, nor does the size of the article matter. ICPA-NSW members are always interested to learn about what goes on in the lives of rural and remote families. Thank you to the schools who have supported

The Top Wire with advertising during 2023 and a special thank you to Claire Butler who efficiently collates information from the schools in readiness for the bumper November edition of The Top Wire. Finally, many thanks to the Rankins Springs Branch who consistently come together every three months to package and post each edition of Top Wire to all our members.

Kerrie Johnston

ICPA-NSW Top Wire Editor

ICPA MERCHANDISE REPORT

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. I have pleasure in presenting the Merchandise Report to you. Since my last report at the State Conference in Bourke 2023, there have been good sales of merchandise at both the State Conference in Bourke and the Federal Conference in Darwin. At Federal Conference Mrs Georgina Luckraft took on oversight of the merchandise, and I thank her for stepping into this role. The two new lines of merchandise, 'sock-savers' and a newly designed cap, have both sold well. The introduction of EFTPOS card facilities via 'Square' has facilitated direct online payments and assisted in managing stock levels. There are a couple of lines that have been reduced in price to clear stock. This reduction in stock has enabled merchandise to be contained to one large suitcase, which makes it easier for traveling to and from conferences. A reminder to all, that ICPA merchandise is available for branches to display at their events and functions, please contact the Merchandise Convener to arrange. Please note the following breakdown of merchandise on hand as at February 2024.

- Polo Shirts Men's 3
- Women's 5
- RB Sellars Shirts Women's 20
- Men's 9
- Sock Savers 50
- Stubbie Holders 8
- Men's Neck Ties 3
- Caps 72
- Scarves 4
- Keyrings unknown

David Shrimpton

ICPA Merchandise Convener

ICPA (Aust) President's Report

Thank you, Tanya, and I'm sure everyone really wants to hear this riveting report just after lunch so if you start nodding off, that's OK. ICPA-NSW President Tanya Mitchell, distinguished guests, Federal Life Members, State and Branch Life Members, fellow ICPA members and friends, it is with great pleasure that I present the Federal Council update. Many thanks to the NSW State Council and Central West Plains Branch for hosting such a wonderful conference and we appreciate the opportunity to provide an update from Federal Council. For those who don't know me, I'm from Tambo Branch in

Western Queensland, somewhere between Charleville and Longreach. My husband and I have sheep property there, Marinos. Bit of a dying art in QLD, Marinos. Can you please buy our sheep when they're for sale down here in NSW? We have twin daughters who've just turned 18, finished high school and we've got one in Uni going to Uni, another one having gap year. We have followed the DE, Small Schools, school bus run and boarding school route for our education and we're now trying to navigate tertiary allowances etcetera, which you know is very challenging and I'm finding that, yeah, pretty tricky if you haven't been there before. So, I acknowledge everyone who's entering new phases in their life when it comes to navigating, AIC, tertiary etcetera. I'm new to Federal Council this year. I've sort of blew in from out of the West in an unexpected way, and if you ask me, this time last year, you know, I'm shocked that I'm standing here in front of you really. However, I have spent the last ten years on Queensland Council and have recently retired as Queensland President, so hence my knowledge about Queensland issues and it's great to have Ally Allison, our Federal Publicity Officer here with me representing Federal Council and please can you give Ally all your sound bites? Thank you. The 2023 Federal Conference in Darwin was a great success, and we thank sincerely the NT convening committee for hosting us all so admirably. conference saw the retirement of Alana Moller as the President after four years of selfless dedication to the cause. Alana made huge inroads in relationships and advocacy during her time as President and is missed by Federal Council and the entire member base alike. Alana continues to provide knowledge and really is great support to me and the entire Council team, for which we are very appreciative. Thank you also to Wendy Hick, who completed eight years on Federal Council and words are not enough to describe how much time and energy Wendy had dedicated to ICPA at federal and state level. We are thankful Wendy has agreed to accept an off-Council position as Communications Advisor to assist this transition through that time. Sue Shotton also retired as Web Manager and all ICPA members are beneficiaries of Sue's vast expertise in setting up the website and all that. We farewelled Laura Stalley from NSW from Federal Council in NT, and Laura served so ably for two years on council. Thank you, Laura. To Kylie, also from NSW, who contributed greatly during her brief time. At the AGM, we welcome alongside me, new councillors Jennifer Ruska from Julia Creek, QLD, Sally Brindal from Midwest Branch, WA and Tracy Older from Kindon Branch, QLD, and Shannah Joyner from Monaro Branch, NSW, joined us as the Assistant Secretary. Earlier this year, Tracy Older stepped off council due to other commitments, and Wendy Henning, who is also the Queensland State President, has recently retired from Council to concentrate on her Queensland President's role, which is pretty big I can tell you. Wendy and Tracy's knowledge and expert experience were a valuable asset to Federal Council, and we wish them all the best. We are delighted to announce we have already recently co-opted, Melissa Kerr from Catherine Branch, NT to our team and we really value having members on Federal Council from all States and the Territory to give that diverse knowledge and opinions. At our October 23, delegations in Canberra, Federal Council launched a campaign to restore the AIC basic boarding allowance to its original value of 55% of average boarding fees. We have worked closely with public relations consultant, C7, to build momentum, which has included an e-petition that's got 4000 signatures and an open letter to the Social Services Minister, which was endorsed by over 20 stakeholders. Council continues to progress all motions carried at conference and letters have been written to government and education stakeholders. Various submissions have been lodged and meetings undertaken. Federal Council will be providing updates on motion action progress to members in early March. Some updates from the various portfolio sectors are as follows. In the tertiary portfolio, the long-awaited universities quarter final report was released in late February. The Australian Government's objective for the accord is to devise recommendation and performance targets to improve the quality, accessibility, affordability and sustainability of higher education. Federal Council contributed to the review with a submission and a consultation with the Regional Education Minister, the Honourable Fiona Nash through the process.

There were 47 recommendations which the government is considering, and we will hope all these will be implemented. Of significance to rural, remote higher education the following recommendations were welcomed. Financial support for unpaid work placements. Increasing the parental income free area for dependent youth allowance. Expanding the income support eligibility by providing pro-rata student payments to students who study part time and reviewing the eligibility criteria for youth payments acknowledging regional, rural and remote students who have specific needs. Reducing the burden of HELP loans by introducing fairer and simpler indexation and repayment arrangements for HELP loans. Regarding the tertiary access payment, recommendations made are the removal of the requirement to commence an eligible course within 12 months of leaving year 12 and amending the timing of payments to provide more timely assistance with the cost of reallocation for tertiary studied before moving. Early childhood. The reviews of many aspects of the Early Childhood Education and Care, ECEC continues. The final in-home care report was published in August 2023 finding that in-home care only partially meets its objectives and really needs to focus on meeting the needs separately of the three cohorts that it was designed to cater for. The final ACC price inquiry into ECEC report, (don't you love jargon? I don't even know what ACC means actually.) Anyway, we need a little manual for that, I think. Recommendations of particular interest were Recommendation 5: The Australian Government should design policy options to better meet the needs of children and households for whom In-home Care Services are intended to serve. Recommendation 7: A market stewardship role should be considered for government by both Australian and State and Territory Governments to monitor, regulate and shape children's childcare markets to ensure they are delivering government objectives. The Productivity Commission draught report was released in late 2023 and among many of the recommendations requested further information regarding the cost, benefit and practicality of implementing the AIC for the three- to four-year-old preschool cohort. Communications continues to see rapid growth and enhancements. The new suite of Sky Muster Plus premium products offers unmetered of data at three different price points. The Telstra 3G network is to close on the 30th of June 2024 and Telstra have reiterated that in areas that currently only have a 3G signal, they are committed to providing 4G before they close 3G. The school Student Broadband Initiative offers eligible families without an NBN connection the opportunity of free internet until December 2025. The USO (Universal Service Obligation) ensures that everyone has access to landlines and pay phones regardless of where they live. The Australian Government is currently examining universal service arrangements due to changes in available technologies and consumer preferences over recent years. ICPA (Aust) has made a submission to the review on behalf of all ICPA, ensuring that the requirements of service delivery for regional, rural and remote families are clearly understood. ICPA (Aust) encourages members to raise with us specific connectivity challenges. To ensure that future developments are meeting the needs of rural and remote families accessing education, and I tell you, Sally Brindle, our Communications Portfolio leader, has got contacts everywhere. If you've got a problem, you need to contact Sally or me and we can make progress. You don't have to wait till conference to address your issue. So, if you've got one, let us know. Secretary, Kim Hughes and I travelled to Darwin in early February for the Joint Council meeting. This year the meeting was hosted and facilitated by the NT State Council. Yet again, it proved to be such a worthwhile exercise to have all state and federal presidents and other representatives from across the country come together to discuss all things relevant to ICPA. This time last year, Federal Council engaged C7, and integrated specialist, regional and rural marketing and communications agency based in Tamworth, to support Federal Council in a couple of ways. Firstly, to assist Federal Council with communications and advocacy to progress long standing issues and secondly, to develop a strategic plan and a subsequent operational plan to ensure the organisations longevity. This engagement originated from a motion carried at the 2021 Federal Conference in Longreach. The result of the work has been to focus on one or two long standing key

issues at a time, making concerted push to government through key messaging and at times the media. After consultation of feedback, it has been decided that the GIDE will be reframed with a fresh look going forward, focusing on ICPA as a whole and the many faces and ways of rural learning across our membership base. Plans are underway so watch this space and Ally has been working very closely with the other PO's across the states to make this happen. The Distance Education Teaching Allowance, commonly known as DETA, has also been discussed at length between ICPA councils, particularly the juxtaposition which exists where the federal government's position is that it is a state government issue and vice versa. It is important to flesh out how this issue may look in each state and what are the common links so that going forward we have a more focused and collaborative request drawing on the widespread commonality we all share. Federal Council recently travelled to Canberra and met with the Honourable Jason Claire, MP Minister for Education, the Honourable Darren Chester, Shadow Minister for Regional Education and the Honourable Michael Sucker MP, Shadow Minister for Social Services to name a few. We discussed the importance of the increase to the AIC basic boarding allowance, along with the other recommendations in our 2024-2025 pre-budget submission. It was a great opportunity to consolidate these key issues prior to the May budget. Federal Council also participated in a strategic planning workshop during our time in Canberra. It was an uplifting experience to be in the room with our fellow councillors all putting forward their ideas and visions for the longevity of the organisation and how we can work as targeted as possible to reach objectives with the ultimate aim to get the very best outcomes for members. The strategic plan is a work in progress, and I look forward to updating members on its progress in the coming months. The Canberra session also included a media training workshop, which is proving invaluable for councillors to have the opportunity to upskill during their time on council, enabling greater participation at a Council level and for personal growth. ICPA at large this year will be making its presence felt at Beef Week this year. Thank you to Queensland State Council for liaising and working with the Beef Committee to bring a panel discussion together, highlighting the critically important role that access to quality education plays in the success of our vast agricultural industry. The purpose being to have agricultural companies large and small supporting the work of ICPA across Australia and to campaign alongside to ensure that our rural and remote communities remain strong and vibrant and educated to support one of Australia's key industries. We also see it as an opportunity to increase membership for ICPA. Thank you to all our members who contribute countless volunteer hours to enhance educational opportunities for all rural and remote students in your state and across Australia. All the very best. Thank you, NSW State Council and again to Central West Plains for bringing such a fabulous conference together. We've really enjoyed it. Thank you.

Louise Martin.

President ICPA (Aust)

ALLOWANCES REPORT

Madame President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Allowances Portfolio report. I am sure I am not the only State Councillor who will stand up here over conference and say that the last year has flown by, but indeed it has at lightning speed. Between the busyness of our day to day lives, we squeeze in ICPA and represent our members, which is something we all feel very passionate about. We are all in this room today because we have some affiliation with rural and remote education and for some of us that can come at a much greater expense than our city friends. Thank you for making the huge effort to attend State conference.

I find that these two days reinvigorate our passion and reinforce the need to continue advocating for our members and their families. After a busy few year's in the Health and Wellbeing and Boarding Portfolios, I made the jump to Allowances portfolio after the 2023 Moree State Conference. I have enjoyed learning about the many allowances and subsidies available to rural and remote families and bringing issues related to this portfolio to the attention of relevant state ministers, departments, and organisations. Spreading awareness, knowledge, and information on allowances available at both a state and federal level is an important part of my role and something I have really enjoyed. Like many portfolios, this is an area where there is continuous change and so many variants to most allowances to understand and decipher. I definitely do not know the answer to all questions but have been happy to find the answer. A big thank you to our President and prior Allowances portfolio holder, Tanya, who has been my go-to this year with many a question. We are very lucky to have state and federal allowances that can assist with the financial commitments that many of our members face. Although they are not designed and definitely do not cover all costs associated with educating our children, they provide much needed assistance to rural and remote families and access to opportunities that otherwise might not be possible.

A huge topic of conversation of late is the increased cost of living; and the effect of this is evident on educating rural and remote students, from early childhood to tertiary. ICPA is aware that our advocating for the increase of state and federal allowances is more urgent in these financially trying times. Providing much needed financial assistance, relative to the costs of education, will go a long way in bridging the educational gap between rural and remote and metropolitan students. In turn, this assistance will hopefully improve the educational outcomes of our rural and remote children. Unfortunately, not all children who are disadvantaged by geographical location qualify for these much-needed allowances and this is something that ICPA continues to bring to the attention of the relevant government departments.

At this point I would like to thank our fellow ICPA Federal Councillors, who spend a considerable amount of time lobbying federal allowance issues which affect ICPA-NSW members. Federal Council have lobbied tirelessly for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC), Basic Boarding Allowance (BBA). In their recent Pre-Budget Submission, they have asked the federal government to cover 55% of average boarding fees for families who have no other choice but to access boarding school for compulsory secondary education. The Pre-Budget Submission can be found here – <https://icpa.com.au/au/news/icpa-aust-presents-pre-budget-submission> They have also asked for an extension of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education allowance to three and four-year-olds accessing an approved distance education early learning program. These changes would have a positive effect on many ICPA-NSW members, so thank you Federal Council. It really is fantastic that we can work together and fight to increase the financial support offered to rural and remote families from State and Federal governments. The beginning of 2024 has seen an increase in many, if not all, the allowances, and subsidies available to our members. ICPA-NSW provides a list of available State and Federal allowances, with a summary of eligibility criteria, closing dates and contact details. This spreadsheet can be found in the next issue of Top Wire, or by contacting ICPA-NSW State Council. I recommend that everyone checks out the allowances and subsidies available, you never know what you may qualify for. And, as always, get in contact with State Council if you have any questions or need clarification. When applying for any allowances, we urge families to not self-assess their eligibility, but encourage them to provide all the information that is required for each application and allow the assessment processes to occur. You never know, you may be pleasantly surprised.

It is great to see many new Allowance motions have been put forward by ICPA-NSW branches. Each year new issues arise, and we have our members to thank for bringing these to State Council. Rest

assured that State Council will take these on board, advocate and update members of any progress made. It has been a pleasure to present my first Allowances Portfolio report and unfortunately my last, as I have made the difficult decision to step off NSW State Council this year. One positive of the COVID-19 pandemic is that I joined State Council to advocate for interstate boarders. The people I have met and the friends I have made have had such an impact on my life. I have learnt new skills, had incredible experiences, and laughed so much. They are a special bunch of people, so I would highly recommend joining State Council, you won't regret it.

Bree Wakefield

ICPA-NSW Allowances Convenor

Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools, and Hostels Report

Madam president, distinguished guests, fellow state councillors, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen it gives me great pleasure to present my first Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools, and Hostels Report. I took over the Boarding Portfolio at Moree State Conference last year from Bree Wakefield and I'm extremely grateful for the work that she has done previously, especially during the previous years with boarder closures and the little issue of the pandemic that we all experienced.

I am pleased to be able to report that the new female boarding facilities at Yanco Agricultural College is progressing and hopefully will be open mid to late this year. This had been an issue raised with ICPA for many years by our members and it will be wonderful to see this completed. In 2023 the NSW government announced that seven Sports High Schools had become Australian Olympic Pathway Schools. Last year's conference resulted in the motion being passed requesting that one of these schools have a boarding facility attached to enable our rural and remote students the same opportunities to develop their sporting pathways. ICPA raised this issue and once again the need for a girl's boarding agricultural school in regional NSW, similar to Farrar, at deputation in Sydney last year and will continue to raise these with the Department of Education and Government Ministers.

Some of you may be aware that there has been a slight increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance and the additional payment component. Although not a significant increase and with boarding costs rising considerably for many families these increases are still not proportional to the costs involved in educating a child. We thank Federal Council for their ongoing support to ensure that our members concerns are discussed at a federal level. I was fortunate to be able to attend three of the four Boarding Schools Expos last year in Dubbo, Griffith, and Wagga. This provided me with a wonderful opportunity to connect with Heads of Boarding, Boarding Supervisors and Enrolments Managers from over 30 schools. I soon discovered that many of the schools knew of ICPA, had representatives that attended State Conference but weren't fully aware of the issues that families of rural and remote students have. Explaining about the distances travelled to attend school or for sport which maybe hundreds of kilometres away and the lack of education opportunities for many families was an extremely valuable conversation. I had many discussions explaining the allowances that families may be able to claim and for many families these allowances can be the difference between a family being in a financial position to send a child away. It was a pleasure to speak to many ICPA families and have the opportunity to explain ICPA to many that weren't aware of our organisation. I'm looking forward to this year's Expo's and a huge thanks to Amanda and the team for the organisation required to provide rural and remote families with this fantastic resource. The virtual online Boarding

School Summit is a valuable tool for families that may not be attend an Expo in person and we hope to see this continue in the future.

I am fortunate to represent ICPA-NSW on the Boarding Scholarships for Isolated Students Selection Committee (BSIS). These scholarships are provided for students who do not qualify for AIC and are attending one of the State Based Agricultural Boarding Schools in NSW, these being Farrar, Hurlstone, and Yanco, and I look forward to continuing to be a part of the selection process. Richard Stokes and the team at ABSA have continued to be a valuable supporter of ICPA and all our families. They have a very full and informative program planned for the year providing training workshops, seminars, and education for boarding staff throughout Australia not just NSW. Some of these include Duty of Care workshops, programs and training for Gap students, Fostering Inclusive Environments, Youth Mental Health and Well-Being, Behaviour Management and Cyber Safety. These provide a crucial opportunity for Heads of Boarding, Supervisors, and staff to connect with each other, learn what other schools are implementing, what works and what doesn't and new issues that may be arising in the Boarding Environment. We entrust our children with boarding schools, and it is reassuring to know that they themselves have this support network and education available to them. Schools have returned for the year and how wonderful is it to have orientation programs, onsite school tours, sleep overs, boarding outings for the students and most importantly parent functions resume. For myself personally this year is one of trepidation as my eldest is completing his HSC and all things associated with year 12 and the completion of his secondary schooling. I wish all families and boarding staff the best for 2024.

Myfi Kellahan

ICPA-NSW Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools, and Hostels Convenor

Communications Report

Madam President, invited guests, Federal Council, fellow State Councillors and members, it gives me great pleasure to be presenting the Communications report for the 2023 year. The planned 3G closure is very close. The life expectancy of a mobile connection is 20 years. 3G has been around for 20 years. Many of you are frustrated with the lack of service over the past 12 months. It is hoped that once the spectrum becomes available, following the closure of 3G, we will experience a more reliable and consistent service. If your experience is not better after the 30th of June, you are asked to get in touch with ICPA, as we have been promised at least an equivalent service to what we did have had almost two years ago. Believe it or not, but 6G is on the horizon. I would like to thank Louth Branch for bringing the motion about a better service once 3G is switched off. This has been my comment at every meeting for the last two years. I actually don't like the word equivalency as we are expecting it to be better. The long-standing motion from Namoi branch regarding assistance for antennas and boosters is still being pushed. Telstra has asked for assistance for people in their co-investment submissions and the farm connectivity assistance. To date this assistance is unfortunately still not available. ICPA will keep the issue at the forefront. Closure of Next G Wireless Link (NGWL) Along with the 3G closure comes the NGWL closure. Telstra have a designated team working to upgrade rural and remote landlines that are currently working on the NGWL system. These NGWL services are being replaced with the Telstra 4G Fixed Wireless (Telstra 4GFW) service. This service works on a (700MHz) frequency rather than the (850MHz) the NGWL works on. With the change to the Telstra 4GFW, consumers will have a Telstra Smart Modem III installed instead of the Ericsson W25 or Calyptech CWG-100 modems.

Telstra are working with the Local Government Association to look at access to the service, affordability (which is 2% or less of the population), and the ability of the users. Telstra is wanting to retain, grow and provide a better service for everyone. Along with this partnership they are planning for success and improving the connectivity literacy. I would like to thank the NBN for providing late last year, a series of webinars to provide information to members. The few webinars I did attend, I found them to be very informative. Some relevant information to come from the webinars were a website that you can look up to see if you have been hacked. The website is Haveibeenpwned.com. Another useful website regarding child safety online is thinkuknow.org.au. School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI) There is free internet available for any family who have school-aged students who do not have access to the internet. The Australian Government has made this assistance available until the end of December 2025. Please avail yourself of this initiative if you are eligible. Further information can be found at www.nbnco.com.au/campaigns/school-student-broadband.initiative. You can also catch up with NBN whilst you are at conference. They are in the room. There is now a referral centre for direct contact and support, should you be eligible for this initiative. The number is 1800 954 610. This centre is open Monday to Friday from 10 am to 6pm (AEDT). The referral centre can be contacted by a website. www.anglicarevic.org.au/student-internet. The initiative offers a voucher allowing the family to spend it at a participating SSBI retail service provider. NBN Co Road Trip have organised a road trip after the ICPA-NSW conference, and we have been invited to ask Telstra and the Regional Tech Hub to be part of this information tour. ICPA-NSW, NSW Farmers and CWA of NSW will be continuing to spread the word about the tour and encouraging members to take the opportunity to meet with the Telco's. There are two trips:

1. Louth – Bourke – Brewarrina – Walgett – Coonamble – Nyngan – Cobar starting on 11th March 2024 and
2. Goolgowi – Hillston – Lake Cargelligo – Condobolin – West Wyalong – Rankins Springs on the week starting 18th March 2024. ICPA-NSW thanks NBN for planning such a trip, which should be very useful and informative sessions for members.

The new Sky Muster Plus Premium plans are designed to provide homes and small businesses in regional and remote Australia with more options for uncapped data use for all their internet activities, following the launch of new NBN Sky Muster Plus Premium satellite plans. There are three plans:

- Sky Muster Plus Premium – high tier option: Replaces the current NBN Sky Muster Plus Premium plan and offers uncapped data use with maximum wholesale speeds of 100/5 Mbps at least once every 24-hour period and an anticipated typical busy period wholesale download speed of 48 Mbps.
- Sky Muster Plus Premium – mid tier option: A new plan that offers uncapped data use with maximum wholesale speeds of 50/5 Mbps at least once every 24-hour period and an anticipated typical busy period wholesale download speed of 31 Mbps.
- Sky Muster Plus Premium – entry tier option: A new plan that offers uncapped data use with maximum wholesale speeds of 25/5 Mbps at least once every 24-hour period and an anticipated typical busy period wholesale download speed of 16 Mbps. In addition to the new plans, NBN is also introducing other new features for Sky Muster Plus and Premium users such as the option to purchase dedicated static IP (internet protocol) addresses for users who wish to do things like remotely access their network from outside their property. Enhancements to NBN satellite services are made possible due to upgrades to the NBN Fixed Wireless network, which includes migrating around 120,000 premises from the NBN satellite footprint to access NBN Fixed Wireless for the first time. This is part of a nation-wide upgrade program to deliver better broadband for homes and businesses across regional

and remote Australia. The motion from the Brewarrina branch in March 2018 “That ICPA NSW continues to lobby all internet service providers and NBN to give rural isolated students unlimited data allowances” has further been enhanced with more options with the introduction of these new plans.

In June 2023 Telstra partnered with OneWeb to deliver Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Satellite to remote mobile sites. Telstra says this will improve the mobile experience for remote communities with the low latency connections. In July 2023 Telstra set up a deal to resell Starlink broadband plans which also include a voice service. This broadband connection is expected to give better latency, download speeds and a better experience all round than the current ADSL. This Starlink deal comes with onshore and on the ground support for all installations and technical problems. The rollout of the OneWeb LEO cellular backhaul has begun. The first call has already been made. The average bandwidth for these OneWeb LEO sites will increase at least 15x and the average latency will reduce tenfold. Telstra is expecting that customers in rural and remote areas will have lower latency, higher speeds, and a more consistent experience.

Universal Service Obligation (USO). This legislation requires the Universal Service Provider (Telstra) to connect a telephone service to any premise in Australia and to provide payphones. The USO is under review again and ICPA Federal and States will be responding to the review, which closes on 1st March 2024. The review was announced in October by the Minister for Communications, the Hon Michelle Rowland. The purpose of the review is to commence a ‘broad consultation with industry and the community on the delivery of a modern and more fit for purpose (USO)’. ICPA-NSW will be able to put the following Louth motion into the review. “That ICPA-NSW request that the Telstra Corporation ensure that there are reliable and continuous telecommunications services available to rural and remote students and their families.”

It is wonderful that the Regional Tech Hub is at conference. Please avail yourselves of their information. The Regional Tech Hub phone number is 1300 081 029. Opening hours are Mon: 12pm – 5pm Tue: 12pm – 5pm Wed: 9am – 2pm Thu: 9am – 2pm Fri: 9am – 2pm Otherwise, you can leave a message, and they will get back to you.

The Telstra Connected Communities Grant program opened on 27thFeb 2024 and closes on 27th March 2024. Resilient communities that are well prepared and socially connected when disaster strikes with the ability to renew and recover together. Sustainable communities that are diverse and inclusive, planning for the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of their people and the planet; and Liveable communities that have digital capability and help to equip individuals with the skills to live, learn and work in a digital society. The program offers not for profit organisations an opportunity to apply for \$10,000.

During our main deputation week to Sydney back in June 2023 we enjoyed catching up with both NBN and Telstra. We thank both Telco’s for sparing time to meet with us. ICPA-NSW continues to have a seat on the Telstra Regional Advisory Committee, which meets virtually most of the time. This is also a great opportunity to thank Telstra and NBN for their continued financial support for the organisation. It is greatly appreciated, and we thank you most sincerely. We are also having quarterly catchups with NBN, CWA of NSW and NSW Farmers, which are proving useful virtual meetings. Stay connected and stay in touch.

Libby McPhee

ICPA-NSW Communications Convenor

Distance Education/AHWISE Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow State Councillors, members, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to present the Distance Education rRport for ICPA-NSW for the 2023 year. Firstly, I would like to thank Central West Branch for hosting the 2024 Conference, having grown up in the area it is great to be back. Over the last couple of years many of the distance education motions have been around NBN Sky Muster and the implementation of new computers. We are excited to finally say that the first stage has been completed, although not without a few hurdles. For Broken Hill School of the Air, it has meant that they are now using TEAMS as their main video platform. This has been an adjustment for both teachers and students with all students now required to have their cameras on. We are also aware that all students now have headphones that are supplied with the computers. We would continue to encourage our members to ensure that they are contacting the Help Desk when issues arise, or they have concerns. With Stage I complete, ICPA-NSW will continue to work with the Department of Education on Stage II to review the scope, cost, and timing, to expedite this process. This process will also include the review of portable devices and printers. Broken Hill School of the Air has priority with its new satellite studios, and ITD is working with the school to upgrade the studios.

ICPA-NSW has been working with RRREP team through monthly meetings, to convey any concerns that come up. We would like to thank them for including us in meetings with the appropriate departments. We were also included in discussions for the Distance Education Preschools review at the end of 2023. During our Deputation in Sydney, we continued to advocate for our members within the Distance Education space particularly for Geographically Home Isolated children. A motion in 2022 at Bourke Conference around a review in Distance Education is still something that we are strongly advocating for, particularly with all the changes to technology and the learning curves since COVID-19. We have also attended some P&C Meetings at Broken Hill School of the Air and given updates on the technology roll out. If any other Distance Education centre would like us to attend their P&C Meetings, please get in touch.

Laura Stalley and Bree Wakefield

ICPA-NSW Distance Education Convenors

Early Childhood Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow State Councillors, members, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for allowing me to present the Early Childhood Report for ICPA-NSW for the 2023 year. The past 12 months has seen ICPA-NSW continue to bring focus to several key issues in the Early Childhood Portfolio. Lack of Practical Access to preschool for families in rural and remote NSW. Since 2014, ICPA-NSW has been working towards more equitable access to education for four-year-old preschoolers in identified remote locations where the only preschool four-year-old's could access was via Distance Education, requiring a supervisor. The pop-up pop-down model initiated by the NSW Department of Education utilises existing towns or village schools and Distance Education preschools. This has proved successful at several sites identified as having the need, and although not before time, Wanaaring Public School has in 2024 a preschool program operating for two students, allowing them the vitally beneficial opportunity to participate in a formal preschool educational program in preparedness for their primary school education. ICPA-NSW will continue to monitor remote and very remote areas and aims to consult with the Department of Education to determine where preschool

access is required as cohorts vary over time. Access to Early Childhood Education for remote three- and four-year-olds remains a priority. Under the current Start Strong Funding Guidelines, services are required to give equal priority of access to:

- Children who are at least four years old on or before the 31st of July in that preschool year and not enrolled or registered at a school
- Children who are at least three years old on or before 31st July in that preschool year and from low income and/or Aboriginal families
- Children with English language needs
- Children with a disability and additional needs
- Children who are at risk of significant harm (from a child protection perspective) There is no order of priority of the above groups.

However, the groups outlined would have priority over all other three-year-olds. Due to vast differences, it is very difficult for many rural and remote preschoolers to access the recommended and funded 600 hours of preschool in just one year. ICPA-NSW would like to see the criteria for priority to include children whose address is in a remote or very remote location. Ongoing lack of salary pay parity between four-year trained early childhood teachers and four-year trained primary and high school teachers, impacting services ability to recruit and retain adequately trained quality staff. As the broader education sector faces national shortages of teachers, the challenges in recruiting and retaining in rural and remote areas continues. Whilst there have been welcome incentives for NSW Government School teaching positions, this has further compounded the staffing issues for Early Childhood Services, particularly in rural and remote settings. Current Incentives for teachers and executives in rural and remote schools under the Incentive Schools Benefits can offer financial benefits of up to \$65,000 over and above the teaching salary award. This includes a breakdown of:

- 70% rental subsidy
- \$20,000 recruitment bonus
- \$5,000 rural and remote relocation bonus
- \$10,000 stamp duty relief
- \$5,000 per annum retention benefit for up to ten years
- \$10,000 experienced teacher benefit for up to five years.

Some of the schools attracting such incentives are Balranald, Barham, Hay, Hillston, and Moulamein to name a few. There are currently no scholarships open for application for Early Childhood Studies on the department website, and no incentive package for current professionals to take positions and relocate to rural and remote services. The burden of incentivising positions remains with the early childhood service, with no additional funding to attract staff. This issue will continue to have a significant impact of services ability to provide quality early childhood education to rural and remote children, where access is already a challenge. ICPA-NSW continues to seek action on better equipping services to secure teachers now and into the future.

As the roll out of the four-year Health and Development Checks in ECEC settings commences in 2024, in conjunction with NSW Health, ICPA-NSW continues to support the request for ongoing funding of

the "Better Learning Better Lives" proposal, a proposal presented last year to assist five identified rural, remote communities in NSW. The program aims to include services such as early intervention and screening, allied health therapy, wellbeing mental health services, capacity building for parents and teachers and community navigation and service coordination for families so that they can more easily find services. Royal Far West have the expertise and capacity to deliver this service in these locations, meeting a need that is otherwise unfulfilled.

ICPA-NSW made a submission to the IPART Review of Early Childhood Education and Care in November 2023, addressing several key areas. The submission included the points discussed in this report, aiming to provide an insight into the challenges and barriers for communities and families to provide and access Early Childhood Education. Most recently at the time of writing, there has been an announcement of 100 new public preschools to be built and co-located on existing public schools. 49 of these new preschools are in regional towns. ICPA-NSW will be keen to learn more about how this announcement will enable greater access to early learning for rural and remote pre-schoolers. I have been in awe of the incredible work performed by your state councillors as I begin to learn how to advocate for better access to Early Childhood Education for rural and remote communities.

Kirsty Wilson

ICPA-NSW Early Childhood Convenor

Health Well-Being Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow state councillors, members, ladies, and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to present the Health and Well-Being Report for ICPA-NSW at the 2024 State Conference. ICPA has raised with the Minister of Health and Minister for Regional Health the following issues:- limited access to allied health services and the inclusion of these in the IPTAAS Scheme; screening health checks for children; post-natal services; counselling and support services in schools; and the increasing wait times for families to access specialist services in rural and remote NSW. A common factor in all these issues was the importance of continuity in the provision of these services and varying differences with services provided across the different health districts. We regularly hear stories about members having to start from scratch and develop new relationships when either services are suspended, or staff move on. Whilst acknowledging the difficulty in accessing these services in correspondence received, the Minister stated that, "this presents opportunities for rural local health districts to consider increasing the availability of public allied services based on the needs of their communities." He also advised, "that the proposal for NSW Health to provide subsidies to receive private or not-for profit allied health services would generally not be supported.". These are concerns that our members have raised over numerous years and ICPA are committed to ensure that these continue to be raised with the relevant Government departments. The NSW Budget for 2023-24 outlined increased funding for regional and rural areas in NSW. The Minns Labour Government has interestingly stated that, "People living in rural, regional and remote parts of NSW will have better access to high-quality healthcare as part of 2023-24 NSW Budget.". A brief overview includes; \$438.6 million to be invested in recruiting an extra 500 rural and regional paramedics; increasing the incentive payment for healthcare workers moving to regional and remote areas from \$10,000 to \$20,000; \$419.1 million to increase staffing levels and address the shortage of nurses; \$121.9 million over 5 years towards study subsidies for healthcare workers to ensure continuation of attracting graduates; \$3.8 billion for new and upgraded facilities in regional NSW including Albury/Wodonga, Bathurst, Moree,

and Glen Innes; and \$18.6 million to fund 29 new and eight existing McGrath Foundation Breast Screen nurses.

There is also a focus on creating a gender equal society for a stronger economy including \$13.8 million to improve women's participation and empowerment in the workforce and \$30 million for Level the Playing Field Facilities Fund for new and upgraded facilities to empower women to participate in sport. Whilst these budget announcements are welcome, as we are all aware, the actual implementation of these is another issue. The NSW Department of Education is continuing their School Based Traineeship program which allows high school students to remain at school whilst completing their traineeship. Traineeships include Allied Health Assistance, Health Service Assistant, Community Services-Individual Support (Ageing) and Health Services-Dental Assisting.

I have been fortunate in my workplace to witness first-hand the importance of these programs and as a result two local students have been able to commence employment with our local hospital whilst a new student has just commenced their two-year traineeship. This demonstrates the importance of being able to train locals to keep them local. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow State Councillors and my family for their support throughout the year. Thank you.

Myfi Kellahan

ICPA-NSW Health and Wellbeing Convenor

Rural Schools Report

Madam President, fellow State Councillors, Federal President and Councillor, members and guests. Moree Branch held their 51st Annual Conference in 2023 and thanks to Phoebe Watts and her team we enjoyed another successful conference. After our conference, a letter was forwarded in conjunction with Distance Education, Rural Schools, Early Childhood, and Allowances as these motions are all directed to the Deputy Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Prue Car. ICPA-NSW has continued to have monthly meetings with the RRREP unit (Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy Unit.) It is an opportunity for ICPA-NSW to bring up specific motions and have meetings with the appropriate people to help with these requests. All motions that are carried at conference are put into the Rural Schools Policy Report. If your branch has had any feedback from the Department regarding a particular motion and still do not feel completely satisfied that the issue has been addressed, if possible, change the motion and explanation the following year to reflect the response. The Rural CONNECT Child and Family Day was held at Louth on the 17th May 2023. Thanks to Sue Kingwill and her team. Jane Carroll a children's author attended the day; Jane delivered a workshop to the children of the Louth Public School. Emily Armstrong organised yoga and relaxation techniques for the school children and in the afternoon to parents and visitors. Hearing Australia conducted their hearing checks throughout the day for students, mobile children, and the adults. As the Flying Doctor was in attendance it was a fabulous day for Hearing Australia to attend as, if any follow up treatment was needed, the children were able to obtain a referral or antibiotics. Hearing Australia said it was an excellent day as they did assist some children with ear infections and early hearing problems. Hearing tests for the adults was also beneficial as many would not normally have the testing done.

State Councillors attended the annual deputation to Sydney in June. We once again met with many politicians and groups relating to our portfolios. It is generally very positive to meet face-to-face with the politicians that directly relate to our portfolios. Our motions are discussed at these meetings in the

hope that we may get some positive feedback in return. Unless some of these rural school's motions are made into policy, when there is a change of directors or principals even though some of our motions have been implemented it maybe that they are not continued and thus the need for motions to be continually brought to our conference will continue. Many motions are supporting the incoming principals which can only be beneficial to everyone concerned. A report from the Auditor-General – Regional, Rural and Remote Education, was handed down on the 10th August 2023. I have listed the link below which has the full report. <https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/regional-rural-and-remote-education> There was another report in November 2013. Rural and Remote Education-A Blueprint for Action. As a person who has educated their children in rural and remote, I find this quite disturbing as it has been 11 years since the last report and clearly there has been minimal progress. In the Portfolio Committee No 3-Education on 24th October 2023 this was discussed with Deputy Premier Prue Car, and she stated, “as the result of that damning report,” Murat Dizdar, Secretary for NSW Department of Education also stated, “I don't take a great delight in its reading. It's pretty sobering and says we've got a long way to go to get things right for rural and regional.”

On a brighter note the Secretary, NSW Department of Education said in the Portfolio Committee meeting that in the last seven months he has been leading the agency to look at what policies teachers really use as currently they have around 350 and they are hoping that some of these can be removed with zero impact. The polices remaining will be more accessible and as an example the excursion policy instead of being 18 pages will be reduced to a maximum of two pages. They realise that reducing policy and improving policy will not be the whole solution to the teacher workload, but it will be very welcomed. The workload of teachers particularly in our TPI and TP2 schools has been a concern of ICPA-NSW for some time. ICPA-NSW was invited with other stakeholders to have at roundtable with the Secretary NSW Department of Education and in the Portfolio Committee No. III, it was stated that some 25 per cent of our students are in rural and regional and remote contexts and that the stakeholders at the roundtable are very passionate about this topic. ICPA-NSW believe this would be very beneficial for both parties if we could continue to meet with the Secretary when we have our deputation to Sydney.

I would like to thank all our councillors who do such a fantastic job volunteering their time to hopefully achieve some great outcomes for our rural and remote children. Thank you to our branches and members for taking the time to come to conference.

Annabel Strachan

ICPA-NSW Rural Schools Convenor

Special Education Report

Distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Special Education Report for 2023-24 year. During 2023 NSW State Councillors had two deputations to Sydney which saw them hold meetings with various Ministers, Shadow Ministers and stake holders with many discussion points being relevant to the Special Education space. They included the access to allied Health services for rural and remote children and the importance of early intervention. Among those meetings were: Royal Far West HQ at Manly; Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning, Hon Prue Car MP; Bronnie Taylor MLC; Sarah Mitchell MLC, Shadow Minister for Education, Early Learning and Western NSW; Natasha Maclaren-Jones, Shadow

Minister for Families and Communities; Centre for Effective Reading, Principal Serena McLean; and the Department of Education, RRREP Unit.

In addition to the above-mentioned points ICPA-NSW continues to raise the need for a compulsory Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) specialised training module for university student teachers as part of their training. Such a module would greatly assist teachers to recognise the early signs of a child with special needs who may be experiencing problems in the classroom and therefore able to provide help for that child. Interestingly we see the continuation of the drastic upward trend in the need for access to allied health services including speech therapy, occupational therapy, and other specialised areas. The difficulty for our ICPA families centres around the actual access to these services. ICPA-NSW continue to voice the imperative need and urgency for the assistance that families require. Our families face great difficulties in accessing these services with long wait times and the out-of-pocket expenses which are not compensated. These timeframes for early intervention critical to the child's learning educational outcomes, are being blown out, resulting in unacceptable delays in assistance thus creating a flow on affect which further disadvantages rural and remote children. ICPA-NSW continues to advocate for the special education needs of our rural and remote children. I would also like to thank my fellow councillors who are an amazing bunch of people who volunteer their time for the better of all our children. Thank you for doing all that you do on a daily basis for ICPA-NSW, we sure do appreciate your dedication to "Access to Education" for regional, rural and remote children.

Gabie Le Lievre

ICPA-NSW Special Education Convenor

Tertiary Report

Distinguished guest's, fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I present the 2024 Tertiary Report. At the Moree Conference in 2023 just the one tertiary motion was presented to conference by the Louth Branch. The motion read as follows: - "That ICPA-NSW requests University Administration Centre (UAC) to look at the way credits and advance learnings could be transferred from one academic transcript with recognition of prior learning when students move from one university to another." This was a great motion from the Louth Branch. This motion is a common-sense motion, and one would think that it should be able to be achieved very easily. Unfortunately, with universities all being separate entities with different business models and practises, it is not straightforward. NSW State Council met with UAC to see what could be done to aid in allowing students to move their credits and transcripts with them if they needed to. We learnt that some of the universities have already started talking about this subject and are willing to look at what arrangements could be put in place to facilitate this. We also met with Steve Whan MP, Minister for Skills, TAFE and tertiary education who also sees this as a commonsense approach that should be encouraged for all the universities to adopt. This motion in 2024, is more important than ever. Students are finding the cost of living in major cities and the rental crisis is having a catastrophic impact on their ability to support themselves to live and study away at university. This is even more pronounced when the students are from geographically isolated locations having further to travel and limited accommodation options resulting in many students having to drop out or relocate for financial or other reasons. We will continue to advocate strongly for this motion in the coming year and hope to have a strong influence in this area. We were saddened last year when the Young Persons Travel Card was withdrawn from apprentices and trainees and didn't actually get launched for university students. This was a \$250 travel card to assist with travel costs to attend TAFE or off the job training. The NSW State Government

decided that the card was inappropriate as it was found to be able to be used to purchase items other than petrol in service stations and was also deemed to be too expensive to administrate. We will work with the government to find an alternative so that students will be able to access increased funding for travel and accommodation for attending off the job training.

A complete review of TAFE is underway and should be completed by the middle of 2024. It is being undertaken by a panel of experts and the areas of focus are to rebuild and strengthen TAFE NSW, recognising its vital role in serving our community; address the current and future skills needs of NSW; examine the challenges faced by disadvantaged individuals and explore recommendations to promote equity, particularly in regional and remote areas; and restore confidence in our high-quality vocational education and training system. ICPA-NSW has made a comprehensive submission to the review, and I would like to thank Libby McPhee for preparing our submission in my absence. It is great to see that equity is an important part of the review focusing on regional and remote students. We hope to see some real progress and solutions to breaking down the barriers for geographically isolated students from this review.

ICPA-NSW will continue to advocate for courses to be condensed where appropriate. We believe it is advantageous for students living in remote areas to be able to complete their courses quickly, reducing the living costs and relocation expenses. This financial support is generally provided by parents. ICPA-NSW will continue to seek greater partnership between universities and businesses to assist students find placements as part of their work/university load. ICPA-NSW will continue to work with universities to ensure that a higher level of support is provided to students by university/tertiary educators. We look forward to working on these motions and any new motions that are submitted to assist tertiary students with their studies.

Robin Beckwith
ICPA-NSW Tertiary Convenor

Travel Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Travel Portfolio Report for 2024. In June last year and we had meetings with, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Shadow Minister Regional Transport and Roads, Transport for NSW, Bus NSW, Minister for Agriculture, Regional and Western NSW. The Preschool Drive Subsidy Pilot was conducted in 2022 and 2023. The two-year Pilot is being reviewed with the support of the Department of Education. The Lord Howe Island flight booking trial has a few issues that sometimes causes late payments to parents due to either, insufficient supporting documentation at time of lodgement (team has-to follow up) or leave or illness in the team. There are a range of products on the market which aim to prevent children being left on board a bus by requiring the bus driver to walk to the rear of the bus and press a button or enter a PIN number at the end of each shift which forces them to check for passengers left on board. From 2023, rural and regional Category One & Two school buses procured via the NSW Government Motor Vehicle Pre-Qualification Scheme, are required to have this technology fitted. BusNSW understands that new Category Four school buses procured under TfNSW Bus Procurement Panel Four (which is likely to be implemented in early 2024) will be required to have a child check alarm system fitted. Below are the Travel Motions from last year's conference and the responses we received in August from TfNSW.

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, to continue the Regional Apprentice and University Student Travel Card trial program.” The Regional Apprentice and

University Student Travel Card is currently under review by the NSW Government. Further information will be available once the review has been completed.

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education, Transport for NSW, and BusNSW to implement a state funding program that would help ensure that no young children are left on school, preschool or childcare buses by installing sensor devices that sense sound and movement, to detect and alert drivers if young children have been left in the vehicle.” Is it expected that all regional and rural buses will be fitted with passenger-check alarms with general fleet replacement? Yes, all new buses procured through the next generation of Bus Procurement Panel (Panel Four) will have a passenger-check alarm system installed. Context: A new bus procurement panel of manufacturers called Bus Procurement Panel Four will be providing contracted bus operators across NSW with reliable, high-quality buses which meet specifications set out by Transport for NSW (TfNSW). Specifications include a requirement to meet Australian Design Rules and other relevant Standards for technology and safety. Are there any plans to introduce a retrofit program for existing fleet? If so, what arrangements are expected to be made with bus operators for financial assistance to retrofit? No, there is currently no plans to introduce a retrofit program for existing Fleet Three. Please provide any other relevant information. Minimum specifications for the passenger check alarm system have been established and included in the new Bus Panel Four requirements. Bus manufacturers must meet or exceed the minimum specifications. Two passenger-check alarm systems have been referenced in the Bus Panel Four requirements as examples of acceptable systems with appropriate capabilities, they are: Doran Sleeping Child Check Monitor and Ashley Group Child Alarm. These requirements have also been applied to purchases of new smaller buses commonly used for school bus services in rural and regional NSW (e.g. Toyota Coaster and Fuso Rosa) purchased from NSW Government Motor Vehicle Prequalification Scheme (GMVPS).

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and Transport for NSW to lower the number of students required to start a non-commercial bus run as a matter of urgency.” TfNSW considers all applications, on a case-by-case basis, for the introduction of a new rural and regional bus service even where the current number of school aged children is less than 15. When considering requests for the introduction of new services, TfNSW considers among other things: whether the proposed bus service will travel by the most practical route to school; the number of children that will use the bus each morning, afternoon, and week; expected future patronage numbers over the following five years; the nature of the roadways travelled; the safety of bus stops. Where it is not feasible to provide public transport, the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) is offered to parents of eligible School Student Transport Scheme students. This subsidy is intended to partly offset the cost of using a private vehicle to drive children directly or partially to school or the nearest bus pick up location.

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads to provide extra funding to Local Councils for school bus route roads to be maintained, repaired and upgraded.” The NSW Government will invest in road repairs that are urgently needed across our regions via implementation of a two-year Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund - a \$670 million fund to ensure that the roads people rely on every single day across Regional NSW are up to scratch. This work will better connect regional and rural communities, including school bus routes in those areas. More than \$2.2 billion funding has been provided to Councils via a number of programs, including Fixing Local Roads (\$691 million); Fixing Country Bridges (\$500 million); Fixing Country Roads (\$543 million) and Regional and Local Roads Repair Program (RLRRP) (\$500 million).

“That ICPA-NSW continue to work with Transport for NSW to evaluate bus runs on a case by-case basis rather than set numbers in remote areas.” TfNSW considers all applications, on a case-by-case

basis, for the introduction of a new rural and regional bus service even where the current number of school aged children is less than 15. When considering requests for the introduction of new services, TfNSW considers among other things; whether the proposed bus service will travel by the most practical route to school; the number of children that will use the bus each morning, afternoon, and week; expected future patronage numbers over the following five years; the nature of the roadways travelled; the safety of bus stops. Where it is not feasible to provide public transport, the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) is offered to parents of eligible School Student Transport Scheme students. This subsidy is intended to partly offset the cost of using a private vehicle to drive children directly or partially to school or the nearest bus pick up location. TfNSW has a contractual obligation to monitor the performance of all rural and regional bus services, including the number of passengers using the services. In cases where passenger numbers fall below eight, TfNSW will place the service under review for a two-year period ahead of any final determination about the service. However, the review of a service does not mean that the service will be withdrawn if numbers do not increase. During the review period, TfNSW works closely with the service provider and the school community to ensure that every opportunity to maintain the service is investigated.

“That ICPA-NSW request Transport for NSW to increase the number of trips for South Australian Term Boarders to accurately reflect the compulsory number of trips they are required to travel home.” “That ICPA-NSW ask Transport for NSW to review the current School Drive Subsidy classification for boarders to include more options to meet current needs.” “That ICPA-NSW lobbies Transport for NSW to increase their allowable trips for Term boarders.” The School Student Transport Scheme and the School Drive Subsidy are designed to deliver transport as it applies to the standard published NSW school calendar. If changes are to be made to the offerings under these schemes, this would require a policy review involving consultation and consideration of impacts arising from any proposed changes. At this time, a review of the SSTS and SDS policy is not being considered.

“That ICPA-NSW urges Transport NSW improve their School Drive Subsidy Program by providing a direct telephone help line between liaison officers, schools, and families”. The Customer Operations team covers a broad range of concessional products, schemes and services and needs to ensure that any dependency on individuals is removed. We have nominated two staff as specialists for School Drive Subsidy to improve the response to rural and regional customers. We have also implemented changes to the feedback forms to ensure School Drive Subsidy queries are sent directly to these staff.

“That ICPA-NSW request Transport for NSW to add a “Rural & Remote” option to their School Drive Subsidy feedback form”. This has been implemented, TfNSW notes that the ICPA indicated this has been well received by their members.

“That ICPA- NSW urges Transport NSW to improve their School Drive Subsidy program parent portal for rural and remote families.” Work is continuing the Transport Concessions platform with the ongoing migration of a range of concession products, schemes, and services. In the interim the team continues to review feedback provided to look at opportunities to improve the existing portal.

“That ICPA NSW request Transport for NSW to extend the Preschool Drive Subsidy following the Pilot Program and provide greater transparency for families to navigate the eligibility and the application process.” Transport for NSW continues to work with the Department of Education on the evaluation of the Preschool Drive Subsidy. Any decision on the future of the Preschool Drive Subsidy will be based on the findings of the evaluation and subject to Ministerial approval.

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Transport to allow preschool children to travel on rural and remote bus runs in the year prior to commencing school enabling them to be included in the

Preschool Drive Subsidy and the School Students Transport Scheme for that year.” The Preschool Drive Subsidy evaluation is ongoing. It is premature to comment on how the Preschool Drive Subsidy could be used to support additional travel to or from preschools. In relation to the School Student Transport Scheme, under the current policy settings preschool children are not eligible for free travel under this scheme. At this time, the SSTS policy is not being reviewed. There are further safety issues that also require consideration as in some cases these children might be as young as three years and six months. Subsidies and free travel available to students. The School Drive Subsidy (SDS) is administered by TfNSW and is available to NSW residents. The subsidy is for driving school students to school or to the nearest transport pick up point and is only intended to partly offset the cost of using a private vehicle. Students from Kindergarten-Year Six are eligible if: they are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education; aged four years six months, or older; from their home address; the distance to school exceeds 1.6 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.3 km walking distance, and the distance to the nearest transport pick up point (where available) exceeds 1.6 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.3 km walking distance. Secondary school students from Years 7-12 are eligible if; they are a resident of NSW or an overseas student who is eligible for free government education; from their home address the distance to school exceeds two km (straight line distance) or 2.9 km walking distance, and the distance to the nearest transport pick up point (where available) exceeds 2 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.9 km walking distance. Boarding school students and weekday boarders attending day school: Students who board away from home to attend school may be eligible for the SDS. If no public transport is available, boarding school students are eligible for subsidised travel between the family home and school at weekends and school holidays. Students that are weekly boarders are entitled up to 22 trips per semester. Students that are term boarders are entitled up to nine trips per year. Students who board in town and attend a day school during term may also be eligible for subsidised travel between the family home and the place of boarding at weekends and school holidays. There is no subsidy cap on the distance travelled. At present, university students they may be eligible for Fares Allowance which covers the cost of the least expensive and most available form of public transport in Australia between your permanent home and your place of tertiary study. Where it is not practical to use public transport, you can travel by private transport if you need to move belongings that exceed strict luggage limits or are difficult to move around. To get Fares Allowance you must be a tertiary student living away from home to study and you must also receive one of these payments: Youth Allowance as a full-time student; Austudy as a full time or part time student or Pensioner Education Supplement as a full time or part time student and you must also be one of these; dependent and get a higher rate of Youth Allowance when living away from home, independent and living away from your partner to study, a parent living away from your dependent children to study, were dependent and living away from home in the last study year and you are now independent due to; turning 22 or supporting yourself through work, or are studying a distance or online course and need to do compulsory travel to your institution. Distance Education students attending mini schools.

The NSW Department of Education (DoE) operates a number of face- to-face mini-schools to compliment the distance education program. Distance Education students who are full-time and geographically isolated are eligible for the SDS. To be considered for the SDS, students are required to be enrolled in accordance with section 2.2 of the Distance Education Enrolment Procedures set out by the NSW DoE. There is no limit to the number of trips that can be claimed to attend mini schools during term time (subject to school attendance records being checked). The School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) provides eligible school students with free or subsidised travel from home to school. The scheme includes free travel to and from home and school on approved train, bus, ferry, and light rail services during school term; discounted travel on buses between home and school with a School

Term Bus Pass; free travel on NSW Train Link Regional services and long-distance coach services for boarding school students. Students from Kindergarten-Year Two are eligible if they are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education; aged 4 four years six months, or older. No minimum walking distance criteria applies to these students. Primary school students from Years 3-6 are eligible if they are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education; the straight-line distance from their home address to school is more than 1.6 km; the walking distance from home to school is 2.3 km or further. Primary school students who live too close to the school to be eligible for free travel may qualify for a School Term Bus Pass which provides bus travel at a discounted price for the whole school term. Secondary school students from Years 7-12 are eligible if they are a resident of NSW or an overseas student who is eligible for free government education; the straight-line distance from their home address to school is more than 2 km, or the walking distance from home to school is 2.9 km or further. Secondary school students who live too close to the school to be eligible for free travel may qualify for a School Term Bus Pass which provides bus travel at a discounted price for the whole school term. TAFE students are eligible if they are a resident of NSW or an overseas student eligible for free government education; they are under 18 years of age at 1st January of the year of application; they are enrolled in a full-time TAFE course for a minimum of 16 hours per week; they are not employed; the walking distance from home to TAFE is 3.2 km or further; they attend the closest TAFE where enrolment is available. Tertiary students studying at TAFE may be eligible for concession travel on public transport.

Eligible boarding school students can apply for a free school travel pass for either daily travel to and from school if they reside away from home but do not reside at the school, or weekend/vacation travel on NSW Train Link train and coach services. Students are not able to apply for both.

The Department of Education Assisted School Travel Program: This program provides specialised transport assistance for eligible students with disability to travel to and from school. The Program provides travel support services primarily between a student's permanent place of residence and school. The program is targeted towards supporting eligible students who are unable to travel independently and need transport assistance to attend school. Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS): This is a NSW Government initiative providing financial assistance towards travel and accommodation cost when a patient needs to travel long distances to specialised allied health clinics. Speech Pathology is an example.

David Butler

ICPA-NSW Travel Convenor

Guest Speakers

Ruby Reithmuller, Woman Kind App.

Good morning and happy International Woman's Day this week. I'm very excited to be with you all this morning and I would like to first pay my respects to the traditional custodians this beautiful Wiradjuri country and as someone who grew up on a farm near Wagga which is also on Wiradjuri country, it is very nice to be back in the country this morning. So as the very proud founder and director of Woman Kind people often ask me why I chose to start this organisation, and this is why. I want you to all visualise the kind of images you would expect to see if you Googled, "teenager with a mental illness." In my mind I see distress, darkness, and isolation. I see a young person pushed to

their limits. Their head in their hands and a shell of the kid that they once were. When you searched, “a teenager with a mental illness” in Google these are the kind of images that you see. Of course, that is what a teenager with a mental illness can look like and I emphasize the word “can” because for a long time these images have painted an assumption of what we can expect a teenager with a mental illness to look like and we have assumed that until someone looks like this there is no need to worry. The recent studies would suggest that a more accurate representation of what a teenager with a mental illness would look like is more like this. (slide presentation) My friend actually taught me that a teenager with a mental illness can look a lot like this. I was very fortunate to go to a boarding school on a scholarship and at school my group of friends were high achievers, the life of the party and wildly ambitious. We all wore badges. We were all on track to receive ATAR’s over 90 and were frequent on the social scene. The assumption that people had of us was that we were seemingly thriving and living the teenage dream and while there absolutely was truth in that assumption it wasn’t entirely the most honest perception of our group and almost every single one of us struggled with something really heavy. Insecurities, worries, habits, and experiences that you learn about in health class or on the news but rarely things happened all that often at least not to your friends. So, when I think of the things that we navigated during school largely on our own and often in silence I still feel a sense of emptiness but now I also feel hope. Empty because no teenager should have to navigate the things that we did and hope because I believe in our ability to change the narrative and very ironically our generation has become isolated from each other by the very feelings and emotions that we all have in common. In that sense Woman Kind was actually created as a space for young people to lean into their vulnerability and to take off their armour and let their hearts exhale. It is a place where they can show up as themselves and be met with kindness instead of judgement and it is a community full of thousands of girls who are better to have each other. The lived experiences of my peers formed a large part of why I wanted to start this organisation as did the statistics we know around mental health. In Australia over 60% of young people are struggling with psychological distress which is just a fancy way of saying mental illness. To put that into perspective that is 18 students in a class of 30. More than half of every sports team and choir and 60% of our future leaders. Honestly, that is why young people and it’s every day, and knowing these statistics and seeing this play out in my own circle, I get this overwhelming sense that they are the ones most worthy of protecting. So, Woman Kind was created as a space for those who follow in our footsteps. It is a simple concept providing every teenage girl and gender diverse young person with access to effective, engaging, and relatable advice and support which is delivered by our mentors who are young people and trained in mental health first aid and advised by our network of allied health professionals. When I started Woman Kind three years ago, I realised very quickly that what young people really needed and wanted was support on demand and what was most important to me as someone who grew up in the country was actually making sure that young people who live in regional, rural and remote communities had the same opportunities to access the support as their metropolitan peers. So, we launched an app and a pod cast, and we have now supported over 50,000 young people across ten countries. What I take great pride in is that Woman Kind is community led. We design services with young people based on what they tell us they need and want and the voices of the young people in our organisation are so influential in the strategies that we take and the business development. Just some examples. During the design and development of our app we spoke to over 400 young people to really fine out what they needed and wanted. We also have youth advisory council which is made up of 68 girls and any decision that I have to make goes through them as well and 70% of those girls live outside of the city. When I meet with Ministers or Politian’s

or influential people I always take a young person with me and that is not just to show-off the young person, I take them so that they know that their voice is important and valued and I take them because they have experience and knowledge that I don't have, and I take them in the hope that other people might consider doing the same thing because when we are talking about young it is important that they are part of the conversation. When I say that we are a youth led movement I really do mean it. So, what can young people do on our Woman Kind app? They can do many things, and the most popular thing is that they can be curious. They can ask questions in real time either as themselves or anonymously which will be responded by either their peers or our mentors who are qualified in mental health first aid training. I have read so many of the questions there recently, but some of them stood out and I thought I'd share them with you. One was, "I always feel I am not good enough even though I have people who love me and always tell me how great I am. What should I do?" The next question is, "What do you do when you are trying to fit in, but it isn't working? No one wants to be my friend, and I feel so alone." The other question is, "How do I make my mum realise that I am trying my best?" So, they can also read about topics that are relevant to them and we have curated hundreds of blogs on everything on hot tips when you are moving out of home or the science of a broken heart or how to write a killer resume. All the content is focused around three themes, and they are Belonging, Leadership and Wellbeing. They can connect with other young people. They get sent a daily quote. They can easily and instantly find information on additional health services that might help them as well and that's just a few things that they can do from the comfort and convenience of their phone. It truly is a lifeline for dozens of young people already and I feel like we haven't even scratched the surface. Unlike many mental health organisations young people actually want to engage with us. They want to have these conversations with us. They want to have the app on their phone. They are so keen to hear what we have to say, and I think that that is one of the most powerful things. Almost every other day I get a message from a young person who has said that they have told their doctor about Woman Kind or that they had asked their principal if he could give everyone in the school access to the app and I think to have young people championing this cause really goes to show that young people do want this and they do need it and I believe that they don't necessarily champion our mission because of what we say or what we do but more so because we have made them feel seen, made them feel safe and made them feel accepted and celebrated and that's what they want more than anything else. I'm very grateful for the many ways that Woman Kind has been recognised over the years and the incredible opportunities that I have had as a result like speaking to you all here today. That doesn't compare to the pride that I feel of the shadow we are casting on young people. I consider the honour of being a role model to thousands of young people is a huge responsibility and a privilege and if they can look to me and my team and see themselves in us in some way, owning our insecurities, owning our vulnerabilities, talking about our feelings but still reaching for our goals and getting success in whatever that looks like in us then I think we are doing the right thing. So today I ask you to do three things. Firstly, tell every person you know about Woman Kind because you just don't know who needs to hear it. Secondly is to encourage any young person in your life to connect with us or download our app. The app is completely free to download. A lot of people opt for the paid version which is \$10 per month or 30c per day which is a very small investment with a big impact. The third thing is a little different. Woman Kind recently conducted a survey of 500 young people, and we found that 82% of those young people feared for the mental health of at least one friend and 81% of them said that at least once a week they feel like they are not good enough. Also asked them what they needed now more than anything else of which they could choose more than one thing. 64% of them said love. 71% of

them said courage. 65% said company. 62% said a hug. The youth mental health crisis we face in Australia is a lot bigger than just those things, but I think they are a pretty good place to start. Let us all be conscience of the influence we have on young people. Let us lead by example. Listen with empathy. Speak with integrity. Lean I not vulnerability and talk about our feelings. Have unfiltered conversations. Practice self-care. Believe in these things with fierce conviction. Remind them that they are enough just as they are and if they live under your roof, obviously hold them close and tell them how much you love them even if they cringe. Tell them you are proud of them even if it's the way they spoke to their brother in kindness. So, thank you all for your time this morning and thank you to ICPA for having me. Please stay in touch via our Woman Kind social media or me personally on LinkedIn and if you see any opportunity work together to optimise the mental health of young people in Australia, I would love to hear from you. Thank you so much.

Aunty Margaret Walker, Dubbo Lands Council.

Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Dougal. Welcome everyone to today and my name is Aunty Margaret Walker and I'm a Wiradjuri elder from this community and it is a pleasure to be here to offer you welcome to country today. The country we are meeting on today is Wilay Wiradjuri country. Wilay is the possum and is the totem for this area and we are part of the Wiradjuri nation. I would like to start by acknowledging and pay my respect to elders past, present and future because they hold our culture, our history and our memories. I also acknowledge the decedents of the Aclang group within Dubbo. A warm Wiradjuri welcome to all of you here today and I'll give you our traditional welcome then in English. Welcome ladies and gentlemen to Wiradjuri country and the Wiradjuri people are glad that you have come. On behalf of all aboriginal people our culture, our history and our land, welcome to Wilay Wiradjuri country. Thank you.

The Hon Fiona Nash, Regional Education Commissioner.

Thank you and I would also like to acknowledge the local member for Dubbo and Leader for the Nationals, Dougal Saunders, and thank you Dougal for having me here in your patch. Also, Sarah Mitchell opposition Education Minister and just arrived the Deputy Premier. Good morning, Deputy Premier, Prue Car and to everyone here this morning it is a real pleasure. Ibe thought I would just say a little bit about the role of the Regional Education Commissioner. I was appointed to the role at the end of 2021 and it was the first time that we had actually this position and there had been quite a push from one of the rural, regional and remote tertiary education review report that was done to look to having a Regional Education Commissioner to have a national perspective right across the board and have an advocate for regional education for people in our rural and regional and remote communities. I was very fortunate to be appointed to the role and this is the start of year three now and I must admit it has gone very, very quickly. Effectively my role is to work with communities, to work with industry, to work with the education sector, people out on the ground, States and Territories as well to look at what the challenges are for regional education, and you all know this better than most, but noire importantly to give advice to the federal government on what I see are those things that are going to improve outcomes for people in rural and regional and remote communities when it comes to education. One of the things that I have is the ability to span the whole pipeline of education because

my role takes in from early childhood education and care through schools, vocational education and training, universities, and I also then have an eye to regional workforce and I don't think you can look at that whole education pipeline without looking at the impacts on our regional workforce and out regional communities and what we see needed in those areas. The federal government over the last year or so in reflecting that has had three reviews into each of those areas. Early childhood through the Productivity Commission. There was an independent panel set up to do a review into schools and the university's accord process and that was looking at higher education, tertiary education and actually looking at both higher education and VET. I was very privileged to be appointed to that panel for that twelve months work and I'll make a few comments about that shortly. We know that there are many challenges out there across our rural and remote communities so I'm not going to spend a lot of time on those but just to say the important role that ICPA plays in making sure that those challenges are fairly and squarely in front of decision makers and the solutions to those challenges as well. Not only in this role as Commissioner but prior to this having spent twelve years in federal parliament, the power of the ICPA organisation is significant and is taken very, very seriously by decision makers. Not everything you might want may happen straight away and some things might take some years and a number of work but never underestimate the power of the ICPA because it is so significant. When we look at the challenges around things like distance, as you all know better that anybody, around the financial implications and costs, around a number of those things right across early childhood schools and higher education and Sally Quigly said it brilliantly this morning and I was just going to stand up and repeat what Sally said this morning because that's pretty much what I'm going to do. But equity. It's about equity. It's about looking at our people who live in our rural and remote communities that have all these circumstances, these challenges, that simply don't sit with people who live in the cities and that's the inequity. That's why we need people in government, people in opposition, people on the crossbench and decision makers from everywhere to understand that it is an equity issue. Why should things not be equitable for families and children out in rural and remote areas? They should be. When the solutions are there, that governments can grab and actually look to and try to make things more equitable. Like increasing the AIC. Like having a home tutor allowance. Like looking at having that ability to recognise the incredible support that those families are giving to those three- and four-year-old children in delivering the preschool that they would get in a metropolitan area very easily but the difference and the difficulty that sits there has to be taken into account and I often say when I'm talking to people in Parliament House, when I'm talking to people in departments, when you are looking at creating policy or you are looking at policies in place, one size does not fit all. You cannot look at a metropolitan policy and sit it over a rural and remote area and expect it to work because it simply won't. I think that when we look at things like early childhood education and care, and I've been really fortunate to have the opportunity to have a really strong input into all of those three reviews across the sectors, I think there was a real recognition and understanding of the different set of circumstances that we saw out in rural and remote communities when it comes to early childhood and decision makers have to think differently. Often it comes down to things where we might have a business or an organisation delivering child care and that is terrific in the city where you have got economy of scale to make a return but if you're trying to do that out in a more rural or remote area where the economies of scale aren't there to make that financial return then government has to think differently and has to think about the social good component that we see is necessary for people for people in rural and remote areas where we are just not going to see the market deliver and it is really important that it occurs across all of those areas. I've mentioned also that I have been very privileged

to be on the Universities Australia Accord Panel for the last twelve months and we had a panel of six of us who did a significant amount of work and we were given the brief to look at what reforms are needed across the tertiary education sector to look at ten, twenty, thirty and forty and fifty years as to how it is going to be appropriate for what the nation needs. It was a very significant piece of work that we did through the year and we literally just Sunday last week that the Minister released the report. There were a number of key things. Forty-seven recommendations and nearly 400-page report, but the key thing that we focused on all the way through was equity and how we can have greater equity across the tertiary education system. We really had a significant focus on what we were calling the underrepresented groups. Those equity cohorts of students who were first nations, who were first in families, who might have a disability, lower socioeconomic circumstances, and regional. When I say regional, I am meaning rural, regional, and remote. So, the whole year had the focus of how we lift that aspect and aspiration and participation and attainment of the students from those cohorts because compared to their city counterparts it is such a big discrepancy between the outcomes that we are seeing. We are going to have to lift the number of students right across all of those equity cohorts if we are going to meet the targets, we are going to need to meet in lifting the number of people across the country that have a tertiary education qualification that we are going to absolutely need into the future. One of the statistics that always sits with me for our rural and regional and remote people who are twenty-five to thirty-four they are less than half as likely to have a Bachelor's degree qualification than their metropolitan counterparts. There are so many reasons for that and it's the barriers we see in front of our families, our students that results in that inequity. So, I'm hoping very much that the accord process in this report that the government will pick up all the recommendations. I think it will be, as I'm expecting it, a very much staged approach from government which is completely understandable as some things are urgent and some things are going to be things that take more time but I've been very impressed with the Minister Jason Clare and his absolute focus on making sure those equity groups are recognised and we do more to increase their ability to participate in the tertiary education environment and he certainly has an extraordinary strong focus on regional as well and I have found that very encouraging. One of the things that came about from the Accord process was our interim report which had five immediate recommendations and one of which was expanding the Regional University Study Hubs, and this has been absolutely terrific. So, the first round of those extra places, I think there is an extra thirty-four in the rural, regional and remote areas and the government is actually doing a suburban study to open hubs now as well, and it is good to see regional Australia leading the way for something that the cities need to do. But that first round is happening at the moment, and I gather will be announced reasonably soon. The reason I mention that is the thinking around policy change to make sure that we have got as much access as possible in our regional communities and those Regional University Study Hubs are extraordinarily successful. Having the hubs in our regional communities for any student studying at any university online has the ability to have human being support as a cohort of students that may well be studying with many other universities themselves but that support that they get and one of the trail blazers for all of this is a ICPA President, Duncan Taylor and he has been relentless in his pursuit of making sure that it has been a very successful programme. The equities issue is really important and don't ever let it go because I often say that the people in government, the decision makers, I have never heard a decision maker tell me that they want people to move out of rural and remote areas. That they don't want them to be there. So, clearly, they want them to stay there. We couple that with the fact that rural and remote Australia is the engine room of the nation. What it contributes to the economy is absolutely massive never mind

that social fabric we see by having this extraordinarily diverse nation and the population and where it is. So, if decision makers are going to accept that people are going to have to live there then they have to accept that there is a social good component and that governments are going to have to provide support to people in those communities and to the communities themselves if we are going to have equity because the market is not going to deliver it and it is very important that, in doing what you are doing, recognising the power that you have got and I have to really comment ICPA because they are one of the organisations that best provide for decision makers the evidence and the data around the things that you are putting forward that you think need to be done. That makes a massive, massive difference for people who are in those positions and making those decisions. I did just also want to mention on a side note that the Minister for Communications, Minister Rowland, recently appointed me to the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee which many of you would know is convened every three years just to look effectively at the state of regional and rural communications. That process is just about to kick off so I would really encourage you to be mindful of that process and make submissions where you can and where there are issues, please raise them because we very want to get that input from the ground on what the circumstances are around regional telecommunications. So, thank you very much again for asking me to be here with you this morning. It is a real pleasure, and I must say that coming to ICPA events is always one of the things that I most look forward to and all the things that I get to do in my role as Regional Education Commissioner doubly nice for me because I just live down the road at Narromine so very handy. All the best to you for the next couple of days of deliberations and congratulations again for all that you do.

The Hon Prue Car, Deputy Premier of NSW, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney.

Thank you so much everyone. Thank you, Tanya, and thanks to ICPA for having me here for my first annual conference as minister. It's a real honour to be here amongst so many people who are deeply committed to the education of our children everywhere in New South Wales. I want to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that we are gathering on and discussing and debating on today and tomorrow. I do want to also acknowledge my parliamentary colleagues, Sarah Mitchell, Shadow Minister and Dougal Saunders, the local member here in Dubbo and the Regional Education Commissioner, Fiona Nash, and really thank her for her very strong comments about equity for all our children across Australia is her purview of course but New South Wales is mine and I think it is really encouraging to see those really strong words about equity. I know we are all focused on that but that keeping it as our north star I think is most important when it comes to our everyday work on behalf of all our kids. I want to start, obviously, by saying that it is, as Fiona said, the ICPA is a force to be reckoned with as we all know. I've been meeting with you for some time when I was the shadow minister and now minister and I know the meetings come with a long line of very well researched items that are grounded in pretty much always those issues of equity and access and I just pay tribute to the enormous amount of work that goes into raising those issues with all of us and bringing that evidence based to the decision makers. Thank you for your passion in putting that all together to making sure that all our students, and we could be doing better in this, get the best education possible. Parents and carers have been such a source of advice for me personally in the first twelve months of coming into government and I really want you to know today that this year will be dedicated even

more to delivering for the benefit of your children and all our children across New South Wales. This must start with ensuring that all our students have the ability to access the amazing education that our state can and should offer. The right of each child to access that and that's what I see my role as minister as and, of course, that's what I see the department and our government's role as well. That's why we are very proud to say that we have put equity at the forefront, well and truly, of our new plan for public education in New south Wales, the road map for the next four years. Of course, our regional, rural and remote communities are an essential equity group in this, and you know because you are telling me all the time, but it is important to acknowledge on days like this that this is not a small set of communities. It is a large set of learning communities. 40% of our schools are regional, rural or remote. That is 25% of all our students. As a department we must do better, and we must keep focused on making sure we are meeting the needs of our students in all these settings wherever they are in New south Wales. We know and it's not good enough, but we know there is a gap. There is a gap in outcomes between our regional, rural and remote students and those who live in metropolitan students and we are committed to improving this. We know that all our schools are doing the very best they can. Incredible things. They are doing a wonderful job educating our kids but what we need to do is to make sure we improve the system to give them what they need in return. We need to see the long-term systemic change to close these gaps. We've heard from Fiona, and I'm sure this will be a constant theme, that rural, regional and remote New South Wales is a special place to live, and it has so much to offer, and governments have a responsibility to invest it through the thing that starts everything and that is the education of our children. We need to make education such a key driver of this investment and the quality of that education is a key driver for families to move to the regions and to the country. I know that all the communities that you come from are incredibly diverse and one is so different to the next one. I know that every community face unique challenges that are so different to the next remote community and then even more different to the challenges that some of the issues we have in metropolitan Sydney and what those communities face there. That is why the work of the ICPA is so important. Limited access to transport services. Health services. Training providers. These are just some of the issues I know our smaller communities face every day and where would we be without the advocacy of the ICPA. We must work together, and I am committed to doing this across government and with communities to improve supports at local levels because communities are always the heart of our schools and our education systems particularly in smaller communities. We are really steadfast in our commitment to enhance student outcomes. I know that's what we are all about. Improved student wellbeing and make sure that the beautiful school communities that you create no matter where they are, have access to the opportunities to thrive. We are putting a renewed focus on addressing the challenges facing rural and remote education in particular. As I've mentioned before our plan for New South Wales public education does put an equity lens over everything and all our efforts that we are attempting to uplift in all of our public schools commits us to eliminating barriers, advancing reconciliation, equipping schools with the resources they need and developing targeted and differentiated support through an inclusive curriculum. You would have heard of the audit into regional, rural and remote education that came out last year and as a result of some of those disappointing findings we made a commitment to address the issues the Auditor General had raised. We are getting on with that work I am pleased to say which is why, a couple of weeks ago, I was pleased to release the Rural and Remote Education Implementation Plan that outlines how we will be delivering on the rural and remote education strategy this year. This is one of the commitments the department made in response this audit report. We need to, we want to, our kids are demanding, that

we drive real and meaningful change in all schools in our communities across the state. That's why the department invited the ICPA to the table to help set the priorities for the year ahead. We wanted to understand where we should be focusing our efforts. What will have the most impact because we need to chip away at those things one by one. Thank you for your input. It was so valuable in guiding our direction. Through this consultation we were able to reach agreement on the key initiatives outlined and in the plan. I know that some of you would have read through that plan, and you will know that all three initiatives have a very clear link back to addressing teacher shortages and the reason for that is simple. We know it seems like a one plus one equals two calculation, but I need to keep saying this. We know that for our children to excel they need quality teachers. We need to attract teachers to all of our communities, and we need to look after our teachers so that they stay particularly in smaller communities and remote ones. I know the teacher shortage which is being felt everywhere is particularly being felt in some of your areas than most. That's what has been our priority to address this. Of course, we delivered the most significant pay rise for teachers in a generation to keep teachers in the job and attract new teachers into the profession. This is supporting the 48,000 teachers working in regional New South Wales. We are providing more job security for more than 16,000 teachers and support staff. I know from personal experience that this is greatly benefiting our colleagues in rural areas and in fact more than half of the 9,000 teachers across the state who we have made permanent are in regional, rural and remote New South Wales. We also offer one of the most generous financial and non-financial incentive schemes in the country to teachers who take up positions in a rural area. Relocation support payments, you know all this, recruitment and retention bonuses, stamp duty relief, and rental subsidies. The Implementation Plan is addressing the attraction and retention of our teachers by targeting some of these issues particularly found that teacher housing that many of you have raised with me over and over again, the state of teacher housing. How difficult it is to get teacher housing maintained. Strengthening professional connections for our staff so there are professional development opportunities in person in rural, regional and remote New South Wales and, of course, providing one-on-one particular, targeted staff support for our rural schools. These are the priorities we identified to be the focus this year to shift the dial for our communities and our students most importantly. By attracting teachers to our schools and keeping them there we can improve continuity of learning which is so important for our students. We can help schools plan for the future, remove additional workload of our teachers and our wonderful principals but we need to see results on the ground. I know that Ben Ballard from who leads the Regional Rural and Remote Education policy unit in the department, I think is speaking today about some of the specifics of that plan. So, I won't go into too much detail because he's the man with all the detail and he'll talk you through that. But I just want to reiterate my personal commitment to reducing the gap for all our students. We need to see that all our students, no matter where they live in the state, have the opportunity to reach their potential, and I commit to working with the ICPA every day to ensuring that we can chip away at those issues that prevent maybe some of our students from accessing the world class education that they have a right to access. And I really look forward to working with you all for many years to come. Thank you.

Michael Marom. Telstra, General Manager, Regional Northern NSW, Telstra Retail & Regional Australia.

It is always a great opportunity for us to be here with ICPA and you guys are very valuable members, and we have a really strong bond with regional and remote Australia and you guys are very much part

of that, so we appreciate that. Firstly, on behalf of Telstra, I acknowledge and pay my respects to the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and recognise the connection Australian first nations people have to land, water and culture. We pay our respects to elders past and present. Today I would like to outline Telstra's investment on behalf of Australians living in regional and remote areas and how we are engaging with you to ensure that these investments meet your needs. Connectivity is at the heart of all these things. Our CEO, Vicky Brady, described connectivity as the bedrock of digital communications but she also said that connectivity is not the end game but is just the beginning. Connectivity's true impact is the things that enable. In regional Australia this means supporting businesses and families, helping strengthen communities by removing barriers, to digital inclusion and, above all, for you and your members, providing access to educational opportunities for children and young adults living and learning in the bush. Making this kind of impact requires an entirely new solution. It requires multiple technologies to come together on top of our networks. So, we are innovating to give rural and remote customers connectivity options through a mix of mobile, fixed wireless, satellite and complementary technologies. We also acknowledge delivering these best solutions might mean partnering with others. I would like to share some of the ways we are investing to help enable some of these solutions and improving the services we are providing in rural and remote areas. This includes ways to make connectivity more reliable and resilient. So, the first thing I wanted to talk about is something that you are all probably starting to get familiar with and that is satellite. We currently use a mix of technologies to provide voice and broadband services including NBN. Our mobile network is an aging copper and radio network. Telstra has also partnered with organisations including Starlink and there is a kit at the back if you want to have a look and see what that looks like, and one whereby new low earth orbit satellite technology called LEOSat. As the name implies, low earth orbit or LEO satellites are much closer to earth than geo-stationary satellites. Geo-stationary are typically around 36,000 kilometres while low earth orbit satellites are around twenty times less and are around 20,000 kilometres. All that means is faster data through-puts, reduced latency making them a more consistent option for voice and video calls which means it's like using a normal connection. These services will be available later this month so we will be able to offer StarLink from a consumer base product. We already have a business-based product and will have a consumer-based product at the end of this month. This will be a game changer for distance learning. The voice service we can offer over StarLink will also be universal service obligation clients so it will form part of our USO obligations are. We are also using a company called OneWeb with their LEO Sats to backhaul some 300 of our towers which are currently satellite fitted. Again, that will increase our backhaul by 15 times what it is now and reduce our latency tenfold. The technology will also be likely to improve communication reliability in disaster prone areas as well. The other thing is to look at innovation and partnerships to enable our rural, regional and remote customers to benefit from LEOSat technologies. The latest in a long line of pioneering initiatives we've been delivering for more than a century and to give you an example, we span 7.6 million square kilometres with around just under 26 million people. This reality has required decades of ingenuity from our engineers and partners. Coming up very shortly in the year are reforms to Telstra which is the designated universal service provider and must provide access to fixed phone services and pay phones on a reasonable request nationally, on an equitable basis. These obligations supported by a contract between Telstra and the Commonwealth Government which started in 2012 and expires in 2023. The technology available to meet these needs has evolved significantly since the USO was created and we feel that it is an appropriate time to look at how we restructure that to set it up for the future. Without reform the current approach will lead to regional communities being locked into outdated technologies like aging copper and I know we all have a love for copper, but it has had a good life, and we think that it is time that we found other solutions. As I've spoken before, a modern, reliable alternatives to copper technology already exists including fixed

wireless and LEOSat connectivity. However, regional and remote people, to get the best technology, there needs to be a move from mandating specific coverage technologies to a focus on getting right outcomes for customers whatever technology best suits their individual circumstances. Reliable telecommunications connectivity is essential particularly for people living in regional and remote Australia. Last year the Federal government announced it would undertake a process of consultation for a potential modernisation of the USO. Telstra is very supportive of reform to modernise Australia's Universal Service Obligation. The most important change to the USO would be the removal of copper and the removal of the copper continuity obligation so that Telstra can invest to bring new technologies to regional and rural customers. Telstra is engaging in the reform consultation including lodging a submission to the government, a discussion paper and engaging with the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review which is starting shortly in 2024. We will continue to advocate at this reform to the highest level of government across the country and will work with communities and customers to encourage and support them to participate in the process. Now I just want to talk about boosting connectivity and how it is really important for schools. In 2021, and I think most of the people in this room would understand this, we undertook a major network upgrade with the New South Wales government to increase bandwidth to some 2,200 public schools and we are very pleased to say that across those schools we now achieved that aim and many regional schools like Dubbo College Senior Campus now have multiple gigabytes capacity which is almost ten times their previous connection speed available to both the students and the staff. The other part of Telstra's ambition is to make sure that we have a more resilient and robust network particularly given the number of disasters that seem to be plaguing our country. Our support extends to any customers doing it tough so, whether it is helping around one million customers in vulnerable circumstances across last year or helping people impacted by natural disasters. If we just look at the last few months, we've had customers impacted by natural disasters, storms, floods, cyclones, fires across Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and we have something like 3,000 events where people have been on the ground across those states responding to different needs including the recent severe storms in Victoria. As part of our preparation for future disasters we have successfully tested functionality that could underpin a temporary disaster roaming solution which would allow people to connect to any available network in a disaster zone. So, we have got that in trial stage. It's looking fruitful and we think that there will be a commercial application for that in disaster zones probably next year but watch this space. Instead of just being able to make a 000 call you'll be able to use your mobile technology as you normally would. The other thing is to help people stay connected we made a commitment to achieve 100,000 square kilometres of mobile coverage in 2023. We have exceeded that, and we've now delivered 140,000 square kilometres of coverage since 2021. In addition to this Telstra is investing to upgrade 1,000 of our payphones in areas deemed to be disaster locations, to be more resilient in case of power failure as well as to provide free WiFi ultimately more data and I am pleased to say that by February this year we have now got 296 of those pay phones enabled and upgraded in those areas. Well, they are not pay phones anymore because they are free, and this is great news for a lot of those small communities. Interestingly, people often think that no one uses public phones anymore. Well, our usage of public phones last year doubled to 23 million calls so there are a lot of people using them particularly now that we have made them free. Go figure. The other thing I wanted to talk about is the 3G closures and a lot of you have asked a lot of questions and curious about 3G closures, so I just want to demystify that. It is part of what we are doing to make sure that you get a better network experience. So 3G closure will pave the way to expand and improve our delivery of the next generation 5G technology into many more rural and regional areas around Australia. Importantly, if you or anyone you know still has a 3G only device please remember they will not work after the 30th of June this year. So, I urge you to go and get an upgraded device before that time. Remember that 3G devices aren't

just mobile phones either so you need to think about things like old Telstra mobile smart antennas, internet of devices linked to devices like merchant and EFTPOS machines, telemetry devices and some medical devices. So, anybody who has any of those you need to check your provider and make sure that they are 4G as they will not work compliant or upgradable as they will not work past June 30th. Of course, we are absolutely committed to providing equivalent 4G coverage in current 3G only areas before the network closes. This is a commitment we made when we announced the planned closure in October 2019, and we stand by that commitment. I would also encourage you to read the pamphlet on your table about the 3G closure which has a QR code to get more information about whether your devices are compatible after June 30th and if you don't have one on your table, we have about 1,000 of them at our stand at the back so please come and see us. I would like to close with another reminder. As most of you would know Telstra's mobile network reaches 99.6% of the population. Our commitment to servicing regional and remote Australia has a long history and this commitment will continue through technology partnerships that bridge connectivity gaps and refine our network mix to strengthen regional resilience for future generations. Just as importantly, we will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with rural, regional and remote customers so your needs are properly considered and addressed by decisions we make especially those decisions made by those in government. Thank you.

Tom O'Dea. Head of NBN Local NSW.

Good morning. Thanks for having us long. It's always great to be hanging out with friends at ICPA, and I'm really happy to be here and to provide a bit of an update from NBN. So as people know, I'm Tom O'Dea. I'm the head of NBN, Local for regional, rural, and remote stakeholder and community engagement in NSW. I'm not from Yas but I live in Yas. I wasn't born in the hospital and I'm here today to just provide some updates about some of our technology changes and then also some of our co-investment opportunities as well and pleasingly our first ever ICPA roadshow. So, I'm just going to go through a few things. First of all, a little bit about NBN local and the Regional Development Engagement team. We were set up in 2019 to engage more deeply with regional Australia and as part of that process, we needed an on-the-ground team called NBN Local and we had a team of two in NSW when I joined looking after the whole state from a regional perspective and I now have a team of 16 people based around the state looking after regional communities and stakeholders. As part of joining our business unit, you are unable to join the team if you don't live in regional Australia, so we don't hire people with brand new Akubra's and RM Williams boots to fly in and say that they understand regional. Everyone is based in the regions that they're supporting and that's my regional development engagement team and we've got Erika here today and she looks after Western NSW and all the rest are based around the state, and they basically spend the vast majority of their time in cars driving around talking to communities about all things digital technology and lifting the digital capability of regional NSW. As part of our partnerships and stakeholder management, I look after all of the state-based bodies, so NSW farmers, ICPA, CWA, Business NSW, etcetera, etcetera and I've been working with Libby for a long time and then Claire, prior to that on getting information out so that people are fully armed about the changes that NBN makes in terms of upgrading our services. As part of this, we have come up with a fantastic roadshow that we're going to be doing in western NSW and also the Riverina Murray where we'll be going to 12 locations over two weeks kicking off next Monday and we'll be providing scams awareness training for keeping families safe online. So, this is informing parents about some of the things that we're seeing from a scams perspective. I don't know about you, but I'm sick of getting text messages about my toll being overdue and Nicole from the NBN calling up saying if I don't transfer X number of dollars in the next five minutes, so they're

going to disconnect my NBN. But it's real, so we need to give people the latest information about how to stay safe online and that's part of the roadshow so people can come along for free online safety for family sessions, and we'll also have opportunities to ask any questions about NBN and the NBN upgrades that we're doing across the country right now in all of our technologies, from satellite to fixed wireless and including our fixed line network. So, Walgett on Monday, Bree Monday afternoon, Burke, on Tuesday, Louth, Tuesday afternoon and then and then finishing off at Quambone and Nyngan. Then in the Riverina Murray, we've got Rankin Springs, Goolgowi, Hillston, Lake Cargelligo, West Wyalong and Condobolin. So, if you're from any of those regions and if you'd like to come along, we'd love to have a chat. If you have got any Members or other community groups that you think would benefit from coming and having a chat, we'd love to see as many people as possible. If there is anyone in the room that's sort of going, hey, that would be great to come out to our region come and have a yarn to us and we would love to have a chat to you about how we could set up a roadshow as well. The main thing with the roadshows is it's really important that we get as much attendees as possible because obviously there's a lot of logistics that go into these so it's really important that we work with branches with ICPA and then also CWA to make the most of these when we're out because we don't necessarily get out there again for a little while. So, anything that you can do to spread the word would be fantastic. As part of our partnership with ICPA, not just at the state level, but also a national level, we ran a series of seminars late last year on some assorted topics and they were really well received, and they were all online. The only thing I would say is that the attendance was fairly low. I think people are a bit zoomed out as we like to say. So too many webinars too many zoom calls and that's part of the reason we have developed the roadshows. We'll still do some more of these webinars, and I'll get the information out to Libby and via Top Wire hopefully but that's part of the reason we've moved physically is because we've really taken the feedback on board that that people prefer to catch up to face to face when they can. Now, on to co-investment. So, the NBN network of yesterday is not going to be the NBN network of tomorrow and we are upgrading every part of our network right now. As part of this we work with local councils and state and federal governments to change technology types in locations, and we do this via co-investment model, so we get money via grants to change technology types where we wouldn't be able to make a commercial return without that support via those grants programmes. As part of our work with the NSW government I am very pleased to announce that we have a Cobar corridor investment that will be going in with five brand new fixed wireless towers in these locations These areas are currently served from an NBN perspective by NBN satellite, and they will be moving to fixed wireless by the end of 2025. We've got to find the sites, we've got to build, the towers, etcetera, but they will all be coming online in the next sort of 18 to 20 months, and this is absolutely game changing for these locations. Because these areas are really, non-topographically challenged for example, they don't have cliffs, massive sand dunes, huge forests, and in most cases the connection will go a fairly long distance. So, in most of these locations the signal will go out from the tower 29 kilometres from the site that we choose, and once these towers are built, most of these customers will be able to receive up to 425 megabits per second download on the NBN fixed wireless tower as a part of our upgrades, so an absolute game changer for these locations. Whenever we talk about this sort of stuff, there's obviously the question of when am I getting one? We've also worked with the NSW State Government on Gig state, which was \$100 million fund set up by the NSW government and we have been the recipient of a \$50 million grant from the NSW Government for another 56 towers across the state, including places like Bree and Wilcannia all over the state. We will be popping up towers all between now and the end of 2026. An additional 56 towers and bringing in roughly an extra 13,000 customers off the satellite footprint into the NBN fixed wireless footprint. So once these towers are built, it will be an absolute game changer. The great thing about doing this work as well when we do it, it brings the edge of the network closer so it means the

next opportunity is where's the next tower because the network has come closer, and we can extend the network out. So, we're not stopping here. As a result of the upgrades that we've done to the fixed wireless network, we are able to bring in additional 120,000 customers off our fixed wireless network into our satellite footprint and that has already occurred. This has meant that we can amp up the capability of the Sky Muster network. We've got three different types of Sky Muster options that we wholesale to our retailers. It's really important to note that our customers are the telecommunications providers. We don't own customers so when you sign up to an NBN service, you're not signing up with NBN, you're signing up with your telco and that's what causes some confusion and potentially some challenges in terms of getting stuck in the middle. But in the first instance, if anyone's got any challenges or concerns with their NBN service, they need to go to their telecommunications provider to lodge a ticket so that we know that there's a challenge with that service. As a result of the changes that we've made with the fixed wireless network, we're now able to offer a new type of plan to our retailers, which is our Sky Muster Plus premium product and to say that it's changed the game is a serious understatement. I've been with NBN for four years and if you told me that we were going to be able to offer unmetered data using our satellite service and up to 100 megabits per second downloads I wouldn't have believed you and we are able to do this as a result of our continuing investments in our other network technologies. A lot of information on this slide and unless you got goggles on, you probably won't be able to read it but basically the key points are here. The typical busy speed for our high tier plans is now 48 megabits per second. So, when everyone's using the network, the top tier plan that you can purchase via your retailer is now 48 megabits per second. The middle tier is 31 megabits per second and the bottom tier 16 megabits per second, and that is, as I've said, the ranges of the maximum speeds range from 100 megabits per second in the top tier, down to 25.5 in the lower tier. And that's a diametric improvement on how the Sky Muster service has been set up and the capability that it can provide. Like I said, up until now, I wouldn't have said that this was going to be possible. If you had a Sky Muster service and you don't currently have it active, I would suggest that you could sign up to a plan to test it out. Most of the contracts with the retail service providers are one month only, so you are not locked into a contract, and you could test out the Plus Premium product and then disconnect it if you didn't think it was good. We have a lot of people that are coming back to Sky Muster as a result of these changes that we've made. If you if you gave it a go before and you haven't tried it out recently, it's definitely worth having a chat. The other really important thing to note for those that are connected is that not all the retailers sell this option. So you might be with a retailer that doesn't sell it and you ring them up and you say, hey, I'd like to get that, and they say sorry, it's not available as opposed to sorry we don't sell it and you need to go somewhere else. So, it's really, really important for anyone in the room that's currently connected to an NBN satellite service that you make sure that you are on the plus premium because otherwise you're missing out. If that means that you've got to shop around, then that's a good thing. So please, if you only take one action out of this conversation it is to double check your service to make sure that you are on the Plus Premium product because we believe that the capability is far superior. I've gone through most of that. The good thing about the Sky Muster Plus Premium plan is that allows you more choice so you don't need to necessarily go to the high tier if you're not needing that sort of usage, you can go to the lower tier, but they are all unmetered. The good thing is if you had a service previously as well, the satellite dish should still be on your roof, so it's actually just about placing an order. We don't need to send someone out to reconnect it. All we have to do is turn it on in the background via your retailer and you could literally get a service really, really quickly. There is no truck roll as we like to say required to reconnect that service if you already have the gear on your place. The next thing I was going to talk about is the school broadband and School Student Broadband Initiative, which is an initiative by the federal government to provide up to 30,000 families with school age children across Australia that currently don't have NBN

broadband. Again, an absolute game changer. The challenge that we all have in digital inclusion is this - it's great that it's available, but it's not always affordable to everyone and this an initiative that I'm really proud of. I think it goes a long way to addressing some of these challenges. It maybe doesn't go the full way, but it's a good start. I was down in the South Coast doing an event and we spoke to a family that had ten kids in a place called Korma just near Cobargo and they don't have an internet connection at home because it's not financially viable for them and during COVID they had ten kids at home with a range that we're not able to do any online study and they are now able to connect via this initiative. I've got goosebumps talking about it because it's literally that level of game changing. So, there's a lot of people out in the community that could take advantage of this. And the only thing stopping them doing so is that generally they don't know about it. So again, when you get back home, if there are people in your community that you think this would be useful for, please, please, please let them know because there's potentially families out there that are suffering in silence, and they don't need to be in terms of internet connectivity if they haven't previously had an NBN connection. There's the number to call if anyone wants to pull their phone out and take a photo, that's the number they call. It's the National Referral Agency and basically you call up the National Referral Agency and they refer you to the retail service providers that can provide you the service. You pass some eligibility criteria and then you can sign up and the process is painless and pretty quick. So, please if we can get the word out, that'd be great. They're open Monday to Friday from 10:00 AM till 6:00 PM. As I've said, it's to help families get connected with school student broadband initiative and children who can access online learning at home as part of their education. Well, that's me. Thanks very much.

Ben Ballard, Director, Rural, Regional and Remote Education Policy Unit, Department of Education.

Thank you everybody. I like the previous photo up there. It looks a lot better than the one you're probably seeing in front of you today, but you'll just have to make do. Thank you for the warm welcome. Before I begin today, I'd just like to acknowledge country. I acknowledge we're meeting on the lands of the of Warijidi and traditional custodians of the lands we meet on today and pay my respects to the elders, past and present. I'd also like to acknowledge the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education, the Honourable Prue Car who addressed us earlier today. The Member for Dubbo, Dougal Saunders; Fiona Nash, our Regional Education Commissioner; the Honourable Sarah Mitchell, Member for the Legislative Council, Shadow Minister for Education and the Honourable Mark Coulton, Federal Member for Parkes. Councillor Josh Black of the Dubbo Regional Council and members of the ICPA State Council and ICPA branch members. It's great to be here in Dubbo today and have the opportunity to speak at your conference again. Having been a resident of Dubbo or the surrounds a few times across my life, I always feel like I'm a bit at home when I come here and I started my education career in education at regional remote advocacy in education just down the road in Narromine and as a three and four year old at preschool when I would advocate for better security as I climbed the fence when I saw whatever I saw or family members or other people I knew who were going past who would play cricket with me on weekends or whenever it was. So, I always felt that, you know, education advocacy was strong in my blood and that I'm glad to be back here again today to continue that. I think our tenants today here are a testament to the important work that ICPA do to improve outcomes for some of our most isolated students and the strong focus the department has on ensuring the quality of access to education. As always, I would like to thank the state councillors and branch members for your ongoing support and Tanya Mitchell, who is doing an incredible job as president. I think I said something similar last year, but it still rings true. Organisations like the ICPA are driven to success by the passion and commitment of their leaders, and this State Council is a great

example of that. For those who have not met before, I'm Ben Ballard and I lead the regional rural remote Education Policy Directorate within the Department of Education. My Directorate works with teams right across the department to drive improved outcomes for students in rural areas. Regional, rural and remote learning communities are an important equity group. We know the challenges facing our rural and remote communities can be complex and vary significantly region to region and from one school to the next. As we know in regional rural context, there are often compounding factors that affect learning outcomes for our students and require coordination across government to improve the equity of education. We need to account for the needs of our regional rural remote students in the design and delivery of programmes and policies across the department and this is how we'll see systematic change. An important part of what we do is working with our educational partners such as yourselves to understand the issues facing your communities so we can advocate for the changes we need. My team have been working closely with the State Council for the past two years, meeting on a regular basis to share information, work through your issues, and to advocate for the needs of rural communities, and this has led to some tangible improvements for our regional learning communities, which as you'll see today, there's things coming up. One example of that has come from our collaboration and collective problem solving, which I'm pleased to be able to now say, is the housing solution for temporary accommodation in Louth. The Department, together with our colleagues in school infrastructure, are piloting a solution to provide temporary accommodation in Louth to meet the needs of short-term visitors like casual teachers and councillors. The latest update I have on this is that the funds have been committed to and the occupation is proposed for on the ground around about March, this month. I know this has been an ongoing issue for the community in Louth and something that my team have been working on with our department colleagues to address, so I'm pleased that as a department we have found our way to address this issue. As mentioned, this is a pilot and we'll be looking to gain feedback to see if this can be an option for others in a similar situation. You'll also no doubt have heard the recent school announcement about the 100 new preschools that will be delivered across the state by 2030, a number of which are going to be in regional, rural, remote areas. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with State Council this year and seeing further progress on the issues affecting our students, staff and communities and this is set to be a big year. We are excited to see the release of the Rural and Remote Education Implementation Plan last month, which outlines how we'll be delivering on rural and remote education strategy this year. As the Premier noted, this is a plan that was developed in collaboration with our stakeholders and education partners, including the ICPA to address the priorities of our learning communities in the year ahead. Robin Beckwith represented the ICPA at this round table and with the secretary back in September along with other representatives from the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations as well, and also note that Jason Ryan from the P&C is here today. The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, the NSW Teachers Federation, the Primary Principals Association and the Secondary Principals Association. At the round table we all came together to really drill down on what we should be focusing on in 2024. In that session we came to an agreement on the three focus areas that we have formed the basis of the key initiatives in the plan. These are tailored housing support, strengthening professional connections and rural remote staffing support. I'll go into a bit more detail on each of these in a moment. But first I want to acknowledge that I know these three issues don't represent the sum of challenges faced by our regional, rural and remote learning communities, and neither are they going to be the cure all for everything. We have listened to the voice of our schools, our parents, our communities, and we believe these are the issues we need to address as a priority to see improvements on the ground. We're also tracking the performance of a number of existing initiatives that are being delivered across regional and remote locations to make sure they delivered meaningful support to our rural schools. As the department has noted, equity is one of the pillars that underlies our plan for public education and

regional, rural and remote learning communities are in that important equity group. It's great to see the strong focus the department has in this overarching plan which kicked off just this year and I am personally excited about what this will mean for our regional, rural and remote students and schools moving forward. But back to the Rural and Remote Education Implementation Plan. I'd now like to just run you through each of the initiatives in a bit more detail to explain what we're looking to achieve this year. The first initiative is the tailored housing support. We know that the quality teaching is critical to attracting and retaining staff in rural remote schools and attracting quality teachers and keeping them in our rural schools is giving the kids the best opportunity to excel in their learning. We want teacher housing to be a point of traction for teachers looking to take up positions in the bush. To achieve this, we are really working towards an across government approach. This will allow for coordinated efforts across various departments and agencies to address the complex challenges we face in rural remote areas. As a department, we understand not all the solutions to the issues facing teacher housing lie solely within our control so it's crucial that we collaborate effectively. We've spoken to principals and teachers living in teacher housing and we know that the coordination, maintenance and availability are variable, and this presents an issue to attracting and retaining staff in our communities and I know it's a motion that's in your topics today. Under the housing initiative, we'll be making sure we are prioritising the work in regional and rural remote locations based on existing evidence and we'll be working with the relevant teams to facilitate faster identification, management and remediation of crisis maintenance issues. We will also be increasing support for teachers and principals by streamlining the procedures to reduce the administrative burden placed on teachers and principals so they can get on with running the schools and teaching our kids. We're also looking further ahead to see what our future needs will be and developing a Departmental Housing Strategy to address this. This includes addressing issues around outdated refurbishment timelines, ensuring we're offering teachers houses that would that we would be happy to live in ourselves. We have been working closely with the Teaching Housing Authority that sits within Homes NSW and our own school infrastructure team to progress the work and we have already started to see improvements in this space. As the community and Louth has raised, a lack of suitable accommodation for teachers can have a significant impact on the ability of our schools to operate. The second key initiative in the plan is strengthening professional connections. This initiative centres around the support, connection and professional learning needs of our staff in regional, rural and remote schools. This is also important for the wellbeing of our staff and can directly impact their decision to stay on at school and this in turn affects the continuity of learning for our students. Many teachers and principals working in small rural schools are from out of the area and don't necessarily have a strong community tie or supports when they arrive at a new school and we know that in some of our rural remote schools, especially the smaller ones, our teachers and principals can experience professional isolation. Last year, my team delivered a series of principal connection days across the region to provide wellbeing support and professional learning to our principles. These sessions were incredibly well received, and I'm pleased to say that under this initiative we will be rolling out further sessions this year and we'll be delivering a similar series for our early career teachers working in regional, rural and remote areas, who we know also face unique challenges. Looking after the wellbeing needs of our staff has a flow on effect to our schools more broadly and our students and our rural communities. We are also working with the school Leadership Institute to deliver professional learning for our middle leaders and other groups that are key to the future of our schools. We've been focusing on improving coordination and visibility of existing activities to ensure to make sure we are getting maximum uptake. By further supporting our staff, we believe we can reduce the burnout and keep our teachers in our schools, which supports the continuity of learning for our students. The third key initiative of the plan is about staffing support for rural and remote schools. Staffing is an issue across the board, and we know that, but it can be particularly

challenging for some of our rural schools, which can have more complex requirements, and that workload usually falls to the principals and school staff on top of everything else they do, and we want to reduce that workload and streamline that process. We want to ensure that there's greater consistency around the application of policies and incentives. So, we've added 22 rural and remote schools to the priority recruitment list, increasing the level of assistance to 100 regional, rural remote schools in areas most in need, and we'll be expanding programmes like Grow Your Own Talent Pipeline to keep people from the region in region and create a pathway to teaching through the local school system. We'll also be expanding on the Rural, Remote Specific Mid-career Talent Programmes to increase access to skilled teacher talent. But this is just a snapshot of what the department is doing to improve outcomes in regional, rural and remote learning communities. There are already a number of tailored programmes being delivered across the regional NSW, and we'll be closely monitoring these through the year and make sure they are delivering meaningful support on the ground. Driving equitable outcomes, opportunities and experiences for our learners and staff is a priority for the department. Simply put, we want to make sure the kids, no matter where they live, have the same access to education and opportunities as the kids in the city. Regional NSW has so much to offer as a place to live in and our regional, rural and remote schools do an incredible job in educating our kids. Our job is to make sure that regional learning communities are getting the support they need to continue their great work, and we look forward to continuing the work with the ICPA towards this goal in 2024.

Thank you.

Richard Stokes. CEO, Australian Boarding Schools Association. Thank you. I don't know which one's more pressure. Is counting the votes or standing up here to do this? Thank you, Bree and Tanya and Libby particularly because I know you sent me lots of emails and to everyone on State Council for the chance to just have a few words and I promise I won't take very long. I thought it was very interesting this morning where we've been reminded about access and equity, and so one of the things that I think is very important for us to understand is that one of the opportunities for access is definitely boarding schools. And so, if you consider that 76% of our borders in Australia are rural and remote kids, that's an important space for all of our boarding schools to understand. I wanted to just talk about a few things that I think are pretty relevant for us right at the moment. Many of you will know about the recent Commonwealth Regional Scholarship scheme that the Federal Government actioned at the end of last year. It was a really interesting process because we were involved in the selection of those. There were some really good criteria that was set and interestingly, that motion about references just now was actually quite relevant to that because you couldn't apply for a grant unless you had a reference from your school. So, I can say that that Commonwealth Government grant did expect a school reference for it too. That Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Scheme was a pilot scheme. Excitingly, it was great for those people who got on early because they got six years of boarding fees. You know, either \$20,000 or \$10,000 for those people who were low- or middle-income earners, which I think was a great concept. Why I'm up here saying that to you is that you need to get on to your federal members and beat them up because we want it to continue. It's such a good concept and it's so good to support regional and rural and remote kids for which that scheme exists. So, make sure that all of you talk to your Federal Member to do that and I promise you, I'm saying that at every state ICPA conference this year, I had the opportunity to present that last week in Alice Springs in exactly the same way. It's a great scheme. There were only 70 scholarships available to non-indigenous kids. There were 30 for indigenous kids in Australia for their pilot scheme. Great concept to start with, but it is just a start, and I know that Louise and I are working really hard to make that something that's going to continue forever because it will really support you and your communities. This is a very, very

important space. While I'm talking about that, don't be frightened to talk to your school, alright? And I've got a few schools at the back who will probably cringe a bit when I say this but I don't care. But you know the reality is this. I remember when I was running a boarding school myself and I've done that, you know, I did that for 40 years. The family would come and talk to me and say, "Look, we just can't afford the fees at the moment." Right? But they'd always pay them. At some stage in their schooling, or even after they've finished. Schools will listen to your needs. So don't be frightened to do it. It's not like you're going begging. It's actually you talking to your school and talking to them about your financial situation. Don't be frightened. Another federal issue, but one that you need to know, and I know you've heard it raised well, I can't think of how many conferences it's been raised at, but certainly it was an issue for State Council with the NSW as well as the fringe benefits tax issue. Don't forget that the fringe benefits tax that the Federal Government puts onto essential boarding supervisors, the ones who live on campus and look after your kids, is causing you to pay about \$1500 to \$2000 more a year in fees. That's not fair. I've got a few people in Federal Government listening and Fiona is one of them, which was really good and so is Perin, but she's just left the room. So, she didn't hear me say it again, which is a pity. But I've also been talking to Anthony Chisholm, who's the Assistant Education Minister and looking after regional education. So, we've been talking about that but again, if the opportunity comes up, it's the people who live on campus who look after your kids who are being charged. It's costing the school a fortune to have them do that much more than it needs to, and we're talking about a drop in the ocean. We're not talking about a lot of money. You know, it's not going to cost the government a lot of money. A few other quick bits and pieces. It's really exciting to see how much professional learning is going on around the country. In fact, Jordan, who's with us, has just literally gone back to the hotel room for the last two hours to run a mental health course. He was the facilitator. There's lots going on around Australia. It's really important for you who do have kids in boarding schools to know that your staff have a really good uptake in that professional learning. We've put a brochure on your table and that brochure is there for one purpose. It's to help you select a boarding school. And it tells you what questions to ask, who to listen to, and if you need any more, we've got a few with us too. But if there's anything we can do to help that's actually not selling boarding schools individually, it's just helping you make good decisions and know how to ask those questions. It was interesting. We were just talking last night at the function with a few people, and they were saying how, and I couldn't agree more, how much more frequent it is that the kids themselves are making the choices now. I don't think that's a bad thing. I think you should be listening to your kids because they'll give you some ideas about it, which I think is really good. But please, also over the next couple of days, don't be frightened to ask me any questions that you want. Last but not least, if you do have kids in boarding schools, think about when you talk to them., right? And I say this really, genuinely. It's classic that parents will say, "How was your day?" And most boys will go, "OK". Isn't that right? Girls? Not much better. But you know, I'm really encouraging you to think about the questions that you ask your kids so that you get a nice flow of information. You could ask, "What was one thing that really went well today?" "What was one terrible thing?" To ask that is OK too, because that's not a bad question for you to be able to address for them. So don't be frightened to think about those sorts of things. Now, last but not least, in a room almost completely full of women although I know there are a few of us men here, I hope you have a lovely day on Friday for International Women's Day. Thank you.

Amanda Ferrari. Director, Boarding Schools Expo Australia.

Thank you, Madam President, for having me and to your executive and the State Council. It's a great honour to be here today. It is our 20th year at Boarding Schools Expo Australia and I'm the very proud

convener and director. I've only been in the role for a few years. What we're really proud of is that during that time we've continued to build an offer on our support to families as they begin their search for boarding school. We work with the families, and they are our main focus and our main client to ensure that they have all the information they need and whether that's support in their decision-making process or whether that's support once they've started boarding school, we're there for them. We've done it and we rely on experts and external stakeholders that support us in giving that information. It's amazing that such a simple concept has had such a massive impact. Before, prior to Boarding Schools Expo existing the traditional way was for schools to rely on their existing contacts so that meant either through a person who went to that school, or they might go out and host a luncheon, and in some parts of Australia schools do that and that's great. It's great to see that the schools want to get out in regional areas and meet families. It is rather limiting though, and it's also not entirely inclusive. Schools doing things that way that don't have access to our Expos are relying on people in their community to bring people to the table. What our Expos do is invite everyone to the table. So, it ensures for the schools that there's a much more diverse range of people attending our Expos and meeting the schools face to face. We really believe in not only equity of access to education for our country kids, but equity of choice. You know, having one school in your local community or the offering of distance education is not choice. That is one option. We really believe in families having access to choice and by bringing the Expos closer to the places that people call home, they have access to choice. Choice of information, choice of school, be they independent, religious schools, government boarding schools, the whole host from regional areas and city areas. We believe that the more people who have access to a secondary education and a choice of that education, the better our regions are going to be for it. While there's anecdotal evidence that kids return home after boarding school, and I can only speak personally of three children who have gone to boarding school and university although not the son. He's 4th year in the university of life but he'll get there in the end. They do come home, and they bring their degrees or their further education or they've developed various tolerances living away from home. Call that resilience, call it independence. Call it what you will. They bring that home. They also generally, when they go on to university, they do outperform a lot of kids that haven't had the opportunity to learn to live away from home and they're really key elements of what it's like and the bonuses that are offered to be able to go away to boarding school and we realise it's not for everyone as it doesn't suit all families. But for those who want to or are interested in learning more about what it might look like, we're there for them. We equally acknowledge that our schools are there to provide support for our country kids to live and study, whether that's in the city or the regional areas, and many of the schools that we speak to through our Australian boarding schools summit and our podcast, they do feel a social conscience to ensure that their boarding numbers remain strong, that their boarding houses remain vibrant and inclusive places for kids to learn, live and extend themselves as far or wherever they want to. So, I've sort of touched on the next slide which is. We believe in our access to choice and how we do that is by bringing the schools closer to where people call home. We've got Expo's in Queensland, NSW and this year, Mildura, first in our Tri State region. It's our first one down there. We've done 60 events in 19 years. This is our 20th year and we're really proud of that. We're meeting every year, face to face at our in-person events up to 700 families. We talk to them, we survey them, we get their responses. We know what they're looking for. We know what they're wanting out of this journey, and we know what their needs are. That's really, really important to us. This slide is just a little timeline for you. Since the pandemic that made us realise, like so many of the schools, that that come to our Expos, we needed to start doing things a bit differently and after 20 years, obviously our demographics getting a bit younger, you know, 20 years ago I was the key demographic. I'm not anymore, but we stay in tune with that and we're upping the ante. So, of course, we've got our podcast, we've got our Australian Boarding School Summit, which is an online event because something that was really important to me,

having a lot of friends that live so remotely up in far North Queensland and the NT, they don't have access to our events and they don't, they won't. We do go to Mount Isa, but generally there are so many families living out there and just because they are small pool of numbers doesn't mean that they shouldn't have access to our information and be able to get involved. It's a two-way street. We now offer, and we're in our third year of the Australian Boarding School Summit, which is a summit targeted at families. We're answering and discussing the topics that matter families. We have expert panellists. The schools are on there, we talk to the students. It's fantastic and we've really enjoyed putting that together and this year we're trying to look for corporate sponsorship for that so we're looking forward to growing that and bringing people in the room together rather than remotely. We've also got our shortlist feature on the website so you can go to the website. You can select your schools, register yourself and your information always stays private, and you can compare your schools side by side. It's just an easier option for you. What do the schools love about coming to our events? The ones that are sitting here at the moment are so excited for our first event kicking off and they're back to Dubbo. The things that they tell us are that we offer a direct path to families for their target market essentially. It also offers them the opportunity to branch out, to go to areas that aren't there, traditional area, meet new families, meet a diverse range of people. They love that. They love the sharing of ideas with their fellow colleagues from other boarding schools and the networking opportunities that are in a relaxed and informal environment. I walk up and down the rows in between booths during Expo and it's so exciting and you see them really enjoying each other's company and chatting when they're not chatting to families, they're chatting to each other, and I really love that. They love that the support they get from colleagues. They might have a problem or something that that that's a challenge for them and they get to discuss that with colleagues. And what do families love about coming to the Expo? Well, there's a few familiar faces here today that I know that I've seen at our Expos. Obviously, the number one thing they love is that so many schools, some of our Expos, have up to 45 schools, we've got over 70 schools exhibiting face to face with us this year and that's Queensland, Victoria, SA and NSW. They love that they can come somewhere closer to where they call home, where their kids are comfortable, where it's a familiar environment. It might not be their hometown, but it's not too far. I'm looking at Bernadette down here and she only travelled 900 kilometres, so not too far. But the children a bit more relaxed, everyone's a bit more relaxed, so I think that that really helps. You know, like I mentioned before, you used to have to know someone who went to a school, and you might get invited to a lunch and if that school came out with the principal and that was just a little bit more limiting. This is a really friendly environment. We've welcomed over 15,000 children in those 19 years. We've had breaks for drought and pandemic, obviously, so they're fantastic numbers. What does the average visitor look like? Well, just quickly, 72% of our visitors every year is their first time to one of our events. The numbers, and this is one of the questions the schools asked me as soon as the Expos over, I give them all the data and the figures, and they will always come up to me at the end of the Expo and they comment that there are so many boys at this Expo, or the boys school will say that the Expo was full of girls. No matter what, every single Expo, when I work those figures out, it is almost 50/50, which is quite interesting. Over 65% of the kids, are aged zero to 11. We get babies, we get pregnant women and their partners, and we get toddlers. And one of our taglines which I really believe is it's never too early to start the conversation. The earlier you start that conversation, and I know for many of you in the room it is your only option, so of course that's not a conversation you need to have because your kids know, but for others it can be a choice. So, the earlier they start that conversation, the more their kids are comfortable with the idea of going to boarding school and all the different things that will happen there for them, the earlier they can build relationships with the schools of their choice, the easier it is for everyone in that transition. The other statistic that I absolutely love is that on average, 65% of people who walk through our doors did not go to boarding school themselves. The reason I

love that statistic is because they don't come with any bias. They are truly open to every school in the room, to all ideas, whether that's single sex, co-ed, whether that's government, non-government. I love that that shows that families are wanting this for their children. I've touched on this before about the key demographic of which I'm not anymore, but I mix it with those who are, so I know these things. So, we've got our online summit for families. We've got almost 600 families registered on that now from overseas and right across Australia. The engagement with our Australian Boarding School Summit, which is online, it goes live on one day and then it's available on demand for the remaining 12 months has been fantastic, shortlist feature and of course our podcast which is called Destination Boarding, and if you haven't listened to it, I really encourage you to get on and subscribe or at least follow it. We have just done our second series called Nailing Home Sickness, which is a summer series which sits alongside the main format, the long format. They are short. 15-minute chats with the borders themselves from the Territory to Victoria from everywhere and it's their hot tips on how to manage home sickness. As we know some kids really suffer and some parents suffer as well. I've just written the blog for pedals called The Empty Nest Blues. I still suffer it. I've got a 27-year-old daughter who's heading up to her gap here in the territory at 27 and I am starting to feel the empty nest blues even though she doesn't live at home anymore. It's a real thing and it prompted me to write that article for the next edition. The podcast, if you do have kids or you know of any kids that went off this year or last year or whenever, and they're really struggling, just encourage them to listen to that. This slide is Boarding Expo 365. That's what it looks like. That is the platform that our Australian Boarding School Summit sits within that and the schools that partner with us. Last year we had 23 gold partners. They are the schools that partner with us. They're the ones that enable us to bring this to you because it's very expensive and we don't receive any funding for this. We are totally free event. We don't charge anyone to walk through our doors so we absolutely rely on our schools to enable us to bring formats like this that can reach more families and more remote families. We don't play the numbers game. You know, there might only be a few people that we reach right out there, but that is just so important. So, the way that looks you, register and join. You can peruse the schools and look at all their information. It's just like a booth, but it's virtual and you can watch the summit. The shortlist feature is that we've had over 1000 schools short shortlisted. Over 1000 short lists have been made and we've only had that feature for 10 months. When you're drawing out of a very niche and boutique pool, they're pretty good numbers and families are really engaging in that. Podcast we've talked about, so that was our summer series. We do have our long format. We talked to exporters, current borders. We talked to the schools themselves and a host of different people. What we really wanted to achieve with the podcast was really demystifying what it's like to go to boarding school in Australia. That's very important to me. Being a city girl, I did go to a school that had borders, which sort of gave me my introduction to the country. But there are a lot of myths around boarding schools and when you're not a generational border there are a lot of myths around it, so we really want to set about demystifying that. Highlighting the varied and broad nature of boarding school communities right across Australia, which is another thing. They're all unique. They're different. They're people who truly care about what they bring. And just for further support. So finally, what are we excited about this year? We want more events. We want to reach more people. We want more families to be able to come and chat to all the schools in one place. This we continue to bring the ICPA to more families. We are so proud of our association with ICPA. ICPA comes to all of our events and thank you so much to Libby and Tanya for coordinating that because I know it's not easy, being a volunteer organisation, to find people to come to our events and sit with us, it is a challenge. We're launching an accommodation feature later this year which is just allowing families who might have a city pad or a pad in Orange or a pad in Toowoomba who are happy to rent it out at a reduced rate to what a hotel might cost for other boarding families, knowing that they're getting good people in there and that they're helping someone out. And we have got the

third Australian Boarding School Summit. And that's about it. But I just would like to say I love coming to these conferences and seeing the schools in the room. It really impresses me. These schools, what I now realise, are incredibly busy places. They have so much going on, not just even the boarding houses have so much going on, and to see them take the time, and I think there's what 11 or 12 schools here today from Victoria, Queensland, and NSW. I really commend them because, as I say to those schools that come to our events, it shows me and it shows the families that you care about your country connections, about bridging that regional and rural remote divide or bridging the city country divide. Our boarding schools continue to do that. Thank you very much.

Joe Leader. CEO, Leaderlife.

Welcome to dubbo. Thank you for having me. If I accidentally swear today that lady, Amanda Ferrari, who was just up here, she actually taught me how to swear so, I'm really sorry if I drop anything. Can I start by telling you a little story? I was sitting with some good friends this week. One drop-in from Lightning Ridge. One from Wilmaringa. One from Goodooga and me originally from little old Trangie. Anyway, we were having a cheeky little Monday afternoon gin and soda after the kids finished swimming training as you do. I think there's thirteen kids between the four of us and ten of them were boys, hence the gin and soda. Anyway, so I said to my friends, I'm having a yarn at the ICPA-NSW conference and these western bush women literally all gasped and they said, "Oh my gosh, the ICPA is ***** fabulous." Bush kids would be completely ***** without all of you guys. So, first of all, I just want to say thank you for all being ***** amazing. I can't believe that ICPA started in 1971 before there was zoom and star link and emails and FaceTime and text messages and now Canva. So, thank you for all the incredible work you do for advocating for kids, for taking the pressure off the vulnerabilities that go with isolation, and for advocating together. A wise man once told me that if you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together. So good on you guys for going together and for being so ***** amazing. So, me in a quick nutshell, my name is Joe. I'm a mum of two very wild bush boys. I'm a self-appointed good joke teller, a beef farmer with my gorgeous husband in Narromine, an entrepreneur, a little bit of a hippie, a lover of cold plunging, and founder and CEO of a beautiful charity called Leaderlife and a very crap public speaker. I'm a lover of Dubbo in rural Australia. I was a paediatric speech pathologist in a past career and I'm a sideline cheerer and advocate for all kids in this country and especially for the kids having a tough time. I believe that we are absolutely and completely #Better Together and I believe that when you know better, you do better. I believe that education could look different for every single child, and I believe you can learn just as much in a paddock as you can in the classroom. I believe in finding community solutions to locking kids up in gaol, and I believe that absolutely no child should be left behind no matter the circumstances. I know that children who need the most love often ask for it in the most unloving of ways, and I know that it truly takes a village to raise a child, and if the child is not embraced by the village, they will burn it down to feel its warmth. Children are a beautiful barometer of how we're doing together as a society and the statistics say to me that perhaps the big people in this society should be doing things a little bit differently. The statistics tell me that we all need to know better so we can do better. 2018 statistics revealed that Dubbo has one of the NSW highest representations of children in juvenile detention outside of Sydney, with over 96% identifying as indigenous. Rates of First Nations young people attending preschool, childcare and completing year 10 all sit below the national and the Dubbo community average. 75% of indigenous young people over the age of 16 are unemployed. One in five kids over the age of 15 don't have a job, aren't in education or training, and I suspect, since the COVID showdown, that perhaps these statistics have become significantly worse. I decided that these statistics weren't good enough and founded Leaderlife in 2010 to help kids falling through the cracks of society.

Just like your ***** fabulous work of providing accessible education for those kids who are geographically isolated, the kids I work with are isolated for other reasons. They might be isolated because they are homeless. They might be isolated because their dads are in gaol, or their mums might be addicted to ice. Without a doubt, some of the greatest teachers in my life have been kids. They have trailblazed so much inspiration into my heart, and most importantly, they have taught me that no child is broken and no child needs fixing but gee, they need a lot of loving and to be given greater opportunities to know better so they can do better. I saw the need to create Leaderlife to help kids find a better way of being in this world. Like many of you in the room today, we want all children to have opportunities regardless of where they've come from or regardless of what they've been through. At Lead Life we do what we do so all kids can venture into the world and be valued citizens capable of contributing as much as anyone does in this room. So, how do we do this? Well, first of all, we get the fundamental mental principles right. A cool old fella walked into our community centre one day and he said to me, "Do you know, why your programme works?" I said, "No, I don't actually. I'd love to know." And he said it's because you get the circle of courage right and the circle of courage is a model of best practise developed by indigenous people in Canada, the Inuit mob and it uses the wisdom of tribal people and the pioneers in youth work, that says that to have a harmonious group of people, whether it be a school or a business, an association like yours, a family or a relationship between a mum and a child, you have to get these four things right. The first one is that kids and people have to feel a sense of belonging to someone or something. They have to always be learning something, so the concept of mastery. They have to have independence and have autonomy over their decisions, and you have to get the generosity piece right. So, both giving and receiving generously within the community. We use this circle of courage and model as best practise for running four main programmes with Leaderlife. We have our Apollo house, which is our community centre, based in what we lovingly call the Bronx of Dubbo. Anyone can come to that centre where they might use the phone or the Internet or just come in for a yarn. We also have Skill Builders Programme, which is for five- to 12-year-olds kids who are at risk of any kind of vulnerability, and that's about getting the developmental fundamental skills right from the start. We have a Catalyst Programme which is for sort of 13- to 18-year-old young ones at risk of entering into the juvenile justice system or disengaging from education and Soil to Soul is our social enterprise where we employ unemployable kids. Each year we support and care for about 250 kids. Sometimes up to 300 and we're not an indigenous specific organisation, but 98% of the kids that we draw into our work are indigenous. Our Catalyst Programme, which stands for creating access to a learning youth support team, came about a couple of years ago. We were sitting in a room with some pretty important people from education, juvenile justice and other not for profits in Dubbo and all the cops and I remember this day that the top cop said to us all that they had 12 kids who are absolutely turning this town upside down. They're not going to school, they're stealing cars. They're breaking into everyone's houses. And he said to us all, "Who wants to take them on?" You could imagine everyone shifting in the seats that day and everyone's looking out the door and down so didn't make eye contact with the top cop. Anyway, I was the last person to look down that day and I guess my head was telling me one thing and my heart was telling another so I said that we will have we'll have a crack, and we'll help these kids. We took on a dozen kids who we called the Wildcats. And if you're wondering why we called them the Wildcats, if you can imagine letting go 12 feral cats on Bondi Beach on a 35° heat day and having to muster them back to the lifeguard tower, that's what these kids were like. So anyway, we knew we had the passion. We definitely had the courage to muster the Wildcats and like most mums or dads would do for their own kids, we started helping the Wildcats work through the challenges and complexities thrown their way every single day. We were kicking about with these kids. First thing we did was take them to Backtrack and Armidale to meet Bernie Shakeshaft. Some of you may have heard of the remarkable work that Bernie and his team do and his

work is now expanding across many villages across NSW and Queensland, including Down the Track in Lake Cargelligo, I think you guys have met Larn who spoke here, and other organisations like Emerge in Toowoomba. So, Backtrack is really having a ripple effect all across the state now. Anyway, we got back to Dubbo with the Wildcats, and we got straight to work just starting to do stuff with them. We started helping them to live well and with not a lot of money we just started doing whatever it took. If they needed help with legal stuff, we would do that. If they needed help with school, we would get them back to school. If they needed help, you know, with resumes, learning life skills like cooking, saving money, showing them the art of giving back to the community, getting their licences, finding jobs or training opportunities, whatever their priority was. So, the last couple of years for us has certainly been an amazing ride. It would be a lie for me to say to you that our ducks are in a row every day. Most of our ducks are free range and the row is definitely overrated at Leaderlife. Working with these kids is like juggling lightning in your bare hands. So much power, so much potential, so unpredictable. After carefully learning to juggle lightning, I can tell you that none of those wild Wildcats got locked up. Most of them are working. Most of them have their drivers licence and some of them are even now dads. And I can report to you that they're all very beautiful dads. Because we're all about finding solutions at Leaderlife, in 2020, we started Soil to Soul, our social enterprise. Four years ago, a young fellow who was one of the original Wildcats said to me that they really wanted to work, and they really wanted to make their own money and get their own house and all of that that goes with that. But you need to teach us how to work. No one in our family has ever worked. So, you need to teach us. We decided to start our own social enterprise that not only aimed for huge social impact, it was also a sustainable funding model for our charity. Our first venture was restarting our lime farm business in Narromine. Thanks to the incredible generosity and support of the Maxwell family, who also put their hands up to be part of the solution. We've got a little video to play for you just to show you exactly what it's like to work on the farm.

(Transcript from video) Life came about in 2010. We can see a massive gap in services for young people having a hard time in Dubbo and we decided that wasn't good enough. So, we started an organisation to fill that gap for young people having a hard time. Soil to Soul came about in 2020, a young fella had this cracking idea. Actually, he said to me, Joe, we don't know how to work, and we really want to, you know, change our lives and work and look after our families but you have to teach us. So, we had a crazy business idea that ended up being the best business idea ever to employ unemployable kids. And we took over the lease of Lime Farm in Narromine. We've got over 2500 lime trees and we actually hit the domestic market last year and now selling to Coles all across Australia. So, it's pretty exciting stuff. "I've worked with Leaderlife, probably around eight years now, and yeah, probably about two years ago, Joe just gave me the opportunity to work with these young guys a bit more and from there it sort of took its own step towards me running my own group, which I really love." Kids that come to us have so many different stories, many of them being caught in the crossfire of some incredibly challenging things like domestic violence, trauma, abuse. You know, there's so much training that we attach to our young people so that they will have, you know, beautiful resumes and all the skills that they need to transition into mainstream employment one day. "The programme really helps these boys out, you know, we got it started with nothing and now they got about 15 to 20 odd qualifications, and they could work anywhere on any land, any farm or any agricultural business. So, this is really good. You know these young boys; I didn't think I was going to pay much attention to it. But yeah, actually they love it." Ohh, there's so many success stories that I can tell you over the years. Watching a young person work with in our Soil to Soul programme for a couple of months, then go on to get their licence and then transition into apprenticeships. It was a pretty special day, but they're amazing young people. They deserve the absolute best in life. "This is what I live for, and those kids are absolutely amazing in what they are teaching me, and we are both learning off each other. What

really makes it work is that these kids become family.” Our partnership with Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation absolutely is rewriting the future. These kids have hope on the horizon. They have love in their heart. They have energy and so much opportunity in front of them. So, thank you so much.

So that's our little lime farm and you would have seen our community centre, Apollo House in all of that. I guess because of the success of the Lime Farm, we've sort of starting to go a little bit crazy gangbusters and we've expanded into making value add products like this amazing lime cordial makes the best margaritas you've ever put in your mouth. And even now they are starting to do those fancy dried lime things that you pay them crazy amount of money for. We've started up a syntrophic agroforest, which is growing organic food mimicking a rainforest. There are talks of our kids growing pineapples and bananas in Dubbo. So, we'll watch this little space. We've also expanded into a landscape business and our other latest venture is aquaponics. So, we're now barramundi farmers in Dubbo which is very fun to watch. We're currently working with the current powers in education to be recognised as a formal education model so that those young ones at risk of, you know, giving up on school, have the chance to keep on learning in an alternative way that ultimately, long term, helps them find their purpose. When Sarah Mitchell was minister, we almost had this model over the line. Thank you, Sarah. However, with the change of government, we are back to the drawing board of advocating for innovative and hands on learning for kids who are completely disengaged from education. I've brought along little surprise for you today. No one knew about this story, but we just sort of wing a lot of things at Lead Life. I've brought along a fabulously Life young person, and her name is Shakira Toomey and she is a young lady who I met when she was a little girl and she's now 18. She's very dear to my heart. She's currently completing Year 12 at Skillset Senior College. She works for Leaderlife as a trainee youth work helping out with our early intervention programme and represents bush, kids and indigenous youth on the NSW Youth Advisory Council, that reports directly to the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, Zoe Robinson. So, if you need a voice in Parliament, she's your woman. Kira has taught me so much over the years and she's helped me realise the essence of life, how important it is never to give up and that we are always better together. Please welcome her. She is beautiful young lady. There's been times when she has walked into Leaderlife and basically reached into her chest cavity and pulled her out her heart and handed it to us and said, can you please fix this? I'm proud of where she's going. I'm honoured to be doing a little bit of Life with her, so we thought we'd get her up here and we'll ask her a few questions. You guys OK with that?

Shakira Toomey, Leaderlife Trainee Youth worker.

Growing up for a kid like me was very tough. I didn't have a very great childhood, but knowing Leaderlife when I was a kid, definitely made it better.

Joe Leader. So, Kira, I reckon you were about 8:00 when we first started working up at Apollo and tell everyone what's it like for our skill builders programme to our after-school programme is for the little ones, you know, five- to twelve-year-olds. What's it feel like at Apollo House in the afternoon?

Kira. Wild. It was good wild. Being a kid going there was wild, but it was always fun because you would always have your mob around but now being able to work there and see all these other kids there and experiencing the same childhood place that I did as a kid is actually really good.

Joe Leader. And what do you think all those kids would be doing if there wasn't a Leaderlife in the Bronx?

Kira. If there was no Apollo house and Leaderlife in the Bronx these kids will get up to absolute mischief doing bad things. Terrible things. So yeah, it's just like a get away from all the trouble, all the worries, safe home for these kids.

Joe Leader. Tell these guys what are some of the opportunities you've had since kicking about in our camp?

Kira. The opportunities I've had and experienced is speaking in front of all of you guys and other people. I've got my "L's" since being with Leaderlife, going to school every day, job and being able to have a voice on the Youth Advisory Council.

Joe Leader. So, Kira came to us when she was a little turned into a crazy teenager and as we all know what that's like and think that they know best, and we got a phone call. I know you were about 16 then so do you want to tell them about that?

Kira. When I was 16, I lost a very special person towards me who was my pop. He was my role model and when I was little, he always said you got to go to school, you got to get a good job, do everything. And when I lost him, it felt like I had lost everyone. So, I went very downhill, hit rock bottom and then I remembered that I had these crazy people still in the Bronx and yeah, it was like, I'll reach out for help. Scared that that I will get no reply, but yeah, they've been for me there for me ever since that day.

Joe Leader. Where would you be if you didn't make that phone call?

Kira. I would be broke, homeless, in gaol, or dead. Any one of those.

Joe Leader. Thanks for making that call, sister girl. When you talk about Leaderlife being important to a lot of kids in the area what word comes to mind?

Kira. Home.

Joe Leader. What is one of your dreams.

Kira. My dream is to drive a Range Rover.

Joe Leader. Thank you so much Kira.

So Leaderlife is very much about not only keeping kids alive and finding community solutions instead of gaol terms for them but they're also about helping busted kids to dream and to dream big, like driving Range Rovers. I'm often asked, "How can I help the Leaderlife village?" and sometimes that's not always easy to answer. But there's absolutely one thing I know for sure and that every single person can contribute to helping kids who are isolated to show up well and live with love in this world. You might be able to offer one of our kids a job or connect us with potential funders because funding is always incredibly challenging for small charities like ours. Or you may like to donate \$30 each week to our youth programme. I'm not really good at maths but I just did a few quick figures and if every single one of you donated six coffees a week we could employ 16 kids part time for a whole year. If we don't change the way we work with young people, the situation will only worsen. Less kids being educated and more kids in trouble. When we look to innovation and alternative approaches, we will have a community of thriving kids that results in less juvenile crime and more young people growing up to be strong positive contributors to society. Thank you for working together ultimately helping kids lead a life of knowing better so they can do better. Have fun in Dub-Vegas and keep being ***** fabulous. So, if you all get your amazing little phones out and see the QR code on the slide? If you press on that, that'll take it to all our special book face and all that kind of stuff. OK. Thank you.

Senator Perin Davey, Deputy Leader National Party.

Thank you very much and I apologise in advance for being a big step down from Joe going from such an amazing speaker and Kira, what an amazing story to listening to another politician. I'm sorry about that. But I really like coming to ICPA conferences and I thank you for inviting me again. The last conference I attended for ICPA-NSW was in Hay, but I had the pleasure of going to the Federal Conference in Dubbo last year and saying farewell to Alana Moller, who we worked with very closely. I was scrolling through my Facebook feed the other day looking for something else and came across

the first official meeting I had with the ICPA in October 2019 not long after I was elected. Drought was the key issue facing many of your families and you were actively advocating for schools and government organisations to recognise the difficulty and provide some support to ensure your children could continue their education through some very trying and testing times. I remember standing for the obligatory photo and saying goodbye and having an ICPA walk out and thinking to myself what a fantastic organisation. Joe, I think you said it perfectly ***** fantastic and thinking what a committed and compassionate organisation this was working for the interests of children in some of our most remote and regional communities. But it was only when I got involved in COVID again when I actually made the observation out loud and someone tapped me on the shoulder and said that I you qualified because I live just outside Conargo, far enough away from the high school and far enough away from the school bus. Well, you didn't have to ask me twice, and I very proudly filled in the form and sent away my little, very small cash membership fee because the value that you guys get for that membership fee knocks it out of the ballpark. So, I'm very grateful to have been involved and throughout COVID and working with the Boarding Schools Association and the ICPA and others to raise the issues that our children were facing, unlike any other children. At the time my children were actually going to school interstate which I had chosen through a Boarding Schools Expo, and it was a great school, but COVID pretty much put an end to my children going to that school just because we could not make it work for s us. Luckily, I was able to transfer my children, but so many of you had no choice and it was absolutely traumatic. I worked with the family near Whitecliffs, whose kids were at Geelong Grammar, and every time I spoke to them on the phone my heart really broke. The troubles. But working together working with the ICPA, working with the Australian Boarding Schools Foundation, working with then Federal Minister Senator Bridget McKenzie and with Sarah Mitchell, who did not have control of the borders but as State Education Minister, she did have the ear of the State Health Minister and I know how hard Sarah worked on this issue to ram it home to a lot of our urban counterparts that you cannot keep families separated indefinitely, particularly for our senior school students at already the most stressful time of their life. That work will always remain one of the highlights of my political career, even though I share the frustration that every school holidays it felt like we were starting all over again. But we did get through it, and I certainly hope that we never see anything like that again. But now looking forward because it would be great if the work of the ICPA was done and we had equity of access to education throughout all stages, irrespective of geography. But the work remains. I have had the pleasure of being forwarded the pre-budget submission that. The ICPA have prepared and presented to the Federal Government, and I think it is absolutely fair that you are requesting an increase in the isolated children's allowance amongst other payments for isolated families to bring them up to date because the fact that there hasn't been a significant increase since its inception is remarkable and devastating at the same time. When that allowance was first established, it represented on average 55% of boarding school fees. It is certainly nowhere near that now. Absolutely not, and it should be linked to the CPI because our costs go up every year and boarding school fees and just tuition fees go up every year, so it is fair that we ask for that to be seriously reviewed. So, you have my support in your ask. Unfortunately, I'm not in government, but I'm working on that. I'm working on that. I also want to see a solution to the issue of access to early childhood education for our most isolated families. If the federal government is going to pay childcare subsidies for people who can drive down the road to their centre, then they also need to make some form of an allowance for the people who have to do it in their home classroom or who have to drive for a couple of hours, or who only access mobile services. We really need to look at that as an alternative. And you'll be pleased to hear that I'm having very constructive conversations with the Shadow Early Childhood Minister, Angie Bell. She's from the Gold Coast, but she gets it. She really understands that for our rural and regional areas, we don't always have bricks and mortar, but we do have solutions. I

also think that if the state government are bringing publicly funded preschools to everyone, they need to ensure that your three- and four-year-olds can also have access to the same, even if it is via distance education or making sure that school buses can cater for such young, young people because we can't let your children be left behind. But you're very fortunate that you've got the ICPA at federal and state levels and that they have been there for rural families to advocate for these issues and much, much more and in that you will always have my support. My door in Parliament will always be open to the ICPA and it brings me great pleasure when I'm in my party room, my joint party room to raise your issues so that people are at least very aware that we're not all just out in the bush taking it as it comes. We're thinking about these things, and we really want to get our kids educated, give them the equity of access that you've been lobbying for since 1971. The history of the ICPA is a proud one of determination, dedication and fantastic support. Just the networks alone make you feel a little less isolated and I'm sure that there are parents in here now, members of the ICPA, who are once the kids of members of the ICPA. So, it's great to see the longevity even if we'd like to see the reason for existing go away, I don't think we'd ever want to see the ICPA go away. So, thank you again for your ongoing work, your commitment and your dedication. I just really appreciate all the support I've had from ICPA since I found out that I could join and I'm very, very proud to call myself a member but I'm also very proud that I can reflect your voices through my job in federal parliament. Thank you.

Rod Crowfoot. Managing Director, Macquarie Homestay.

Thank you everyone for the opportunity today to share a little bit about Macquarie Homestay and what we do. Back in 2011, it was actually the mayor of Cobar in conjunction with our State Member of the day for Dawn Fadell, who asked what Dubbo could do to help provide some sort of accommodation for all the mums that were having to come in from her local government area in those weeks and whatnot pre-delivery. As a result of that very, very first conversation with Lillian and with Dawn, we established a committee and fast forward to 2019, we actually opened our first 17 rooms, and we are just located 800 metres up the road from the Base Hospital. These are some of the images that you'll currently find within our accommodation precinct at the moment. For us the drivers around establishing home stay were pretty well two. One was to make sure that we provided somewhere as far as accommodation options that was appropriate for patients when they had to come down and number two was to try and remove barriers such as the cost of staying somewhere during that treatment period of time. We understood that for many some of those days are quite short, but for some of them are quite long and so sort of helping reduce some of those barriers was a big driver in helping get Homestay established in those very, very early days. *(Video presentation) "We currently have 17 guest rooms available. All our rooms come as a standard with two king single beds. It's air conditioned. There's a TV. There's a good-sized fridge and a kettle in each of your rooms. Every room has their own bathroom, and we supply the linen so that you don't have to really bring anything more than your own personal belongings. We are a self-catering facility. So, you're able to use a wonderful big common room, a communal dining and living area and our outdoor spaces as well. We invite you to come and experience all that Macquarie Home Stay has to offer."* There's nothing like seeing the actual thing as opposed to just listening to a bit of a story. So, very simply as to why people choose to stay with us, obviously we understand some of the issues that different patients come through when they've got to come for some sort of specialist medical care. Homestay was established to actually support all medical treatments. We're not just about supporting one particular illness or one particular treatment. We're about supporting all medical treatments that that will bring people to the Dubbo health service. As I mentioned earlier on through the introduction, we work very closely with the NSW government subsidy IPTAAS and that provides invaluable cost savings to our patients when they come and stay

with us. We try and create very much that away from home environment and we encourage everyone to do life as they would normally do. They cook their own meals, they can do their washing, they can do their bits and pieces as they normally would do and that not only obviously helps pass the time but also helps reduce some costs and creates that consistency in a family's life which can be really important as well. We are a secure accommodation precinct, so we do have a nice big fence around the perimeter. We have security gates for access, so kids and families can sort of park their cars and whatnot in behind our fence line and feel free to wander around without people coming and going and as I said, we're only 800 metres up the road from the Base Hospital, so we're directly over the roads from Lourdes Hospital, so we're nice and close and accessible to double health service. Many of you would be familiar with the Federal Seat of Parks and the blue inserts up the top are the Western NSW Local Health district. We understand that the Federal Seat of Parks covers a bit over a third of the geographic footprint in NSW and for us that pretty well captures who the people that we support with our accommodation are. Go to the next slide. It actually indicates exactly where the patients are coming from that have come to stay with us in the five years that we've been open and they extend everywhere from out to Broken Hill, right across the Queensland border, all down through the Moree Plains, Armidale, Tamworth and right down through the Cabonne area as well. Some of the Dubbo Health Service with building capacity has increased their ability to serve more patients with higher skill levels and we're seeing some really interesting experiences particularly through that Gunnedah and Moree Plains area where we're attracting a lot of families with paediatric ENT surgeries. They're being consulted up in their home locations with the specialists, but the actual surgery is actually happening in Dubbo, and so in many of those cases, the little one is staying for at least 10 days to two weeks post discharge, and so the specialist is needing them to hang around just for any complications. We've certainly seen a number of little ones that get to nine, ten or eleven days post-surgery and then they have an incident, and they need to get back to the health service very, very quickly. So, being able to stay close to the hospital for that period of time is important. Again, accessing those IPTAAS subsidies just helps make that time for the family having to be away from home a little bit more, a little bit easier and a little bit more financially capable at the same time. So where do where do our current guests come from? The Walgett Shire is by far and away the largest of the shires that that access home stay. Midwestern Regional Council are coming in at number two. That's been quite a change in the last couple of years since the opening of the Western Cancer Centre. Prior to that, they were much lower in their numbers. Warrumbungle Shire, Cobar Shire, Bourke Shire and then through there, so geographically we're very well supported by all of our different Shire areas, but they're obviously some standouts there. Some of them are based on treatment types and some of them also based on age and those sorts of things as well. So, specialist appointments are typically the largest reason why folk are coming. Our maternity components, whether be delivery, for antenatal appointments or for neonatal intensive care, from a large part of our cohort. Surgery, whether it be just general day admission or larger surgeries are a big cohort and now also our oncology treatments since the opening of the Western Cancer Centre early last year. For us, we understand that each of those different treatment types have different needs. So, for some of their oncology needs, they have very specific units uses around how we can help support the patient, but also the care in navigating their treatment period. For some of their maternity, they have different needs. Again, some of them that are coming in for colonoscopies and others have others. So, we're able to sort of customise and provide appropriate resources and support and have systems in place to help support each of those different treatment options. Surprisingly for us, over half of the bookings that we have month in month out are returned guests and they're coming back in because it's not just one appointment, they're coming in for. Usually, a treatment can have multiple visits back into Dubbo and so we're seeing that repetition. We've got one grandma now who's got 12 grandchildren, and all 12 grandchildren have all been born with their mum staying

with us and we are seeing this, and I think we're now seeing mums booked in for their fourth child and are staying with us each of those times. As we've touched on, IPTAAS for us is a big thing that we work towards. Many would be aware of the subsidies, and we worked very closely with the NSW Health Minister and Regional Health Minister two years ago to help encourage the increases in the subsidies for transport and also accommodation and that's been a big game changer for patients who are accessing those subsidies now. I guess the key data for us is, and this is an area of photograph of our site, at the moment we're experiencing 100% occupancy for over half of every month and we're turning away on average over three people every day and we did that in the last financial year. There's a really strong case for us to do an expansion and support even more people. This slide is our architect's view of what our future is going to look like as far as master planning goes and the big building in the foreground is actually what we've just started construction on and that's 26 units and we've named that The CWA of NSW Guest House in recognition of the support that the branches have provided to us over the last couple of years and those 26 units will have a mixture of family units two bed units and one bed units to support the different family dynamics that are coming through that need accommodation when they're in town. In support of that, that's roughly equates to about 294 patients a year who will need 1176 weeks of accommodation, which equates to nearly 23 units at 100% occupancy and that's just for radiotherapy. So that doesn't incorporate chemotherapy, surgery, pre-treatment, any of the other diagnostic type of work that needs to be done as well. So, when we build this, we will fill it pretty well as soon as we're done, but we have further plans and want to build more accommodation in time as well. This slide is our CWA-NSW guest house with a really nice mixture of those different unit types and they're self-catering again, but each room will have its own kitchen. At this time, we've internalised hallways and we've done a really nice big common room for everyone to create sort of opportunities for that emotional and social support, both for the carer but also for the patient as well. These slides are just some extra external images of what the new centre will look like and that's due to be completed and we're hoping to have our first guests in there by November this year. As I touched on, we have more plans to build more so we understand that based on our current knockbacks and based on the demand that the health services bring people, we need to build more. We've got a plan to build another 14 units consisting of two-bed and one-bedroom units and then after that we've then got an additional five family units which we would like to build. Those five family units for us are probably the high priority and the reason we see that as a priority is the number of folks that are coming in, particularly from Northwestern area sort of the Burke, Bree, Cobar, that precinct. The number of mums that are coming in and patients that are coming in that are not bringing just the patient, it's the patient and a partner or it's with mum or it's with siblings and it's with children. And so for us to be able to provide a diverse accommodation base to suit all family types that need that accommodation is really, really important. What we're looking to do is build these family units and for us that'll be the next priority. I can't believe that I'm saying that I'm working on Stage III as I'm just starting Stage II, but we have to fish upstream knowing that it does take some time. Unfortunately for us, with the changes in the landscape of the federal and state governments, access to some of the grant funding that we were able to access before has changed. We're having to be a bit cleverer around how we fund some of these different projects. But that's the five family units that we will build and that will then open up directly into our playground space as well, which is right adjacent. As far as what's next, please be our advocates. We don't want people to ever think that they've got to sleep in their car, as I've had this week. I've had people sleeping in their car because they didn't know that we existed. And with the precious limited availability of general motel accommodation in Dubbo, we just don't want to see folks sleeping in their cars or couch surfing or sleeping in waiting room chairs when they don't need to so the more people that know that we exist is really, really important. Being our advocates, we would really appreciate that. For those that do need to come down at some point in time, book early, don't

ring me today hoping for a room tonight because it just may not happen. Usually, at the moment within a couple of weeks, we can fit people in for those longer-term stays. But what we do understand is that when ill health comes on quickly, you don't have the chance to do that. For us to be able to build our capacity and provide more accommodation will help support a lot of those after-hours accident emergency type trips that we typically do have. I'm very much on speed dial from accident, emergency and intensive care. The nurses ring me all the time, particularly after hours, wanting to know if we have got options for an emergency? So, we work with them to try and make sure that we provide some something where we can or at least a referral service on to others along the way. And again, there may be opportunities at some point in time. We are very mindful of the fact that there are so many wonderful charities within our communities that exist, but sometimes there may be an opportunity where you see something that the outcomes of that particular funding opportunity are looking for would actually really support something like what Macquarie Homestay can provide. So please keep that in mind. Please, please contact us and let us know that it exists because we'd love to have a chance and talk about that. At the end of the day, Macquarie Homestay isn't for Dubbo people. We are for people from the whole of regional New South Wales and that's been very much reinforced in the five years that we've been open. We have still a lot of work to go as you can see in this aerial photograph, we're actually bounded by three roads, Cobbora Rd, Tony McGrane Place and Yarrendale Road. Across the bottom we have eight and a half acres to build into. We have a vision and a master plan that actually allows us to go from the current 17 unit plus the 26 that we're building now, the extra 14 plus the five family units, plus we have two other new buildings that we'll build which will take us to about 160 units if we need it, which is probably there's probably one or two motels in there that are bigger. When you think about the niche market that we support, it's a really, really important part of, we think, attraction and retention of families within the region, but also around great, better health outcomes for families and patients across the region as well. So, thank you for allowing me to share some time with you today. I know it's very quick but please jump on our socials, jump on our website, check out all our bits and pieces there and certainly anyone that wants to have a chat offline more than happy to do that anytime as well. You do have a card in your bags as well so at least you've got that as a reference point at the same time. Thank you to all.

Serena MacLean. Principal, Palm Avenue School, NSW Centre for Effective Reading.

Well, good morning, everyone, and thank you for having us here today. It is a pleasure to be here, and I feel the great warmth from all of you as I sat and joined with you at dinner last night. So, thank you very much and I'd like to introduce you to Lynn Young-Dwarte. Lynn is also going to present with me today, so thank you. Well, I'd like to pay my respects to elders, past, present, and emerging and in this space as educators for us, we acknowledge the Aboriginal students and families that we support along the way for intensive reading. It's a wonderful opportunity for us. There are three images here and they are acknowledging for us Gadigal land Wiradjuri land and the waters of the sea at Manly. So, we acknowledge those particular areas because they are where our hubs are currently located. A little bit about our Centre for Effective Reading. The Centre for Effective Reading is a Department of Education school. It's an initiative that was facilitated and supported in a partnership with NSW Health. As you already know, we support rural and remote students, primary aged students at their home school, where they are working and connecting from, which is really quite beautiful in its way. Those students come to us for complex reading difficulties. We support them for 12 months of intervention and in that support for 12 months of intervention, we have a beautiful wraparound service. You might have heard about our wraparound service of teachers, psychologists and speech pathologists who support them for the 12 months of reading intervention. Our intervention is online as well as face to

face, so you may have connected with us before through one of our hubs or you may have connected through us online. So just like any school, we have all key staff, just like most schools. The only difference for us, we have teachers like all schools, but the only difference for us as I've mentioned here, you'll see that there's that beautiful again wraparound service of speech pathologists and psychologists. They work together to create the intervention that takes place for the 12 months, and they work alongside, and you'll meet different people like our admin officers, our assistant principals, our deputy principal. You may also meet the SLSO. There's a whole team of people who helps this intervention and it's crucial for the success of the programme. So, as I said before, we're located in four hubs across the state. Westmead is where I actually physically sit in the hospital precinct. We connect with the Child Development Unit there. We also have manly team, which is located at Royal Far West. We have the Wagga team at Red Hill Public School. The Dubbo team and Lynn's representing the Dubbo team today, and they are connecting from or co-locating from Yarrawarra Community School. Now we're going through a little bit of a change at the Centre for Effective Reading. We're looking to merge two of our sites, our Westmead site, obviously not the Child Development Unit, but the West Mead site and the Manly site. We're looking to merge them into a metropolitan site and our aim is so that once we do that, we'll have greater funds to hopefully build a fourth site on the North Coast. If you have a quick look at that map, you'll see that there's a big space up to the North Coast that we really need to start servicing as well and looking at locating a hub. So that's our plan for the future. So, if you come and join us at one of our hubs or you come through to one of our hubs, our students, these are the beautiful faces that you will see. Our team of admin staff there as well as teaching staff are all connected to those hubs. We do though have our speech pathologists and psychologists sitting not on a hub. Most of them are actually sitting, connecting with me. But they are connected to a hub, so they provide that support to that hub and again it is because of that beautiful connection and wraparound service that we can provide. The beauty about our speech pathologists and our psychologists as well as all our teams is that we're willing to travel so they do often travel out to the hubs so that they can still meet families and students throughout the year. Just a little bit about the intake so far for semester one, which we're currently in for 2024. We had 202 applicants in our last referral process, which was quite a jump and that was about a 60% increase from our previous applicants. Then we took on 91 students. Again, we're increasing our numbers of student intake as we grow our centre, our school is growing so our service will continue. As you can see, we have a lot of schools that we partner with. There's a couple of dots on the slide there, coloured dots, those different coloured dots actually show how our students are connecting to different hubs. Although they may geographically be located closer to one of our hubs, we try to keep them as close to those hubs. Sometimes, as you can see the North Coast, there's no hub quite so close so those students are generally online. When we go through the process of intervention, a school will submit an application for support. There are actually two arms there that you can see for support. We provide direct support, and most of you are familiar with that direct support. That direct support looks like teacher assessments, psychological assessments and speech pathology assessments. They all work together to form that beautiful intervention of twelve months that the teachers write that individualised programme. Our speech pathologists and psychologists, they can, and at times, they will provide ongoing support but only as the need arises for those students. The second arm there, you'll see is indirect support. We've really opened up and branched out into a new way to support communities, support teaching communities in particular. We're looking at a lot more professional learning that goes out across the state as well as individual school support. And I'll explain that a little bit more here. So, the reading intervention, there's actually three groups or three ways, three tiers of reading intervention. You might be familiar at your school where your students are at or where your children are at. Tier I is where we look at reading as a whole class. That's what's happening in most of our classes. Tier II reading is really that group work. When

we look at some of this individualised school support or the professional learning we're looking at, we're looking more into that Tier II support. But predominantly the Centre for Effective Reading is a Tier III support, which means that we provide that one on one, which is crucial for intervention, for seeing the students have greater success. For our students only that Tier III is what we offer. A little bit of a quick look at the steps prior to intervention. There's a lot of communication that starts at the initial phase. You're connected to a hub, there's a lot of scheduling that happens and Lynne's going to spend a bit of time looking at the scheduling that happens, lots of assessments and she'll share with you some of those assessments. Those assessments are really crucial for us because they give us a better depth and understanding of the children who are coming across to us, so we get a lot of information in a short amount of time and that's essential because a lot of people expect a diagnosis at this stage for the Centre for Effective Reading. There is no diagnosis that we are able to provide for our students, but we do provide intense reports that can guide you and can guide families. The third bubble there that you see there in the slide is information gathering and that information gathering again is to give us a broader understanding of the students that are coming through and also to build that partnership with you as families. OK, Lynn, I think this is you.

Lynne Young-Dwarte. Assistant Principal, Centre for Effective Reading

Lovely to see everyone again. Thanks, Serena. The assessment schedule. So once students have been referred to the Centre and they've been accepted onto support for the centre, they're then divided up amongst the hubs. For many of them this is decided around geographical reasons, or it could be that they might have a co-morbidity highlighted that would indicate that perhaps they would be better off going to see the CDU people at Westmead or if they're up in that top area that isn't quite supported as well geographically, they might have some online assessments. So, the scheduling happens, we need to prioritise those students. Year six students as older students are of course prioritised so that we can see them as soon as possible. That's also when all that communication starts. So, this slide just shows once those students are onboarded, that's when all that communication starts. We start to talk to the schools; we start to talk to the families. We are in touch with the families straight away to organise those assessment dates and to start gathering all that information. Families are sent out a package where there's some questionnaires and that is just to find out more about your child, and we ask the school also to provide more information. They have provided quite a lot of information during the referral process, but some more information, particularly about how the student copes in their school, certain skills that they may have, some of their areas of strength, and some of their areas of need. The assessment is a very important part. That's when we do even more information gathering. Assessments that are done with every student, whether those assessments are completed remotely or whether the student comes to a hub. We know that there are many things that an impact on whether a student or a person is learning, and particularly learning to read so we look at all those areas and we know that we need to look at the psychological profile, their speech and language skills and their education skills. For example, looking at those cognitive areas of strength or areas of need such as working memory, processing speed maybe if they're able to task monitor, all impact on whether a student is progressing with their reading. Their speech and language skills, how they understand language, how they express themselves, and then of course looking at the big six of reading that we like to call them now, which includes oral language that our speech pathologists support us with, but also phonemic awareness, how a how a student can hear sounds in a word to pull them apart, and to put them back together again. Their word attack skills. The letter's sounds. How they know the letters and the sounds and how they can blend notes to read the word. We look at vocabulary, we look at what words that child might have that they know instantly, which we might call their sight word bank, and of course, how they can do that with automaticity. If they can read a word which is in isolation automatically, they're more likely

to be able to apply that to their text reading and read with fluency, which then of course supports their comprehension of reading, which is what we're hoping for. Although the reading intervention may focus on many of those educational aspects that I've just gone through, it's those cognitive and speech and language things that help to tell us the how and the why. As Serena has mentioned, assessments can happen face to face with the teachers when the student comes into the hub, or they can come, or we might do them online and you can see that we've got two photos of the different ways of that happening. Our psychological assessments and speech and language assessments are primarily done online, as Serena outlined, and that could be, again, the students sitting at their home school, and they're supported by their school to facilitate that assessment. Or it could be that they've come into a hub and then our team help and facilitate that assessment, and as Serena did outline, too, quite often our team members come up and visit us at our hub so that they're able to see the students face to face as well. That partner school that we're working with where the student comes from, that is a really important relationship that we're building. It usually includes at least a supervising teacher who supports that programme being implemented in the school and supports that communication happening with the partnership school and our team, and usually an SLSO, Student Learning Support Officer or a Teachers Aid is the tutor that we train and work with and communicate with as well. The tutor who implements the programme at the partnership school is funded by that partner school. That's just outlining a little bit more of what I was saying and the importance of that communication including bringing the parents in for that communication because it really is a wraparound support and getting that feedback and that communication with the parent is a vital part of that team. This slide shows us the different elements of the reading intervention support and as I've spoken about the assessment part is very important. That's where all that information gathering happens. It's where we know exactly where the students' needs are, then we work together collaboratively planning how we're going to best support that student, including their reading intervention, which would be that Tier III one on one intervention, but also how they can be best supported in the classroom as well with adjustments being recommended and supported in the classroom very much driven again from those assessments in those areas of need that were highlighted. Parents also are a vital part of that collaboration. Support starts as soon as that collaboration has happened. That first initial planning meeting that we would have, and that's when training starts with the school where we're supporting the school staff in implementing both the reading intervention and implementing any of those strategies or adjustments in the classroom to best support that child. During that process, the partner school or the school team sends us data, feedback, monitoring at least fortnightly, which then we look at as a team again, look at how that student is progressing and making sure that we're meeting the current needs of that child and that things are adjusted as may be. Throughout the process, the twelve-month support process we also have meetings along the way. Again, these can be as often as needed. Usually, we try to have one at least once a turn and again it's that whole wraparound team that needs to be there. The school team, the parents and the NSW CER team and the student because we love to have the student there as well so that they're actively involved in their goals, how they're going and to give some feedback as well. This slide shows you the timeline of how the intervention works, how we start with assessments. We then start going to the training, that feedback that is continual and reciprocated, and then the meetings as well where we're looking at the students' progress in their areas of need. So that we're adjusting as the student needs. Thank you, Serena.

Serena MacLean. Principal, Palm Avenue School, NSW Centre for Effective Reading.

Just like any other school, we have a learning support team, although it looks a little bit different. Students that do come to us already have complex reading difficulties or learning needs and we already know that, but we might notice that the student stands out with extra difficulties that are coming

through or popping through, or extra support, that's required. The beauty about this provision is that we have this partnership with health, so we really do lean into that support through the Child Development Unit, and we connect with them about any students who do come through and who require even more support. It's wonderful because the access for our teachers and our staff to provide that additional support is essential for us. So again, I'm just going to whip through very quickly. It's a new initiative for us over the last 12 to 18 months in terms of indirect support. There's a lot of professional learning that's gone out across the state from, I say my expert team, they are such a brilliant team with expert knowledge and rather than just keeping it to ourselves we are sharing that across the state to all the teachers across the state, it's been wonderful. Previously we've just tapped into the to the schools that we've partnered with, but this year we're looking to doing that much broader afield actually to schools that we haven't tapped into before. School support is again that individualised support that I mentioned at that Tier II level, and something that we've done a lot more over the last twelve months is school visits. They're a brilliant team with such expert knowledge and rather than just keeping it to ourselves we're sharing visits. That beautiful partnership we know is about community. Lynn actually just came and her team, the Dubbo team did a wonderful tour to Narrabri, Narrabri West, Boggabri, Bellata, and as they went across to those schools, they did professional learning, they ran professional learning teams there. They also did assessments, and they did some tutor training. But crucial to that is actually just understanding the context of schools, the complexities of schools, and understanding how we can support them better. So that's really quite crucial for us because like myself, I live in Westmead or actually sitting located in the city, it's nice to actually understand the complexities that are facing families in rural remote communities. A little bit more about our partnerships that we have. I'd just like to highlight one of them. They're the Scatters Team, the Scatters Team is a Department of Education initiative as well. It is a psychology service, a school psychology service that has been running for a number of years. We are partnering closely with them now so that any information that comes through or crosses over, we share that information. Obviously once we have parent approval, but it's essential because quite often, the students that we have complex issues, complex cases, and we know that that the 12 months of support that we have, we finish, and we need to ensure that they're still supported past that point. So, this partnership has been a beautiful partnership over the last 12 months, and I know it's for the benefit of students and families. To end us off, we're really excited because we're coming into a new referral intake. We have two throughout the year. We're just coming into our first referral intake, which is in Term Two and we're just starting our communication that's going out to schools so that those eligible schools, and I didn't mention this before, but those eligible government and non-government schools, they are invited to put a referral application in and that will start in Term Two. So, thank you everybody. That ends our presentation. Thank you very much for this morning.

Claire Taylor. Head of Strategy Innovation & Partnerships, Royal Far West.

Thank you, everyone. I'd like to acknowledge all the members of your State and Federal Council delegates, observers and guests. It's a real honour to be here today. I don't have a lot of time, and I know I'm going to be cutting into lunch, so I will be here through lunch and some of the afternoon. If anyone has any questions or anything further that arises from this presentation. What I wanted to do is just go through for a couple of minutes about Royal Far West and what it is that we're doing in 2024, which might look different to what it has over the past 100 years and then talk about a particular proposal that we're working on at the moment with the State Government that I think will be of interest to the ICPA, your Members and the families and the communities that you work with. So, as you know, Royal Far West is a national charity that's dedicated to the health and wellbeing of Australia's country

kids. We work across 200 schools, 364 communities, and that was in the last financial year. December this year will be 100 years since Royal Far West began and watch this space for more information about our centenary celebrations, which will involve a lot of your communities as well. We offer multidisciplinary health, education and disability services for children up to age 12, and our team, our clinical team, is currently over 150 clinicians. In the last financial year, we impacted positively 21,413 total beneficiaries and that included direct clinical services to nearly 3,500 rural and remote children in predominantly NSW as we've always been a NSW charity but we are now working Australia wide and have some services in Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia as well. As I said, exponentially since COVID when we've really seen the advantages of a remote workforce, for example, I'm able to do the job that I do from Tamworth, which wouldn't have been an option just a few short years ago. We have 251 staff at Royal Far West, so nearly 40% of our staff is remote. As Pre 2019 and I think zero of our staff were remote and we have 159 paediatric clinicians. So, our multidisciplinary teams include psychologists, psychiatrists, paediatricians, speech therapists, OT's, basically the whole gamut of people that we need to wrap around children with developmental concern. Some of the children that we work with might have a speech and language disorder, trauma, complex trauma, anxiety and depression, or a whole gamut of concerns and we can work with those kids. Just about 20% to 30%, depending on which programme, of the children we work with are indigenous and a larger percentage are male than female in our current cohort of kids. We run in three main business units. We have our schools and early years' service, which a lot of you will know about that's our telehealth and outreach service going into rural and remote schools and that's the one that's expanded to different states. We have our Community Recovery Service, which was really born out of a need to respond to the bushfires in 2019 and is now a floods recovery service as well for children who have been impacted and had trauma through going through national disasters, and then, what we call our flagship programme, is our child and family service, so it's been operating out of Manly out of our Centre for Country Kids and the medical centre before that at Royal Far West, right on beautiful Manly Beach. It's a predominantly an in-person service where children with a complex developmental need can be identified by a paediatrician that they need to attend for assessment and diagnosis. It's a very special service. It's very unique and that's the one that I wanted to talk about today. So, numbers wise it would have the smallest number of children going through that quite bespoke service, but it is what Royal Far West is really renowned for. As I said, it's only for NSW kids, it's about 55% of that programme is funded by NSW Department of Health and it's funded in recognition of the fact that Health don't provide a service like that for country kids themselves and in fact it's called a Tier 4 Diagnosis and Assessment Service, which means referral by a paediatrician, access for paediatricians and for psychiatry, so it is only for those most complex of children who need a multidisciplinary assessment to address concerns about a child's functioning and an ability to meet their expected developmental milestones. We build capacity within that service. So, we will be having the kids in the service, some of them for up to two years, where they might have two or three trips to manly during that time. They will do a lot of work via telehealth as well. A lot of work into the school. We have a Royal Far West school on site and so they will work directly with the school, and I know you've talked about that a bit earlier with the Centre for Effective Reading being part of the Royal West School as well. It is an extremely comprehensive service. It takes a family centred approach to child health and wellbeing. We recognise that child development is complex and dynamic and that the child, their relationships and environment are interconnected. Each depends on and influences the others, so it's not about kids coming and having a medical model only it's very much about looking at family dynamics and supporting the whole family which might include foster parents, grandparents, whoever it is that helps that child to thrive. So, in this particular programme, the majority of the kids that we see are male, 72% of the kids are male and nearly 30% of the kids are indigenous. The average age that are coming

to us at the moment is about ten and we would like that to be lower. Obviously the quicker that we can see kids the better and I'm going to talk a little bit more about compounding issues as to why we're not seeing kids as early as we would like and what we can do about that. That of course, is waiting lists across the state at all levels and a bit of a snapshot where the kids come from. So about 60% of the kids either come from West LHD, where we're sitting right now or from Murrumbidgee LHD, which the main centre being Wagga and then other kids scattered across the state. As I mentioned, we do have a full Department of Education school and as far as we know, we're the only example of a non for profit that has a Department of Education school sitting right wholly within our footprint. We have a three Storey building on Manly Beach and the Department has one whole floor so it's a completely seamless integrated experience for the families who come down. There's no going from service to service as everything is under the same roof. It's probably a little bit too technical, but basically there's three different levels of assessment or different tiers depending on family needs so for those children who are the most complex, they can have access to all of the specialists that they need, but not every family who comes down will need that level, and some will have already had some assessment before they come, depending on where they can access locally. So once a child's accepted into that programme, as I mentioned, they might be with us, it looks like it's three weeks on that map, but the three weeks might take the span of 18 months, or it might take up to two years coming and going from Manly. As I said, having therapy in between, seeing what's working, what's not working, that therapy could be through Royal Far West wherever possible we would access that therapy locally to support a local service, but we're in constant contact with those families while they're in the programme and as they're working through the journey with us. But post COVID the landscape is changing. What we are seeing in the kids who come through all of our programmes is that mental health is worsening. 63% of children aged five to 14 have identified and experiencing a worsening of their mental health since returning to school post COVID and we're just still not quite sure what the consequences of that long gap in education will be for some of those kids returning after COVID19. Exacerbating that issue, and as I said, one of the reasons why we're not seeing the children as soon as we would like to be seeing the kids, is rural workforce shortages. So not just local GP. We all know, you know, I live in Tamworth, and I can't get in to see my GP for at least seven weeks but I'm lucky that I have a GP because in some communities it's much, much worse than that. Particularly in those mental health services, psychology and psychiatry are few and far between and the more remote you go, the worse the situation is. So, we can see that in the kids that are coming through us in terms of the increasing complexity. The numbers here on this slide show a study that we did on the kids in 2021 and then again in 2023. And you can see on nearly every single indicator the kids that are coming through our service are having higher level of complexity in Department of Communities and Justice being involved in their family situation, trauma history, exposure to substance abuse in the family, mental health concerns, child protection concerns, and then about 60% of the kids that we see need to access psychiatry as part of their diagnosis, which is not something that we were seeing in the past. For us as a service, it essentially makes what we do more complex and more expensive. We have a duty of care once we have a kid in our service and especially if they're accessing medication or some particular type of therapy not to discharge before they're ready to be discharged, which means that we are holding the kids in our service longer than we would like to and of course that's impacting on our wait list. One of the main issues is the access to a paediatrician. We'll accept a referral from a GP because we know that if we don't, we will never see some kids. For example, we will never see a child from Dubbo if we don't accept a referral from a GP, because currently paediatricians in the Dubbo hospital have their books closed to developmental concerns. That's a decision they've had to make. They have to prioritise medical kids, kids who have broken their arms or have severe pneumonia or whatever the issue may be. But it means that those kids who have a severe developmental concern or delay are not seeing a paediatrician in

town. Other communities are experiencing the same and it really varies. Some towns, like Wagga, have a really great little pocket of paediatricians, and that's often down to one individual who's, you know, drawing people to town and working together and working across private and public. Other communities don't have the same access. If you can afford a private paediatrician, obviously that's a lot better but a lot of the families we see can't afford to do that, so they'll be on a wait list. We've heard informally, you know, up to five years in Tamworth if you want to see a public paediatrician. If the school is saying to mum, look, you should see someone about your kid and they're seven by the time they get into that service and they're 11 or 12, that that ship has sailed. So, we do have a proposed solution. We've been talking to the LHD's in Murrumbidgee and in Western, sorry this slide is, really, really tiny, but I will send this around properly in a written document for anyone who's interested, of retaining our service at Manly, at the Centre for Country Kids as it is, but developing and piloting for three years to rural outpatients clinics. So, one based in Wagga, one based in Dubbo, we're really flexible and we would set up those centres wherever NSW Health would fund us to set up those centres. We know that we'll have recruitment challenges in the same way that everyone locally does but there is a benefit with Royal Far West of working as part of a very large multidisciplinary team. We wanted to have a look at doing a hybrid of outreach, employing locally, where we can, seconding people out to the regions and accessing our existing teams that are working across our other programmes to fill this programme as well. So, it would make no changes to the Manly model, but, at the moment, because we're doing a big redevelopment of our centre, we can't accept more kids per week than we're currently seeing into that service. In a way of addressing that, we would like to have these outpatient clinics, where we can see more children closer to home and we can hopefully start to reduce our wait list in that way. Parents could still, of course, have the option to wait for the Manly Centre if that's what they'd like to do. So, what I'm asking for you today is for your support essentially for this model. ICPA packs more than its punch or whatever the expression I'm looking for is. I can't go to Macquarie Street, in Sydney without running into members of your State Council. When I was working as the policy director for the Minister for Education, the ICPA always got the meeting, and I tell you what other advocacy organisations do not work in that same way so your support would be really powerful. But first and foremost, I wanted you to know about it. If you have any questions, you know you can have my contact details and if there's anyone you think we need to talk to in the particular regions we're looking at working, then we'd be very happy to talk as well. So, thank you for your time. Happy to take questions or to do some questions after lunch. Thank you very much.

Special Presentations.

Kate Treweeke. Archives Officer. Past President ICPA-NSW.

Contacting Inc was launched in the Year of the Child in 1979 with the vision that isolated children and disadvantaged children, families and communities, irrespective of their locality and circumstances, have access to education, support, information and services to best meet their needs. Contact Inc shows the evidence for new services and programmes and helping communities access funding for services. They speak to government and organisations working with children and families about identified needs relating to isolation. Contact organisers activity days, discussion days, link up days for families, services and the wider community. Through these days they can initiate support and conduct research

while contributing specialised information with expert advice to the government and agencies through ongoing action and research focusing on the needs of these families. So, as you have just heard, ICPA and Contact Inc work well together for our isolated families. Contact Inc started attending state and federal conferences very early on and eventually in 1988, Sue Kingwill started attending ICPA conferences and has been coming ever since, only missing a couple in between. For those who don't know, Sue Kingwill is the CEO of Contact Inc and has been for decades. Sue has been a great advocate for ICPA and has participated in floor discussions during conferences, which at times have clarified discussions and debates. As busy as Sue is with Contact Inc, she's also involved in rural connect child and family days, Wanaaring, Louth and Tilpa and is an ambassador from Moorambilla Voices where she performed a crucial role in helping generate support for the participants and the programme. As most of you know, Sue chairs our AGM's and she first took this role as Returning Officer in 2010 and has continued in this role since then, only missing a few. Sue is regarded as a highly valued supporter of ICPA-NSW and is greatly appreciated by State Council and members over the years and today on behalf of State Council, it gives me great pleasure in awarding Sue within its Certificate of Appreciation.

Sue Kingwill. CEO Contact Inc.

Thank you. I just want to say I'm so deeply honoured and humbled by that and floored. What a wonderful honour to receive and I just wanted to say sincerely that this is a thank you to ICPA. You've been part of our life throughout, whether it's State Council in sharing advocacies together through to when we get out in the community. Everywhere we go, inevitably there are ICPA members, and you've been part of our programmes and our services, and you've provided catering to events. All those things that make all those important community functions happen. So, thank you. ICPA more than anything for your wonderful support and commitment to isolated children and for the opportunity to work together.

Louise Martin. President ICPA(Aust)

Thanks everyone. I do know there was a federal conference in Sydney in the 80's because Rory Treweeke handed over the presidency to my mum. So that was, I think in 1984 or somewhere around then. So yeah, there was one back then. At the federal conference in NT last year, Judy Newton was awarded with a Federal Life Membership in recognition of her astonishing and astounding commitment to ICPA over the years. Judy continues to support ICPA and her role as Federal Membership Officer is one for which every single one of us should be grateful. Unfortunately, Judy was unable to be in Darwin and was unable to collect her badge. So, thanks Tanya and the ICPA-NSW team for indulging Federal Council for a minute to present Judy with her badge. It just didn't seem right to give it to her in the carpark. I think it needs an audience. So, Judy, come and get you badge.

Judy Sinclair Newton. Federal Membership Officer. Technical Database Officer.

Thanks everyone. Just a bit of background. I've been really hassling Federal Council asking where my badge is. Anyway, If I could just encourage everyone here that if you haven't got a position on a Council whether the state or Federal, and no, Kate, you've been there, done that. But yes, being involved with ICPA really changed my life and it has been a privilege to be a part of it. To join people like Rory Treweeke and the handful of Federal Life Members over the last 52 years. So, I'm very honoured and thanks everyone.

Kate Treweeke. Archives Officer. Past President ICPA-NSW.

Ellen Walker has been a member of Rankin Springs ICPA Branch since 1993 and went to her first conference in 1994 as a Rankin Springs ICPA branch observer. Ellen took the roles of Vice President in 1998 to 1999, Treasurer in 2001 to 2005 and again Vice President from 2006 to 2013. Ellen was co-opted onto State Council as the Rugby Tops Convener in 2007, taking over from Wendy Anderson. In 2008, Ellen went to Hillston conference and was elected on to ICPA State Council. Ellen held the Tertiary Education Portfolio in 2009 to 2010, but she continued to be a seconder throughout her years on State Council to tertiary and travel where her passion lay. At the Lightning Ridge Conference in 2011, Ellen was elected as state treasurer and remained in that position until she retired at the Burke Conference in 2017. At branch level, one of Ellen's jobs would be to print off labels, source plastic bags, sticky tape, string and organise the hall and volunteers for each edition of The Top Wire that was packaged ready for posting by the Rankin Springs Branch members four times a year. Ellen has worked tirelessly for the Rankin Springs ICPA Branch fundraising, taking on executive roles and being a Rankin Springs delegate at both state and federal conferences. For her endless dedication to the branch, Ellen was recognised her commitment with the Life Membership being awarded in 2022. Ellen has been a very strong, committed member to ICPA at all levels. So, on behalf of the Rankin Springs Branch of ICPA, we are recognising her dedication at a state level with an ICPA-NSW Life membership. Thank you, Ellen.

Ellen Walker. Rankin Springs Life Member.

If I can stop myself from trembling and carrying on. Thank you everybody who was involved in this. Not expected at all. I've been very pleased and honoured to spend a lot of time since the early 90's when my children were in preschool, I joined ICPA because we were isolated, and preschool was a problem at that time. So, my four children have all grown and flown the nest, and I've got grandchildren now. So, this is very much treasured. Thanks very much.

Kate Treweeke. Archives Officer. Past President ICPA-NSW.

Mrs Lindy Kitto joined the Rankin Springs ICPA Branch in 1993, and since then Lindy has held many positions both at branch and state level. Since she joined, she has been a regular attendee at both state and federal conferences. These are Linda's achievements. In 2006 until 2008, she was elected vice president of the Rankin Springs Branch. In 2009, President of the Rankin Springs Branch, where she continued as a member at Rankin Springs until her family departure from the area in 2013. While a member of Rankin Springs, Lindy was part of organising and supporting numerous fundraising events in the area, including the packaging of the Top Wire magazine. In 2011, Lindy was elected to State Council at the Lightning Ridge Conference, where she took on a Special Education Portfolio as this is where her passion lay and interest with great passion and dedication. In 2012, she was elected as Secretary of ICPA-NSW while retaining her work with the Special Education Portfolio. In 2013, Lindy handed over her Special Education Portfolio to concentrate on the position of secretary that she stayed at for another four years. The Rankin Springs Branch and surrounding areas were sad to see the Kitto family move from their community. It was at this time she transferred her membership to NSW/Vic Lone Members as there were no branches in their new district and she was too far from Rankin Springs to participate physically. In 2016, after serving five years, Lindy retired from State Council as secretary, where her organisation skills, efficiency, unfailing ability remain unruffled, and her easy-going nature was missed greatly. In 2017, Lindy was elected as trustee of ICPA-NSW. But despite being retired from State Council, Lindy was co-opted back as Lone Members Officer until that position

was filled later in that year. In 2018, Linda co-hosted the ICPA-NSW State Conference in Mudgee as well as the ICPA(Aust) Federal Conference in Canberra later that year on behalf of the NSW/Vic Lone Members. All this was done with her usual efficiency because nothing seemed to faze Lindy. She loves saying, “never say never”, because she always believed that anything can be done with a little help from friends and family. In 2019, Lindy was co-opted onto State Council as the Secretary when a casual vacancy needed to be filled. As you can see, there's no stopping this woman. In 2011, at the Hay Conference, we witnessed Lindy being awarded Life Membership of NSW/Vic Lone Members for her tireless work and dedication to ICPA since 1993. Currently, Lindy has a mammoth task of transcribing the State Conference minutes every year for the past ten years - a job that involves numerous hours and which provides pivotal information for State Council in their tireless work for our members. So, on behalf of our members and State Council, we award you with the live membership of NSW.

Lindy Kitto. NSW Trustee, NSW/Vic Lone Member Life Member.

Well, I can't go without saying something and I guess it doesn't say anything about my efficiency because I knew nothing about this. It's been an absolute privilege to serve in ICPA. It's just the most incredible, unstoppable association that I've ever known, and the very fact that you're all volunteers is just such an amazing thing. I'm really, nearly stumped for words actually, which is unusual for me. However, I'd just like to thank everyone of you for the privilege of being able to serve and I would encourage anybody who would just like to be part of this wonderful association. Don't hold back. It's worth every bit and the camaraderie, the friendships that we make in the journey is something that's very, very precious. So, thank you very much for this, this wonderful privilege. And I just hope that I can hang around a bit longer and keep being involved. Thank you very much.

Tanya Mitchell, President ICPA-NSW

Thank you so much, Kate, and thank you to our very worthy recipients, not only for being here today, but also for the work that you have done and the many hours that you have put in to be part of ICPA. Congratulations, Judy, Ellen and Lindy. Well done.

Ali Allison, Federal Council.

Madam President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, a ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I can talk today about an ICPA member who's gone above and beyond the call of duty when it comes to supporting and representing his local ICPA, a branch. A branch committee chooses to recognise a branch member who has made exceptional contributions to the branch by awarding them Branch Life Membership and when it comes to the importance of education for rural and remote children, having an ability to bring people into the ICPA, a family and an ability to take the issues to those who need to hear them, I would like to recognise, on behalf of the Nyngan Branch, David Butler, for being a very committed member of the branch since its inception in 1971. David has ICPA in his blood. Why 1971? David's late parents Neil and Geraldine were two of the 41 people in attendance when the Nyngan Branch was formed on the 17th, September 1971, bringing the Butler family, including David, into the ICPA membership base. David's mother, Jerry, was an active branch member locally throughout her life. She attended federal conference in Perth in the very early years and remained a branch member until very late in life. David's mother-in-law, Jenny McClellan, who is here today, is a life member of the Brewarrina branch of ICPA. Jenny is also a former State Councillor and

a former Federal President of the ICPA, giving many, many years of service to the organisation. I've had the pleasure of knowing David since the mid 1980's and having grown up in Sydney, I had no idea what ICPA was, but after moving to Warren in the early 90's, David made sure that I was introduced to the Nyngan Branch, the ICPA talking me into modelling at a fashion parade at the Marrar Field Days to raise funds for the local Branch. I think David enjoys a good fashion parade because the following year David and his neighbour and great friend Chris Elder were involved in the inaugural AG Expo in Nyngan and made sure ICPA was front and centre on the day. They brokered the annual Nyngan Branch fashion parade at the AG Expo 31 years ago, where members poured champagne and handed around canapés whilst watching the latest fashion on the catwalk to raise branch funds for nearly two decades. David has many years of ICPA involvement. He was vice president to Chris Elders branch presidency, and I had the pleasure of being secretary to David's branch presidency. I never knew what time of the day or night I might receive a phone call, but they came often and generally always with the quad bike idling in the background. David continues to attend all the branch meetings and volunteers his time. David joined NSW State Council in 2016 whilst attending the Broken Hill Conference. He's held the position of Vice president on State Council and has been Travel Convener for the duration of this time. Nyngan Branch has a long history of state councillor representation and David is one of our longest serving members. To David's wife, Shelly, she's the quiet achiever and her three accomplished children here today. Jackie, Rachel and Mitchell. Your achievements are a product of what your father and grandparents have lobbied for and continued to lobby for since the early 1970's. David, on behalf of the Nyngan Branch of ICPA-NSW, we unanimously bestow Life Membership upon you for all that you have done for the branch, your unstinting support, your undertaking of various roles, and importantly, continuing the diligent lobbying for equity in accessing education for rural and remote children in New South Wales. David, you've made a life as a volunteer targeting education, and we thank you.

David Butler, ICPA-NSW Councillor

Yeah, we need a tin after this. Thank you.

Tanya Mitchell, President ICPA-NSW

Thank you, David, and thank you all. We know how much work you put in and I can't say enough how much we appreciate having David in that Travel Portfolio and having him on State Council and every year he tells us he's going to resign and every year we manage to keep him for a little bit longer. So, thank you and thank you to all the people standing up the back. We were just hoping he wasn't going to turn around and see you all. It's marvellous and thank you all so much for turning up. It's an absolute privilege to receive these awards and but they're very, very worthy recipients today, so. Thank you very much.

Retiring Councillors.

Georgina Luckraft, ICPA-NSW Treasurer.

On behalf of State Council, I would like to thank Nathan Kitto, for being our wonderful and outgoing treasurer. He cannot get out of here fast enough. So, thank you very much. Just personally, Nathan and I talk probably three times a week, never seen each other in the flash so, this couple of days has been great and we've had a heap of chatting over here, so apologies everyone for that because we've been

over here sussing out everything that he's going to get me to do and I'm going to keep ringing him. Daily, maybe every couple of days, until such time as he deletes my number which he promises me he will. He may block me at which time I might have to drive to Toowoomba to get his help. Massive undertaking. Nathan and his wife to Jacinta and their new little bambino, Lawrence who everyone's probably been gooing and garing over for the last couple of days. They've driven ten hours from Toowoomba here on Tuesday, been in here for two days and then they're going to turn around and drive ten hours back again. It is a massive undertaking for anybody, but with the little baby, obviously even harder. So, so much appreciated. Nathan just does an amazing job, particularly at keeping all the emotions and the personalities separate from his job, and that's been really valuable to me because I don't do that very well. So, when I say things like, "Oh, hang on, I'm not supposed to care about that." then Nathan says, "You can care, but don't make it your concern. It's not your issue." And I just don't know how but that is so valuable. The knowledge he's imparted has been amazing. He's very professional, but he knows pretty much everyone about everything here on an ICP A level. But he doesn't concern himself with where you live and what you do and who your kids are, because it doesn't matter. I'm like, OK, OK, I need to. Remember that? So yeah, it's been amazing and thank you so much for everything, for being amazing at what you do, but also just so respectful of everyone, you've never got a bad thing to say when I'm being facetious and sarcastic, you pull me up and that's great. You can say what you want now as you go. So, we've got a little gift for you and Libby might hand that over and safe travels tomorrow. And of course, we will all be keeping in touch.

Nathan Kitto, Retiring Treasurer.

Yeah, thanks. It's been a real privilege. It's an honour. ICPA is obviously a cause that is dear to my heart. Obviously, there's mum and she runs around and tells everyone that it's two generations and then we get a little one and then it's like us, third generation. And I'm like, I just want to go home to bed. But to be honest, these are the things that have an impact. It's knees under the table to make a decision about things that affect the too far and the too few. Alone we don't and can't count, but together we make a group that can make a difference. So, it's been an honour to be a part of it all. I'll still be supporting ICPA in the background doing what I can where I can. I've no doubt I'll be back. We've got three generations to sort out so that takes time. But anyway, until next time. Thanks.

Tanya Mitchell, President, ICPA-NSW

Thank you very much, Nathan. I can't thank you enough for the support that you've given and the wealth of knowledge that you have in all things financial. I was going to mention that we had three generations in the room, which is so beautiful and it's great to have the little people in the room as well. And we've had state councillors before who have come on with tiny babes in arms presenting motions at the microphone, and that's what it's all about. So, thank you very much for making that huge effort and thank you Jacinta and Lawrence for making that huge effort.

Laura Stalley, ICPA-NSW State Council

OK, I'm going to try my hardest here to not cry but I can feel it building up already. OK. I've got tissues with me. Bree joined ICPA-NSW in 2020 in the midst of COVID-19. She was brought on to State Council to help with the issues around the border closures. Her personal experience allowed her to advocate with passion and empathy for NSW and Victorian students who needed to cross borders into South Australia. Bree confidently articulated this complex issue on numerous occasions in the media frenzy that followed. During this time, she built strong relationships with the police

commissioners, health authorities, and senators. We all remember her amazing and emotional presentation at Hay Conference, which brought the room to tears. Bree was a critical conduit between boarding parents and authorities in South Australia and was instrumental in using our survey platform to quickly get data from families to give to the authorities. The data even made its way to the National Cabinet and was waved around on Sky News by politicians. The South Australian border was a harder task, but there were some wins along the way as Bree forged ahead, and never taking no for an answer. We all have Bree to thank during this time because without her tenacity it would have been impossible to keep across the issues that were compounding daily. Now we have returned to a new normal. Bree has moved on from the border issues and has been a valued member of State Council, contributing to boarding schools, health and well-being, allowances, travel and distance education portfolio as well as Vice President. Bree's collaborative nature, willingness to share knowledge and ideas has significantly influenced the positive culture on State Council, and she has linked so many SOTA families with Transport for NSW to solve their unique travel arrangements and work proactively to ensure feedback links on the transport website have the rural and remote tab to ensure our families can navigate the website more effectively. Bree is an active advocate for ICPA. Her passion is infectious. Personally, I've had the pleasure to spend time working together on the Distance Education Portfolio. We have spent many hours on zooms with the department around the NBN roll out and I'm sure Mike Tom was sick of hearing from us, and we would tell anyone who would listen to us. Bree and I have also been travelling companions and roommates over the last couple of years. We have had many laughs, tears and solved the world's issues. We will truly miss your presence, but we have gained a lifelong friend. Enjoy your last years with Alice at home. George wanted me to mention that she's still angry at you for getting her to come on to council and then leaving. But she's happy she won't have to carry too many tissues around anymore. We wish you all the best and we know that we'll see you again at an ICPA conference as the FOMO would be too much. Thank you, Bree. I've also created a little Bree slideshow for everyone. She's going to love it.

Bree Wakefield. Retiring Vice-President

That was lovely and everyone knows I won't be able to say much because I start crying. So, a big thank you to my bed buddy Laura, because I have never shared a room with anyone else but Laura and we've just got it down pat. We know how it works. I don't know, Nathan said everything so beautifully and I'm not going to do that. I'm just going to say that I love my ICPA family. Definitely the best thing to come out of COVID. You should join ICPA. It's really fun. Thank you.

Jude Bryant. Conference Convenor.

I'd like to also thank our sponsors. We could not put this conference on without them and there are quite a few. We would like to thank NBN and Telstra; Calrossy School; Australian Boarding School Association; Fletchers; Paraguay Pastoral; Rabobank; Richard Sinclair; Ray White; Nutrient AG; Delta AG; Liberty Oil, Food Fibre; Louis Dreyfus Company; Inland Petroleum; Rebel AG; U2; Sky Brag; River Granny Quilts; Robinson Grain; The Rural Trader; Art by Sally Montgomery; Little Big Dairy and Peggy and Twig. So, thank you very much for all of them and to all of those who have made this conference all we've been able to put on for you and we hope you have enjoyed it. Thank you.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
of the
**ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF
NEW SOUTH WALES INCORPORATED**

8.30 am on Thursday 7th March 2024

RSL Club
Brisbane Street
Dubbo

Minutes

Good morning everyone, my name is Libby McPhee, and I am the Secretary of ICPA-NSW. Welcome to the AGM of the Isolated Children's Parents Association NSW held on 7th March 2024.

Apologies: There have been apologies received and these have been posted in the conference room as well as emailed apologies received.

Motion 01.03.24 *“That the apologies received be accepted.”*

Moved: Libby McPhee, State Council **Seconded:** Laura Stalley, State Council. Carried

Adoption of the Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting:

Motion 02.03.24 *“That the minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting as circulated electronically be accepted as a true and accurate record.”*

Moved: Libby McPhee, State Council **Seconded:** Laura Stalley, State Council. Carried

Business arising from the Minutes: Nil

Correspondence: Nil

Secretary's Report: Libby McPhee

Motion 03.03.24 *“That the Secretary's Report be accepted.”*

Moved: Libby McPhee, State Council **Seconded:** Laura Stalley, State Council. Carried

Treasurer's Report: Nathan Kitto

Motion 04.03.24 *“That the 2023 year audited financial statement of ICPA-NSW Inc. and the accompanying Treasurer's Report be accepted.”*

Moved: Nathan Kitto, State Council **Seconded:** Libby McPhee, State Council Carried

Motion 05.03.24 *“That Colin Harris from Audit and Risk Solutions be retained as auditor for ICPA-NSW Inc. for the 2024 year.”*

Moved: Nathan Kitto, State Council **Seconded:** Libby McPhee, State Council Carried

Motion 06.03.24 *“That family membership of ICPA-NSW Inc. remain at \$18.00 for the 2025 Membership year.”*

Moved: Nathan Kitto, State Council **Seconded:** Libby McPhee, State Council Carried

Changes to Constitution.

These were sent out to members in the required time.

Motion 07.03.24 *“That the following amendments be made to the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of New South Wales Inc. Constitution Rule 17, Fees and Subscriptions.*

The following clauses are to be removed:-

- (c) The annual subscription shall be payable in advance on the first day of January
and*
- (e) The ICPA-NSW Constitution be aligned with ICPA (Aust) Constitution to allow for membership with ICPA(Aust) and ICPA-NSW and Branches to be a rolling membership.
and*
- (1) The annual subscription shall be payable in advance by the 18th day of January.*

The following clauses are to be added:-

- (e) The annual subscription shall be payable in advance.
and*
- (2) Subscriptions paid online are due 12 months from the previous payment
and*
- (3) Subscriptions paid manually are due on the 1st day of January.”*

Moved: Libby McPhee, State Council: **Seconded:** Nathan Kitto, State Council

Comments:

Judy Sinclair-Newton. What you have there to be removed is, I think, not what is in the Constitution. There was a bit of back-and-forward and we clarified and then that bottom part is not correct. If we take these minutes to the Corporation Act they may not approve these changes. What we want is that what was circulated to members needed to be amended.

Tanya Mitchell, President, ICPA-NSW.

Judy, could you please clarify otherwise this will not be dealt with until the AGM next year.

Judy Sinclair-Newton.

The information that went out to members about the changes picked up that things like the “18th” and the “rolling membership” isn’t current so that is not in the Constitution at the moment so my concern is that in the Incorporation Act what is being removed isn’t in the Constitution at the moment. I think that whole section of “The following clauses be removed: -” take all that out and it is in the motion that the changes are requested and then the motion notes the changes to be made to Rule 17.

Tanya Mitchell, President, ICPA-NSW

Do we have conference’s permission for a word change?

Granted.

The motion will now read:-

Motion 07.03.24 *“That the following amendments that were circulated be made to the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of NSW Inc. Constitution Rule 17, Fees and Subscriptions.*

(c) The annual subscription shall be payable in advance on the first day of January be removed.

and the following clauses to be added: -

(f) The annual subscription shall be payable in advance.

(1) Subscriptions paid online are due 12 months from the previous payment.

(2) Subscriptions paid manually are due on the 1st day of January.”

Moved: Libby McPhee, State Council

Seconded: Nathan Kitto, State Council

Carried

Election of Office Bearers

All positions were declared vacant, and Sue Kingwill, CEO, Contact Inc., took the Chair for the elections. Appointment of Scrutineers will be appointed if necessary.

Sue Kingwill, CEO, Contact Inc.

Thank you once again for the honour of being the Returning Officer and chairing the election of the office bearers for the AGM. Before I go into those formal processes, I just wanted to make a quick comment and acknowledge the work of those council members who have served ICPA-NSW in the last 12 months. Consistently yesterday I heard, and I’m sure that everyone else heard, that the Members of Parliament who play statutory roles and are representatives and were here yesterday consistently talked about ICPA-NSW, and I would reflect that on Federal Council as well, is a force of energy and commitment to be reckoned with. So, I would simply like to say to everybody who have served on the 2023 State Council, thank you for being the voice of equity and access for education for isolated rural and remote children and families throughout the state. I also want to acknowledge the Central West Branch for a magnificent conference. All your efforts have not gone unnoticed.

As the returning Officer I can report that there are sufficient nominations and all nominations have been received by the due time and have all been moved and seconded. As there is no contesting for any of the roles so there is no need for any scrutineers or election processes.

In the first instance you would be aware of a second layer to the council which is the Trustees and there are three people on that who are the Trustees of ICPA-NSW. The Trustees within their three-year tenure at present are Joan Treweeke and Lindy Kitto. Anne Milliken is retiring from that role this year. With that in mind, I have a welcome nomination from Ellen Walker from Rankins Springs and Ellen has been nominated by Kerrie Johnston and seconded by Sally Argent-Smith. We need to have the 2024 Trustee nomination for Ellen formally ratified so could we have a show of hands as an acceptance of that nomination? Thank you and welcome aboard Ellen. That is a great role for you to be taking on.

Trustees within their three-year Tenure: Joan Treweeke
Linda Kitto

Trustee: Ellen Walker.

Nominated by: Kerrie Johnston

Seconded by: Sally Argent-Smith

I'll go through all the positions of State Council and at the conclusion I would like to seek the members endorsement and acknowledgement at the end of that process. I also note that if there are any positions that haven't been nominated against, that will be deemed a casual vacancy and state council has the capacity to co-opt to that role in due time. So, it is with great pleasure I share with you the following election results.

President: Tanya Mitchell

Nominated by Annabel Strachan. Seconded by Laura Stalley.

Vice Presidents: (two)

Robin Beckwith

Nominated by David Butler. Seconded by Annabel Strachan.

There isn't a nomination for the second Vice President at this stage so that will be declared as a casual vacancy.

Secretary: Libby McPhee

Nominated by Gabie LeLievre. Seconded by Kirsty Wilson.

Treasurer: Georgina Luckraft

Nominated by Libby McPhee. Seconded by David Butler.

Assistant Secretary: Gabie LeLievre

Nominated by Britt Anderson. Seconded by Annabel Strachan.

Lone Members Officer: Myfi Kellahan

Nominated by Libby McPhee. Seconded by Britt Anderson.

Publicity Officer and Webmaster: Britt Anderson

Nominated by Gabie LeLievre. Seconded by David Butler.

Committee (six)

Tegan Barton	Nominated by Tanya Mitchell.	Seconded by Libby McPhee.
Claire Butler	Nominated by Georgina Luckraft.	Seconded by Libby McPhee.
David Butler	Nominated by Gabie LeLievre.	Seconded by Annabel Strachan.
Laura Stalley	Nominated by Annabel Strachan.	Seconded by David Butler.
Annabel Strachan	Nominated by David Butler.	Seconded by Gabbie LeLievre.
Kirsty Wilson	Nominated by Libby McPhee.	Seconded by Annabel Strachan.

With that in mind I can attest that all positions have been duly executed and I hope by acclamation we can say welcome aboard to all and new State Councillors for the 2024 year. On that note it is with my greatest of pleasure to welcome Tanya back to the chair as the incoming President for 2024. Thank you.

Tanya Mitchell, President. ICPA-NSW

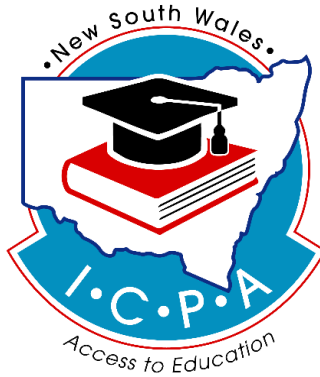
I'd like to welcome a new member onto Council and thank our 2023 Council for all the work and time you put in. You are absolutely amazing, and I know that I quite often get mentioned and thanked but I am only as good as my Council, and I couldn't do without each and every one of you. So, thank you very much.

The 52nd Annual General Meeting of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW Inc. was officially declared closed at 9.21 am.

.....
Tanya Mitchell
Honorary President
ICPA-NSW Inc.

.....
Libby McPhee
Honorary Secretary
ICPA-NSW Inc.

**ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION
OF NEW SOUTH WALES INC**



52nd Annual Conference
Dubbo – 2024

Agenda, Supplementary and Floor

Motions

**THE ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION
OF NEW SOUTH WALES INCORPORATED**

ALLOWANCES

A1. Brewarrina Branch

“That ICPA-NSW, requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning & the Minister for Social Services, to adjust the combined family’s adjusted income structure for the Living Away from Home Allowance for Secondary Students (LAFHA) to reflect the same structure as the Childcare Subsidy to compensate for inflation and the much higher cost of living in rural and remote areas.”

Moved by Liarne Mannix, Brewarrina. Seconded by Terissa Angel, Brewarrina.

Carried.

Explanation:

The current limit for LAFHA cuts off at a combined family income of \$79,996. From 10 July 2023, the childcare subsidy (CCS) increased which means most families using childcare now get more subsidy. The maximum amount of the CCS increased from 85% to 90% for families earning up to \$80,000. Families earning over \$80,000 and under \$530,000 may get a subsidy starting from 90%. Depending on their income, the subsidy will go down by 1% for each \$5,000 of income they earn. The income limit for CCS also increased from \$356,756 to \$530,000.

A2. Wentworth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning and NSW Treasury to increase the Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA) for eligible students.”

Moved by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill on behalf of Wentworth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation.

There are only three public boarding schools in NSW, with one school being boys only, and all of the school’s agriculture based. Places at these selective high schools are competitive. Many rural and remote students are either missing out on a place or have other interests besides agriculture but have no avenue to access a public high school. These students are forced into the private system to access any form of mandatory high school education. The cost to access these schools has increased enormously and the stories of children missing out on schooling, families increasing their farm debt or families making the heart-breaking decision to split up the family home is increasing. In 2023, the QLD Government announced an increase of \$4,000 to their Remote Area Tuition Allowance (the QLD equivalent of LAFHA). This increase is in addition to their base rate of \$3,144. Compared to the 2024 LAFHA rate of \$2,444. It would be fantastic for the NSW Government to recognise the great need for rural and remote boarding families in a similar way to

the QLD Government. The Minister and Treasury must address this problem and provide immediate relief by way of an increase to the LAFHA to ensure the remote NSW students can access education they are entitled to just as every other student in Australia.

Comments.

Louise Martin, President, ICPA (Aust). This is not against the motion but in addition to the extra funding it is not means tested in Queensland so I would be really pushing your NSW Government to remove the means testing altogether because this is an access payment. It has nothing to do with family's income. It is access.

A3. Walgett Branch

“That ICPA-NSW advocates to the relevant Ministers and Departments, requesting that NSW initiate a State Rural & Remote Scholarship Program similar to the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program but specifically for those children that do not qualify for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) despite living in remote areas and are educationally disadvantaged.”

Moved by Cath Deshon, Walgett. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett.

Carried

The distance criteria for assistance for AIC excludes children who live within rural and remote towns. For many families, AIC assistance is the difference between being able to send your child to a boarding school or having to leave town to educate your children. The reality is significant educational disadvantage does exist in these small towns regardless of how many kilometers you live from the local high school. Often these small towns have only one High School, leaving families with very limited options to educate their children, especially if the school is not able to meet the child's interests and educational needs. Access to allied health services, learning support, extension opportunities and choice of subjects are severely limited or nonexistent in small towns such as Walgett, and they don't magically appear just because you live closer to the local school. Most states recognise the need to offer bypassing of local schools that do not meet the safety, social, emotional education standards that families have a right to expect from a High School. QLD for example has 19 schools on the bypass list, NSW however only has two schools on the Bypass list. The eligibility criteria for such a scholarship must ensure the inclusion of families residing in small towns who do not meet the requirements for other available Commonwealth funding. Many scholarships, including Boarding School Scholarships stipulate that you must qualify for AIC to apply, so once again these families are left without any assistance. These families offer vital and indispensable services, whose roles are essential for any rural and remote town's survival. For example, agricultural workers, retail workers, council workers, nurses, teachers, plumbers, electricians, and police families. Tax paying families servicing rural and remote towns where there is little choice and poor educational outcomes, deserve equal access to financial assistance to educate their children. There is no justification for excluding these children. All children in these towns deserve a decent education, not just some of them.

Comments.

Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch. Our region is a similar demographic to Walgett and we have professionals move in who bring out the quality of living in our region and it is a well known fact

that, if they have children at the local school they will leave town at the end of year six and go to areas where they can educate their children safely and with the education that they would like their children to have access to.

Prue Ritchie, Bourke Branch. We have so many examples of families who are ardent supporters of public education and who come to our town and live there and because they can transfer their skills and their jobs, they move to a bigger regional town to continue their children's public education. But that's not a reality for those of us who are committed to the small towns that we live in.

Richard Stokes, CEO, ABSA. I don't want to speak against the motion, but I just want to make a couple of comments. Firstly, the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship programme was for low-income people only. It wasn't AIC required so I think that is an important consideration. It was aimed at low-income people, so I'm concerned, I guess, that you are trying to, and I don't dispute this, trying to look at people who live in country towns who have jobs but need to go away to boarding schools, that makes sense. The second thing is that it was a pilot programme and we have got to be a little bit careful because we don't want to kill the pilot programme and as I said yesterday in my speech, I actually talked about the fact that we need to very strongly lobby our federal politicians to continue it. It was a start, and it was a very good start, and the nice thing was that the new government actually extended the programme from three years to six years. So, you could get a scholarship from Year Seven through to Year Twelve which was unexpected, and we are pretty excited by that. I love the programme because it is a good idea. I don't dispute this concept very much, but I think we've got to be a little bit careful to make sure we don't undermine one with the other.

Louise Martin, President, ICPA (Aust). I would encourage Walgett Branch to bring this to Federal Conference in July to continue to support the absolute need for the pilot programme and to extend the criteria because the more people we have voicing in favour of the scholarship programme the better off we are and the more likelihood for it to become a permanent fixture rather than just a pilot, so we need numbers. There are three or four hundred people who applied for the original one of which 70 children received the scholarship so we need more people, more numbers showing the need for it and hopefully over time they will expand and increase the number of recipients due to the need because of the numbers of children applying.

Karen Ricardo, Walgett Branch. Just a comment. We definitely support the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Programme. The comment to say for us to be patient. My mother is 83 years old, and she has been lobbying for this motion in her lifetime, so we won't give up on any chance to change what is not available in NSW that is in other states. We have two of our members from Walgett Branch, two children who were lucky enough to get those scholarships. I know of four other families who have applied and who were told that they fulfilled every requirement, but the funds had run out. I think that when you do the numbers there are only about six or eight per state that would be able to receive a scholarship through the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Programme. So we will definitely be at Federal Conference, and we won't give up on what we can do for the children of our region.

A4. Central West Plains Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant Ministers review and amend Rule 3 in the Application for Isolated Children form SY040. The proposed amendment should state that the student who does not have reasonable access to a suitable state school for at least 20 school days per year due to adverse travel conditions or other uncontrollable circumstances beyond the family’s control and that once approved the application should remain valid for the child’s remaining school years.”

Moved by Fiona Aveyard, Central West Plains. Seconded by Vanessa Gibson, Central West Plains.

Lost

Explanation:

In its current form, the existing criteria means that when it becomes a drought year and the road potentially is passable, an AIC review means funding is then stopped for that year. Due to the unpredictable nature of these flooding events, it is not practical or good for children’s stability and continuity of education to be pulling children in and out of school, pending ad hoc AIC funding. This is particularly true in drought years where finances are often already extremely tight. It is unfair educational access to have a road that the council deems prone to significant flooding risk and can be closed and inaccessible for up to seven months of the year, which happened in 2022, to then not be eligible the following year in drought when it was still closed for 18 days which is under the 20-day requirement.

Comments.

Louise Martin, President, ICPA (Aust). This motion is relating to AIC which is really a federal advocacy. I really encourage you, your branch, yourselves to come to federal conference in Sydney and put this motion forward with the passion behind it at federal conference. I really encourage you to do that.

Bernedette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. I’m not fully over this motion and I guess I have a question which may not be able to be answered. I may be better to pose it in a case study. In Tibooburra we have people who live on stations with the national park, and they have houses seven to five kilometers out of Tibooburra and they come into the Tibooburra school. So, would this mean if it rained, and their child is enrolled in the Tibooburra school kindergarten, and it rained for 21 days, and the road was inaccessible for 21 days then they would be able to access AIC for the remaining of their school years even though in the following remaining years of their schooling the road remained accessible?

Judy Newton, Federal Membership Officer. I believe what they are talking about is the AIC Boarding Allowance and that is for high school students.

Bree Wakefield, State Council. I think Bernadette is talking about primary school students but AIC for primary is only for DE students.

Sandra Hewitt, Central West Plains. Just clarifying that the families who have raised this issue are raising it for high school students who are unable to access AIC funding because of their proximity to the local school or their home proximity to the bus stop. They have been on occasion been able to access AIC during flood years but then the subsequent year twenty school days was not met by the roads closed and it was 18 days and that family, despite sending letters that were requested, was still declined continuation of AIC for those children.

Libby McPhee, State Council. I just wanted to check that if there is any real case studies we need them for this but also if there is anyone out there who have had the 20 days and then have, perhaps, got a letter from the department saying that they are no longer eligible, did they go back with that form and say that nothing has changed and perhaps provided a list of days that the road was closed if they needed verification?

Fiona Aveyard, Central West Plains. I can speak to this personally. We were ineligible for AIC because of a short driveway despite our distance from school but we were able to access it because of inaccessible roads during the flooding season. We got that in 2022 but it was withdrawn because the next year wasn't a flood. The roads remained the same and if there was heavy rain the roads would be closed but that didn't happen because the roads weren't closed, and we didn't miss the 20 days of school the AIC was withdrawn. So, we made decisions to send children away to school on the basis of having access to that funding and the only option is to bring them home. It is too ad hoc to give it and then take it away depending on the seasons. The roads remain impassable in wet weather whatever the weather.

Ally Allison, Federal Council. Reiterating what Louise said, this is a federal issue and if you take it to state ministers, they will be unable to help. Federal council have a fantastic working relationship with Services Australia, and we can work case by case on individual cases. We really recommend that you get in contact with our Boarding Portfolio leader, Alanah Moller, with your case studies and your issues and we can help find some resolutions on individual cases through those channels.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I will just reiterate what Ally said. With State Council we work on NSW state matters, and we don't step on Federal's toes in terms of the allowances that are federal. So with your case study that you do you are welcome to send it to us as well but the people that you need to talk to is Federal Council. Our NSW ministers, like Ally said, won't be able to do anything for us so really with any of these motions it is Federal.

A5. Central West Plains Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant Ministers to create a new Rule 3 in the application form - Assistance for Isolated Children SY040, to better allow for children whose education is disadvantaged by geographic isolation, but who do not meet the criteria of Rule 1 and Rule 2.”

Vanessa Gibson, Central West Plains requests permission for a word change.
Permission for word change granted.

The motion now reads:-

A5.

“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant Ministers to create an additional rule in the application form - SY040, to better allow for children whose education is disadvantaged by geographic isolation, but who do not meet the criteria.”

Moved by Vanessa Gibson, Central West Plains. Seconded by, Fiona Aveyard Central West Plains.

Carried

Explanation:

Fiona Aveyard, Central West Plains. I think we will have a similar situation here that this is a federal matter and not a state matter and I apologize for that because it was my understanding that it had to come to state before it could go to federal. I’ll continue to explain the details.

By limiting the criteria to small Central Schools (<52 students) we believe that the adoption of Rule 3 will help those in greatest need (rural children living in geographic isolation) by making AIC more accessible, but without opening it up so broadly that it becomes oversubscribed.

The student is geographically isolated (Geographic Isolation Rules 1 and 2)

You are geographically isolated if:

- Rule 1: Your family home is 56 km or more from the nearest suitable state school
- Rule 2: Your family home is 16 km or more from the nearest suitable state school and at least 4.5 km away from the nearest transport to school or there is no available transport service to that school, and this will not be provided if requested).

The new rule should better reflect the changing nature of regional living. It should be more inclusive so that AIC is available to those who most need it. We propose Rule 3 as follows: If your geographically closest local school is a small Central School and you can show that a child will benefit from access to education beyond their local community. The benefit can be based around social, emotional, cognitive, creative, or physical advantage. The criteria for eligibility for AIC was drafted in the 1970’s by an organisation in its infancy, based in Bourke, Western NSW. Back then, the criteria adequately met the needs of that era and community. However, in a changed environment, it no longer provides the framework that allows for fair and equitable education to all students in and around remote, rural towns that are disadvantaged by geographic isolation. The current selection criteria exclude too many children; plenty of farm kids miss out but also 100% of the children who are not necessarily farm based, miss out as well. We are witnessing the emergence of first-generation boarding families, with parents who live and work in these small towns. They have careers in mining, are employed in an agricultural business but don’t live on farm, they might own small businesses in town, or even work as nurses and teachers. The magnetic drag for these families to move to bigger centers to provide their children with access to better educational opportunities is very strong, and it often results in them leaving small rural communities forever. We must better recognise and acknowledge the disadvantage faced by all students living in rural and remote communities, regardless of their proximity to town and school. Providing these families with the opportunity to apply (and importantly, be eligible for) financial assistance via AIC, means that boarding schools become a viable option, and the services and skills of these valuable community members can remain in our small rural towns. It is undeniable that inequity exists between rural and urban education - we know this because so much is already in play to address it. There are a variety of initiatives to attract quality teachers to rural towns, with varied

degrees of success. Improving access to AIC for more rural children will certainly see better outcomes for rural communities. The socio-economic rural/urban divide will only widen whenever any rural child is denied access to equitable education.

Comments.

Sandra Hewitt, Central West Plains. Also realizing that this is a federal issue, I do wish to share with the conference a case study, some facts from our own choir magazine and an opinion on this matter. My anecdote is that a friend of mine, Jemma, who was raised in Nyngan with a family of three other children, and all four qualified for AIC so those children enjoyed the benefit of a boarding school, high school education. Jemma went on to become a nurse and a very valued member of our Tottenham/Tullamore community. She worked in the areas of community health, child and baby clinic, she became a midwife and is currently a clinical nurse consultant. Jemma married a farmer from Tottenham, and they ended up on a family farm right on the edge of Tullamore. That meant no AIC for their family of four children. As we have heard today and as with other families their situation resulted in a decision when the oldest child got to year six to mothball the farm, lease it out and they decided to move to a regional town and settle there where they could provide educational choices based from home for their children. The result was that we lost a gem. We lost Jemma the Gem from Tullamore to Queensland, but we have also lost a second generation where her daughter is now studying radiology. The family wants to live rurally but she would likely not return to our area. The facts. From the Top Wire I noticed in the Health and Wellbeing here the points I'll read out to you. The NSW 2023/24 budget involves increasing the incentive payment to health care workers moving to regional and remote areas from \$10,000 to \$20,000 and also 419.1 million dollars to increase staffing levels to address the shortage of nurses in particular. It seems to me that it doesn't make sense to spend this money on attracting people just to have them leave due to the lack of AIC funding when their children get to high school. Thirdly, my opinion. ICPA needs to be active in addressing the inequalities created by the AIC criteria in our small communities in the area of the Central West Plains Branch. It creates massive division. It affects our members, and we are having a huge problem attracting young families to join our branch and become active, especially young families, because of the inequalities of AIC. Also this issue shrinks our towns and if you have driven through Tullamore lately, you'll see that it is a ghost town. It is a tragic, tragic example of how this directly affects our families, and it also affects our boarding schools. That is about all I have on that issue, and I realize that it is a federal issue, and we will be encouraging our branch members to go but they are our facts.

Prue Ritchie, Bourke. I do speak in support of the motion and while I realize it is a federal issue I would like to see ICPA-NSW advocate to federal council for this change. I totally agree that these small towns, Walgett, Central West, Bourke and everywhere in between, and if you are a member of an ICPA branch I guarantee that you have a service town and the people in your town are impacted by this then we are going to lose more doctors, more nurses and in Bourke we basically have very few nurses who are local left because they leave for educational reasons and I think if we can't advocate in this space for our members then we are in trouble and I think the same thing has happened in our branch in terms of attracting more people to join ICPA.

Louise Martin, President, ICPA (Aust). As you are aware we have been pushing really hard on the AIC in Federal Parliament. We are getting some real roadblocks with Social Services which AIC is administered through because they don't have the understanding of our issues and social services is welfare and we are talking about access here and you talk to the Minister for Education, and he

thinks it is a great idea but what we need is you to bring this motion to federal conference as well. We need every single case study you have got, especially this one, and if we could have that in writing to federal council as well as information from anyone else who has got issues because what they say is if you do not have case studies to back up the argument, we are flogging a dead horse. We need case studies. Ally is here looking for snippets, video clips, to further push the case but we can only do so much as federal council. We need you and your case studies to backup our arguments every single time. So, I really encourage you to do that and bring your passion again to federal conference.

Libby McPhee, State Council. I am in no way against the motion at all. Today we have already talked about the limited schools or bypass as some are referring to it. That's what should be working in NSW and it's not and I think we need another motion on that. I'm not against your motion but for NSW we are only going to get something else through the Limited Schools Programme if we don't meet any of the AIC criteria.

Judy Newton, Federal Membership Officer. I agree with Libby. The Statement of Support is where NSW really needs to be targeting and I notice that there are no motions on that this year. All the other states seem to get it Okay and seem to have enough flexibility in their programs or policies that they put in place to be able to address this issue and the issue we keep having at the federal level is that the states can sign off and they are not doing enough or there is not enough flexibility in that Statement of Support to be able to address some of these issues. So, I would encourage everyone to not this year but next year, to look at the Statement of Support again and make sure we are really hammering home that that needs to be changed.

Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill. I just wanted to make a comment. I'm really supportive about keeping people rural but I just wanted to identify for the rest of you our branch members what AIC means to us, and I think it is putting us even more at a disadvantage, so I ask the question that is it something that we need to separate from the AIC? We are talking about the AIC being kilometers, that is 56 kilometers, from the nearest state school. 17 kilometers from the nearest bus or transport. Just an example of myself personally. I am 725 kilometers to my nearest public boarding school. I am 125 kilometers on an unsealed road to my nearest primary school. 285 kilometers to the local high school which does not offer any boarding facilities, so I totally agree. I think it is really important to get these people and these communities back and keep them there, but I also think we need to think about the severely geographically isolated children.

A6. Central West Plains Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant Ministers to review Rule 2 in the application for Assistance for Isolated Children form SY040 and it be amended to exclude the 4.5km distance from home to bus stop criteria.”

Moved by Fiona Aveyard, Central West Plains. Seconded by Vanessa Gibson, Central West Plains.

Lost

Explanation:

The existing selection criteria of this rule exclude rural children who's on-farm home is located

close to rural road bus stops. Farmhouses may have been built generations ago and are often located for ease of access to rural roads in wet weather or access to electricity. We need to better recognise and knowledge the disadvantage faced by all those living in rural communities, regardless of the proximity of a farmhouse to a bus stop. This particular rule creates so much division and angst within the small communities of the Central West Plains branch of ICPA. It results in an unfair situation where some farming families who are closer in distance to the local school actually qualify for AIC, and other families who are further than 16km but under 56km do not qualify because their house is located “too close” to the road. I live 16.4 kms from town and I am a lawyer in Grenfell and my husband is an accountant in Forbes. I employ in my business 21 people, and he employs in his business about 52 people. But I have to say that we are not eligible because our bus, thanks to the advocacy of other reasons, stops right at our front gate which is 100 meters from our house. We are not eligible for the allowance and I have to say that, if it wasn’t for the generosity of the two boarding schools that my children are at we wouldn’t be there and we had seriously considered moving from the towns that we live-in to provide education for our children which would alternately mean that there would be a significant number of people in both of our communities would no longer be employed. So, this has a significant flow on effect if we have inequity in access to education for our children.

Comments:

Louise Martin, President, ICPA (Aust). Sorry to sound a bit like a broken record but, yet again, please put your case study forward and bring this same motion to federal conference. We have several federal ministers in the room to hear these stories and so hopefully, the more case studies like you and everyone else in the room have, we will get much more leverage. Thank you for your story but please bring it to Sydney.

A7. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA(Aust) to request the Minister for Government Services to increase Centrelink rent assistance payments.”

Moved by Racheal Neilsen, Louth. Seconded by Tegan Barton, Louth.

Carried

Explanation

Obviously regional, remote, and very remote children need to factor in rent to their study plans. Rent is the biggest component of a student’s costs and is often prohibitive therefore to study for example in a larger city or may mean that a student has to work so much that their course suffers.

Comments:

Rachael Neilsen, Louth. This is just a question to State Council and I wondering questioning whether what Laura referred to about the number of branches that came together at the Bourke Conference to put together a joint motion which was to do with the Distance Education Review but I just wondered, and I’m not sure how it works at federal level, whether ICPA-NSW State Council could put a motion together on behalf of this collective issue that we have been discussing

or can state branches put together, if there is collaboration on that, can we put together a group motion to federal or does it come across better from individual branches with the same issue?

Louise Martin, President, ICPA (Aust). It certainly carries more weight if it is coming from the branches and I am certainly looking forward to seeing you, Louth Branch, at federal conference raising this same motion and with all your case studies. I think how it has been working at Federal Council recently is that each branch puts in the motion, an individual motion, and then if they're virtually the same from each branch then Federal Council job lots them together into one motion but each branch is individually recognised in that motion and you all provide your own explanations with your own case studies which are relative to your particular location. That carries the weight. It's not State Council bringing it on your behalf because State councils represent everyone. The power is in the branches, and everyone brings it individually.

A8. Brewarrina Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to financially assist rural and remote families to cover the extra expense of Kip McGrath tuition lessons.”

Moved by Terissa Angel, Brewarrina. Seconded by Liarne Mannix, Brewarrina.

Carried. Please note the motion was amended after the following discussion.

Explanation

Rural and Remote children are behind in literacy and numeracy and many families are turning to Kip McGrath for extra tuition support to help catch their children up, so they are not behind before starting secondary school. Each lesson costs \$65 per child per week. For one child having to partake in both literacy and numeracy lessons each week for 52 weeks a year for two years just to catch up to Year Six level, is an extreme cost of \$13,520.

Comments:

Laura Stalley, State Council. Just wanted to clarify with Brewarrina Branch. During covid I'm fairly sure that it was the federal government that released funding to help children who were behind to catch up and I'm pretty sure that Kip McGrath was one of those providers in NSW. The department might be able to clarify that bit I remember seeing something awhile back about Kip McGrath being one of those. I don't know if that federal funding is still coming in. If the child needs to catch up, why are they not being caught up through the Department of Education? So, that is my question and can the department answer that at all? Do you know if Kip McGrath was a provider of that funding?

Tanya Mitchell, President ICPA-NSW. Do we have anyone from the department who can answer that or that is something, if the motion is carried, we can take up with the department. The department does not have anyone here to answer that question.

Tegan Barton, Louth. I just want to show my support to this motion because in my first year of distance education last year I flagged a few issues within my own distance education school and was met with roadblocks to how they would assist me in my tiny little school to get my child up

to speed with where they were supposed to be. So, I really just wanted to stand up and show my support to the Brewarrina Branch because I think there needs to be more support in our smaller schools because we are a small school. I know that Liarne is part of Dubbo but there needs to be more support to get our children to a level that allows them to be comfortable to go away to boarding school and numeracy and literacy is a right to education, isn't it?

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. I just want to give some examples out of our DE center and particularly I know four of our branch members have been affected by this programme which has become absolutely, positively implemented and the students have caught up and it has just been amazing for our DE center to be able to access this. The school was able to access funding during covid as it was covid funding and this programme came out of that. It is completely online lessons, and it was available to all public schools in NSW. It was a small fee. Our principal said that it was a very small fee, and it was very effect for how much it cost. I can't bring to mind the exact name of the programme, but the teachers were pacifically trained in literacy support and the children accessed online lessons through teams anywhere between two to five lessons each week depending on what stage of the school they were in. This programme was amazing, and my understanding was the funding was from covid through Treasury and the funding for this programme has actually ceased now.

Amanda Bell, Bourke. I personally agree with this motion but I'm just wondering if it needs to be narrowed down to just Kip McGrath? I have two children away at boarding school Year Eight and Year Nine and they both needed face-to-face tutoring the whole time they have been away to still be catching up and that's just something that my husband and I do ourselves for our children.

Anna McCorkle, Bourke. I would just like to put this forth as an idea. Yes, I totally support the motion, but I would feel that ICPSA-NSW should be cautious naming an actual organisation and branding an organisation for this support. So, as Amanda is saying, we need to look at the expense of tuition or intervention there as the wording to actually validate it in that space because teaching in the public system myself I think it would be very difficult for families of our schools to access that. So we are looking at, yes for remote families who could be distance education or could be small schools, but we need to look carefully. Also, in light of the media the kip McGrath has received recently from independent schools, perhaps don't name them.

Kath Deshon, Walgett. I agree that the name needs to be looked at. I also think the Centre for Effective Reading is a phenomenal go-to place if people need to get their kids sorted. I think what is offered in that department space needs to be utilized. My own son used it, so I know firsthand that it is very good. Also there are so many different programs and so many things you can get to do to get your children to where they need to be. So, people should look at what you can do that not so expensive as what the Kip McGrath people are charging you.

Rory Treweeke, Federal Life Member, State Life Member. Madam Chair, It is quite acceptable for somebody to move an amendment to the motion. Somebody can move and second an amendment that certain words can be added or deleted. It doesn't need to come from another branch. The moving branch can request the conference's permission to do that if they wish.

Terissa Angel, Brewarrina. I'd like to request an amendment to motion A8. to remove the words "Kip McGrath".

Conference permission granted.

The motion now reads: -

A8. Brewarrina Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to financially assist rural and remote families to cover the extra expense of tuition lessons.”

Moved by Terissa Angel, Brewarrina. Seconded by Liarne Mannix, Brewarrina.

Carried.

Boarding and Agricultural High Schools and Hostels

A9. Collarenebri-Mungindi Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning for the establishment of a co-ed State Agricultural Secondary School boarding College in Dubbo.”

Moved by Libby McPhee, State Council on behalf of Collarenebri-Mungindi. Seconded by Lindy Kitto, NSW/Vic Lone Members on behalf of Collarenebri-Mungindi.

Carried.

Explanation:

The Farrer Agricultural College at Tamworth is a popular College for rural and remote male students. The only other option that takes girls is Hurlstone and Yanco Colleges which are not geographically aligned for students in the north and northwest and far West of the State. Agriculture offers many careers, but students need to complete their secondary education first. We are aware that the NSW Government is not keen to build single-sex schools. Such a college would alleviate the current demand and lack of places available for students wanting to study agriculture.

Comments:

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. We fully support this motion particularly given what Myfi has just spoken about in her report about the closing of the boarding facilities for our students in the far west in Broken Hill.

Tim Fletcher, Monaro. This was discussed with Professor Jim Pratley who, about five years ago, specifically mentioned Dubbo as the preferred site for a new co-ed agricultural high school.

Richard Stokes, CEO, ABSA. I do think that you would benefit from talking to your Western Australian counterparts because they have six Western Australian Agriculture Colleges over there

which are very successfully run co-ed boarding schools. So, this is a good example in another state with a much smaller population, so I think it would be a very good conversation. We would be happy to help with that as well.

A10. Wentworth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning introduce boarding facilities for rural and remote students at one of the seven designated NSW Public Sports High Schools – Australian Olympic Pathway Schools.”

Moved by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce Broken Hill on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried.

Explanation:

Currently, NSW only provides three public boarding schools that are all located at Agricultural High Schools. Whilst this is great for those wanting to study agriculture, it leaves many remote students without a public schooling option. Travel and expenses are the biggest barrier for sporting children in rural NSW. Talented students from across rural and remote NSW deserve to be able to access specialised Sports High Schools to further develop their skills and education.

COMMUNICATIONS

A11. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Telstra Corporation to resume the same if not better level of service that was provided by the 3G network to the newly updated 4G towers.”

Moved by Rachael Neilsen, Louth. Seconded by Tegan Barton, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Since the upgrade, the reach of service has diminished in areas that were previously covered by the 3G network. It was guaranteed by Telstra that the same level of service would remain post the upgrade, however this is not the case.

Comments.

Michael Marom, Regional General Manager, Telstra, Northern NSW. We would like to get some specific details so if you could come and see us because you are right, it should be equivalent. So, if we can get some details of property address and phone number details, we can then check that. As a general statement, we are very keen to understand where areas have been declared or

upgraded by us for 4G prior to 3G decommissioning, if there are problems, we do want to know about them because it could be an engineering issue that we need to tweak after we have done that work. So, if we can get those details please come and see us and we'll address that. If I can just touch quickly on NGWL. It is really, really important if you are on NGWL that you do something about transitioning because you won't have a service come the 30th June. It has been a little clunky, but I would encourage everyone to contact us and we can talk about your individual circumstances and what is available. If you come and see us we will give you the details of our contact number throughout NSW which is telstracentralnsw@team.telstra.com but come and see us and we'll give you those details. You don't have to worry about getting a phone call or text message or anything like that because we'll contact you directly and help you with that transition.

Libby McPhee, State Council. I just wanted to make a comment on the Louth Branch motion and wanted to thank you for bringing it. It is exactly what I have been saying for the last two years at every regional advisory meeting that I have gone to with Telstra. I actually have trouble with the word "equivalent" because I think it should be better than equivalent because, right now, it is not equivalent to anything. So, that has been my drawcard and recently I heard that the CEO of Telstra said, "We are wanting to build a robust, reliable and resilient network." So, I'm hanging on that and unfortunately at the moment we are not getting that sort of service and so I just wanted to say that I really wanted to thank you for motion as it is what I've been saying all along, and this backs me up.

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. I just wanted to make a comment on this motion that our members are really concerned about this, but we actually don't know if it is better or worse because we are still operating on 3G.

Louise Martin, President, ICPA(Aust). Federal Council has raised members concerns several times with Telstra regarding the 4G coverage in 3G areas and have been assured several times that those areas that receive 3G only will receive 4G when 3G is turned off.

Distance Education/AHWISE

A12. Brewarrina Branch

"That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to provide a secondary learning platform other than MS Teams."

Moved by Terissa Angel, Brewarrina. Seconded by Liarne Mannix, Brewarrina.

Carried.

Explanation:

MS Teams is used by Dubbo School of Distance to deliver their online lessons. One Stage 2 child through Dubbo School of Distance Education in 2023 has endured 3 ½ terms of interrupted learning using MS Teams. In one MS Teams lesson, the platform dropped the call 54 times.

Noone has been able to fix the problem and the problem is continuing. An alternative platform needs to be provided.

Comments.

Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill. Our members through Broken Hill SOTA have been experiencing really positive outcomes from Teams. We have had no major issues since moving off REACT platform and very hardly any dropouts or things like that or any happenings throughout our lessons, so our comment is that our Teams have had no issues.

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. I would just like to speak against this motion as the experience of our branch members has been nothing but extremely positive and the outcome of the teachers and students using MS Teams, which our whole school, our DE center transitioned to halfway through last year, so the whole school has been on MS Teams for one semester and the beginning of this year. I'm just wondering if this might be an internet connection issue or perhaps a hardware issue because we have really completely got rid of dropout calls as one of the issues with our online lesson use.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I just have a question if the department or the branch can answer this. Have you been getting help from the help desk and how has the department help desk been negating those issues? I don't know whether that can be the Department of Education or you guys but one of the things that we have been told is that when there is an issue you need to make sure that you are reporting it. Obviously, you are saying there are a lot of dropouts and that's not acceptable for DE students to be having those dropouts, so I do really feel for you because when we were on REACT that's what we were experiencing as well so, I guess I just want to clarify the processes you have been going through to rectify the issue. That's not against but rather a comment on that. Yes, Broken Hill has been having positives and obviously there have been some negatives for a different DE center.

Liarne Mannix, Brewarrina. We are not wanting to get rid of MS Teams but would like an alternative platform for my child to actually join the lessons, so she has experienced nearly a year of interrupted learning. We went through the help desk. It has been flagged with Microsoft, with MS Teams. They have nearly looked at every possible problem. They have gone under every rock, and we have tried computers. We have tried alternative devices, alternative networks, and still nobody can fix the problem. So, we are certainly not saying to get rid of MS Teams, but we have a lot of localized issues here and as a result we can't join lessons at all because the crash rate has reached such a level that she would probably rip the computer out of the wall.

Jacynta Moylan, Acting Director, Partnerships, Department of Education. I can take this on notice, but I know that there has been a lot of professional learning support for staff members who are in the teams and, like the lady has said, there has been overwhelming positive response from students who are learning through that platform. It does sound more of a localized issue so I can take that up and follow it up for you.

A13. Tibooburra-Milparinka Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to ensure that a qualified staff member trained in literacy learning support programs, teaches the programs, live to geographical isolated Distance Education (GIDE) students.”

Moved by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill on behalf of Tibooburra/Milparinka. Conference permission to withdraw this motion.

Motion Withdrawn.

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. We received information at the beginning of the year at the commencement of the school term that this is applying to our DE center at the moment.

A14. Tibooburra-Milparinka Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Department of Education, School Infrastructure investigate how to provide more physical indoor learning spaces to allow all enrolled students at School of the Air Broken Hill from Kindergarten to Year Six to attend classroom activities at the school grounds at the same time.”

Moved by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill on behalf of Tibooburra/Milparinka.

Carried.

Explanation:

At the current time all enrolled students at School of Air Broken Hill (SOTA BH) cannot all physically fit in an indoor learning space all at the same time. In 2023 there were 146 students enrolled at SOTA BH, 2022 144 students. The average enrolled student over the last 10 years has been 130 students. (Data accessed from myschool.edu.au, Jan 2024). In the 10 years prior to this, student enrollment was much lower. The increase in student numbers has not been met with any increase in teaching classroom spaces. Currently SOTA BH grounds has three teaching spaces and four other facilities. (https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/schools/5/5302.html#content_2) The current building configuration at SOTA BH doesn't allow for all students to be on site for classroom learning experiences due to the lack of physical indoor classrooms. This means families are making extra overnight trips to Broken Hill each term to allow for all their children to have face to face learning time with their teachers. Especially at this current time, multiple overnight trips to Broken Hill substantially increase education costs for families. Classes have been taken off site to other facilities to allow students to all be in Broken Hill at the same time. We feel this is not a sustainable solution for the future. All students should be able to be accommodated at their enrolled school grounds. We are seeking an increase to indoor learning spaces at the SOTA BH grounds. SOTA BH is located directly next to other properties owned by the Department of

Education, which we would suggest would be worth investigating how the land within proximity can be better utilised for student learning for both SOTA BH and the other schools.

Comments

Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill. We totally support this as this affects most of our members.

Laura Stalley, State Council. With this infrastructure, maybe two years ago, we submitted in the School Infrastructure Report for the NSW government and the facilities at SOTA BH was one of those issues. In Bourke in 2022 we had the review into distance education as a motion and it was a joint motion through several different branches and a part of that review that infrastructure at all these DE centers was something that we felt needed to be looked at along with other facilities. So, I was wondering if the Department of Education would take this on notice and inform us if there is going to be a review into distance education which will include the facilities at DE centers. Is there any progress on that review and that motion from two years ago?

Tanya Mitchell, President, ICPA-NSW. The Department of Education has agreed to take this motion on notice.

A15. Wentworth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to provide an update on Stage 2 of the technology rollout that will include Wi-Fi, portable devices and printers that are fit for purpose.”

Moved by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried.

Explanation:

Almost every person in this room has used a portable device today to enable them to complete daily tasks. It is a fact of modern-day life that we are constantly moving to get things done. This is also true in a home school room where some activities are completed at a desk, some outside in the sand pit, some in the sheep yards and some at another property in another state. Equipping our students with suitable Wi-Fi and devices that are fit for purpose is a necessity and allows our students equitable access to their education.

Comments:

Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill. I just have a question. Is there anyone from the Department of Education in the room today who can give us an update on the Stage 2 rollout of the technology? No.

A16. Tibooburra-Milparinka Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests that NSW Department of Education allow Wi-Fi internet access in all geographically isolated distance education (GIDE) homesites.”

Moved by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill on behalf of Tibooburra/Milparinka.

Carried.

Explanation:

All GIDE homesite have been provided with NBN Sky muster internet connection. The desktops are connected by cables only. There is no provision for access to Wi-Fi at the homesite. At public school students can connect with Wi-Fi on their school campus with either a department / School provided device or with an approved and appropriate BYOD. GIDE homesites are our students' everyday classroom and they need to have access to Wi-Fi to allow more efficient completion of their daily required learning. Students have been provided with portable devices to assist with their learning needs. Such as an iPad to use for learning support applications, such readers and speech, for talk to text and screen reading. These functions don't work without Wi-Fi and the students must leave their supervised classroom to access these features at home. Students enrolled in Aurora College Opportunity class are required to have access to Wi-Fi to connect the college supplied laptop to use simultaneously as the department provided desktop at every lesson. This occurs at all face-to-face public schools; however, GIDE students have not been provided with access to Wi-Fi in their classrooms. While there are work arounds that have been found for these students, provision of Wi-Fi at the homesite, exactly the same as at other public schools, should be the standard and expected.

A17. Tibooburra-Milparinka Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education provide a colour printer per home school site, for Preschool to Year 12 students studying via Distance Education due to geographical isolation.”

Moved by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill on behalf of Tibooburra/Milparinka.

Carried

Explanation:

Geographically isolated distance education (GIDE) home sites were all given new printers with the latest technology update completed in 2023, however these printers are black and white only. This doesn't allow students to have an equivalent access to technology as students in other public schools. The DE schools have coloured timetables and send out student learning activities that

are required to be printed in colour. This colour printing must then be completed at home, on printers GIDE families are purchasing and maintaining at their own cost, further increasing the cost of educating their children.

Comments:

Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill. We are totally in support of this motion, and it seems totally archaic that our children don't have access to a colour printer.

A18. Wentworth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to continue to explore new technology that will shape Distance Education sites into the future.”

Moved by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried

Explanation:

Whilst School of the Air families are rejoicing at finally being able to access technology and platforms that have been widely available to other students and the general public for years, it exists that many families have already moved beyond this and, at their own expense, adopted up to date technology in their school rooms. Families are often bypassing the Department provided technology in favour of faster more appropriate technology. Many home sites are using platforms such as Starlink as more reliable and faster and by having their own Wi-Fi connection they can then incorporate portable devices, coloured printers and other technology that is more efficient.

Comments:

Laura Stalley, State Council. I wanted to add to this and if we look at when the first motion when NBN came to an ICPA conference it was in the early 2000's and we received the new system last year, so it took a very long time for that to be implemented. There was a whole generation that missed out because it took the department a long time to push it through but I also wanted to reassure the floor that as a state council when we do meet with the department we are always advocating for better internet, better computers and I know in our last meeting with the department which covers a couple of the motions that we have just had that they are looking at Stage 2 of the implementation process and they have asked us to continue to give our advice on what our members are saying. So, I just wanted to reassure the floor that we are there, and we will be putting those through.

Louise Martin, President, ICPA (Aust). With a Queensland hat on and this is really a comment and something whether NSW might consider pursuing, is that in Queensland the government doesn't actually provide anything, hardware, software, equipment. They provide a subsidy so families can choose whatever they like. You can have whatever internet you like and I wonder if that is worth ICPA pursuing that the government doesn't provide you with the product that they are dictating to

you that you should have but could be providing you with an internet subsidy and you can choose whatever you like to have.

Jacynta Moylan, Acting Director, Partnerships, Department of Education. I want to express that we don't actually have a representative from ITD here today but in working with our unit we will definitely bring ITD to the table in our regular monthly meeting with ICPA to be able to provide further information around ITD today.

Tegan Barton, Louth. Just a comment and that is that my eldest son has been enrolled in Bourke/Walgett Distance Education since September 2022. It is now Maech 2024. I do not have an NBN connection. I do not have a computer. I do not have a printer. I do not have anything given to my child by the department or the body there. So, basically, I just want to support this motion wholeheartedly. I actually think we'd be better off on a subsidy level because I currently pay my internet bill connected to my internet, my computer, my ink and everything like that because I wanted my child to not miss out on his education and being part of a classroom as such.

Bree Wakefield, State Council. Just in response to your comment about Queensland. Laura and I had countless meetings with the department over eighteen months and that was initially what we were asking for because we knew it could be rolled out quicker and potentially be less loopholes to jump through, but we were told that this was not possible. I'm sure that moving on State Council would be more than happy to reopen those conversations with the department about moving to a very similar plan as Queensland has.

A19. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning to implement an initiative to ensure practical access to high schooling for geographically isolated stage four students, using the existing primary school facilities in remote and very remote areas.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Neilsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

NSW DoE does not provide practical high schooling options for some isolated high school students. The students this motion refers to are those who are unable to successfully assimilate into a boarding school environment because of a variety of reasons. The only practical pathway left to access high school is by Distance Education. It is unreasonable to expect a student to have any success in completing the DE or SOTA high school curriculum without a literate adult to support them and an appropriate environment to learn in. Quite obviously students, especially in stage four, need structured spaces and time and the support of an SLSO. It has been the case that remote primary school students who are going to do DE high school repeat year six because his or her family, teacher and community recognise that is effectively their last year of education. Isolated communities recognise it will be those students last school year. With respect to anyone who cannot believe that the above strategy is necessary in 2024, should examine the statistics

citing the education levels achieved by DE high school students who fall into the classification of vulnerable. We would like to see a situation in which a successful time at high school is accessible and the attendance obligation to do so is as rigorous as it is in all state schools. Therefore, truancy issues would be the responsibility of the DoE. Louth Branch recognises the complexities with enrolments in dual schools. However, we ask the Minister and the Department work with ICPA-NSW to find a solution which allows access to the existing state school facilities, including a supervisor, immediately.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

A20. Tibooburra-Milparinka Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education and NSW Department of Planning and Environment to investigate pathways for funding accommodation or offer rent subsidies, to teachers and educators in Early Childhood Centres that are located in remote and very remote locations.”

Moved by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra-Milparinka. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill on behalf of Tibooburra-Milparinka.

Carried.

Explanation:

The first five years of a child’s life are vitally important for development in all areas, including cognitive, physical, and social. While the State and Federal Governments have worked hard to establish and sustain early childhood education services in remote and very remote locations, it is very hard to attract teachers and educators to these areas. Accommodation is extremely scarce and what is available is expensive. If services could offer rent subsidies or free accommodation, it would make it easier to attract staff to remote areas. This situation in a very remote community like Tibooburra is even more acutely felt. There is one public school and one not for profit early childhood education facility, directly across the road from each other. A person who wants to live and work with children in Tibooburra is much more likely to choose the job that comes with subsidised housing, which is the public school. Which in turn adds another layer to the recruitment and retention of staff for the early childhood education facility across the road, as they don’t have access to the subsidised teacher housing. We believe there is scope for both the public and other providers of early education facilities in remote and very remote areas to work together on this issue.

Comments:

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra-Milparinka. We have brought this motion forward for a few years now with a few revisions from responses from the department so that Ben Ballard spoke about yesterday about the priority area of Rural and Remote Education Strategy tailoring housing support. The immediate need and the collaborating across the departments that he said was occurring in regard to access to teacher housing in remote and very remote areas is very pleasing to hear.

A21. Wentworth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning and the NSW Department of Education to provide administrative and governance learning and support for volunteer led community preschools.”

Moved by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried.

Explanation:

Communities across NSW have been asking for administrative assistance from the government for many years. It is completely unrealistic to expect parent volunteers to be able to adequately administrate community p reschools. The responsibility and expectation placed on these volunteers without training and support is beyond what can be considered reasonable. With Community Connections Solutions Australia (CCSA) recently going into voluntary administration, community preschools have lost their only avenue of support in regard to governance, management and compliance. These tasks are beyond that of a volunteer and the government needs to step up and provide this support.

A22. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant State Ministers to amend the lack of salary parity between four year trained early childhood teachers and four year trained primary and high school teachers.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Neilsen, Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

Currently, the pay gap is so significant it is impossible to recruit and retain teachers in early childhood Centres and new recruits often use early childhood jobs as a steppingstone into the primary school sector.

Comments.

Louise Martin, President ICPA (Aust). Just to let you know that this issue is raised at federal level at every given opportunity. At delegations and in submissions so, I would also encourage to bring this to federal conference and yourselves and your passion because early years in this sort of thing need to be in front of the federal government as well as NSW.

Rachael Neilsen, Louth. Just a question to federal and state council. I'm not asking for an amendment now but just for the future, are we able to leave that motion but add in, "and ICPA (Aust)" and then that will go to both conferences.

Louise Martin, President ICPA (Aust). In answer to your question, it is best for your branch to submit the motion yourselves to federal council. If you bring it here, then that's okay but it's not the state council's role to forward it on to federal council. It is really your branch that needs to forward it on to federal and state councils and each member is a member of three tiers. You're a member of your branch and you are a member of your state, and you are a member of federal so therefore you send any federally related lobby issues straight to federal conference. I hope that helps.

A23. Bourke Branch

"That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant State Ministers for funding to be sought to address Early Childhood teacher pay parity."

Moved by Lilly Hand, Bourke. Seconded by Amanda Bell, Bourke.

Carried.

Explanation:

Pay parity of early childhood teachers is a significant issue. An early childhood teacher completes a four-year degree course. If they elect to work in the public school system in a rural and remote location, the additional benefits they will receive are significant compared to working as an early childhood teacher. Early childhood services are significantly limited in their budgets. It is important to find long term solutions to address the pay parity of early childhood teachers in rural and remote locations.

Comments.

Prue Ritchie, Bourke. I speak in support of the motion and just to echo from the Early Childhood Portfolio earlier. The gap in pay in Bourke, which is a Connected Community school, if you are a deputy principal and therefore effectively taking the same responsibilities as the service leader. In fact the nominated supervisor of a preschool has a higher level of responsibility than a deputy principal. If you are paid under the Children Services award the award rate is \$71,224 and you will work for 48 weeks of the year. If you are employed in a government preschool at a deputy principal level, on last year's salary rates you would earn \$147,776 and you would potentially take home \$63,000 in additional subsidies. That is \$210,000, which is nearly three times the amount of money and that doesn't take into account the additional superannuation you would accrue or the additional eight weeks of leave that you would accrue. I think for services in our area it is becoming increasingly difficult when we want to attract that higher level of education, and we want people who are skilled and qualified in the area to teach our young people, to attract and retain those staff. The announcement of the 100 preschools of which Bourke has been named in the 49 sites. This is

just going to create further pressure because you are going to create more positions within the Department of Education and we will lose the staff that our organisation have worked very, very hard to train up and some of them are sitting in this room, who are amazing people and amazing educators and they are going to be amazing teachers. So, why wouldn't they leave and move to something that pays them three times as much.

A24. Walgett Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning urgently address the issues that are undermining the ability of rural and remote towns to recruit and retain Early Childhood Educators.”

Moved by Cath Deshon, Walgett. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett.

Carried.

Explanation:

The shortage of Early Childhood Educators (ECE's) is obviously a widespread issue that is compounded in small rural and remote towns, resulting in large waiting lists for preschool places and the Long Day Care Centers having to reduce operating hours and reduced days. Having few if any ECE's in these small towns not only compounds the educational disadvantage of this age group of children but has knock on effects to local schools. For example, when primary & secondary teachers do not have childcare for their younger children, they then must reduce their teaching hours/days. Recruiting staff to remote areas is very difficult when there is limited or no childcare or pre-school available. Families are restricted in their working hours and days as one parent must look after the children. In some towns such as ours, we have childcare facilities we just don't have the staff to run them. A higher level of pay is needed to encourage more people to get early childhood degrees and to retain them once they are qualified. The rate of pay for early ECE's needs to be addressed to reflect the education undertaken by educators. Early Childhood Educators do not receive rental assistance or have rentals readily available to them, unlike primary & secondary teachers in remote areas. With very limited rental availability and no rental assistance, there is little chance of attracting ECE's to these remote regions. Universities, TAFE, and other educational providers need to continue to be able to provide a variety of flexible pathways to gaining a Diploma or Degree in early childhood. Many students struggle because of the cost of studying and lengthy unpaid work placements. Subsidised course fees and financial assistance for rural & remote work placements would be of great benefit. More also needs to be done to find out why ECE's are leaving or thinking about leaving the industry. Constructive feedback and practical suggestions need to be gained from educators themselves. Input is needed from not only current educators, but also those that have recently left the industry in order to make meaningful improvements in the sector. It is essential that this information is sought out in person by travelling out to these rural & remote communities to see and hear first-hand what support is needed and what needs to be put in place going forward.

A25. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning communicates effectively and continuously with remote and distance education schools to ascertain whether there are eligible preschoolers who are not achieving their mandated 600 hours of preschool through lack of access.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Neilsen, Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

As many as ten remote schools were identified by ICPA-NSW in 2014, as servicing areas without practical access to pre-schooling. The NSW Department of Education has since identified other sites. Several remote DE preschools have been established. However, as the Department of Education is not involved in researching the changing needs of these communities, it falls on the community members to advocate for access each time there is a four-year-old without access to preschool.

A26. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education includes geographically remote three-year-olds in the criteria which enables three-year-olds to begin preschool in NSW.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Neilsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

The Start Strong Funding communication explains their existing criteria for three-year-old inclusion to receive funding for preschool are:

Children who are at least 3 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year and are:

- Children with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds
- Children from low-income backgrounds
- Children with a disability or additional needs
- With English language needs
- Children who are at risk of significant harm

Louth branch would like to see remote three-year-olds included in this criteria, as geographically remote children rely on intermittent specialist services and often have formidable distances to travel. This would allow them to have two years to achieve their mandated 600 hours of preschool access. Currently, there are distance education providers not enrolling three-year-olds at all. This simple solution would ensure that remote three-year-olds are eligible for enrolment.

Comments.

Prue Ritchie, Bourke. I'd just like to bring it to conferences attention that the announcement for the new preschools attached to public schools in NSW will not be funding three-year-old

preschool. So, it will be four-year-olds only so, even if they do fit within those categories your three-year-olds won't be eligible. This is my understanding, and I don't know if anyone from the department wants to talk to that.

A27. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Director Educational Leadership for the Mitchell Region to arrange the establishment of two days preschool at Wanaaring Public School.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Neilsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Louth Branch is relieved to have finally been informed that the preschool at Wanaaring has commenced at the beginning of term one, 2024. However, only one day is being offered. This is a gross inequity. In 2016, the Mandatory Universal Access agreement was signed and quoted directly from the Department of Education Website states that all four-year-olds are to be given access to “15 hours per week or 600 hours a year, with a focus on participation by indigenous children, vulnerable and disadvantaged children”. Eight years later and only half of that opportunity is being granted to the children in one of the state's most disadvantaged villages.

At Wanaaring there are -

- four preschoolers (possibly more)
- an enthusiastic SLSO
- safety net funds available
- space within the school
- proven policies are available to ameliorate any liability issues
- DSODE is ready to enroll students in their fifteen hours a week program to achieve that amount of mandated access, students require two days at the very least.

Louth Branch would like therefore for the children of Wanaaring to have what EVERY four-year-old child in Australia has been mandated to have access too. Namely access to fifteen hours a week of preschool not six.

HEALTH and WELLBEING

A28. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Health to ensure that there are antenatal, postnatal, and infant early years in-person support services to be available to rural and remote parents.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Rural and remote parents need accessible services catering to antenatal, postnatal, and early years stages. The development of resources and services for isolated children and parents are needed to ensure equity of access to support, especially in 0-3 years to ensure children start preschool without disadvantage because of where they live.

Comments

Laura Stalley, State Council. I just wanted to quickly mention that last year we had Tresillian come to conference so just remember that Tresillian has a great service which is available so if people do need that service, please get in touch with them as well.

A29. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Health and Minister for Education and Early Learning to enable access for parents/carers of remote students, vital allied health support through funding and/or subsidies”.

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Currently parents and carers of remote students needing early intervention through allied health support are required to pay for these services. Distance Education Centers are unable to provide timely support to access school or allied health professionals because of long waiting lists or unavailable services. Time is critical for targeted intervention in a child's education. A subsidy or funding to enable families to access providers of allied health professionals to allow them to access appropriate, timely support for their child or children. Children who do not have a significant disability cannot access NDIS fall through the gaps. The only options their parents have are to pay for it out of pocket or not access vital support.

Comments.

Nicole Piper, Namoi. Royal Far West just came to mind, and it is one other organisation that may be able to help.

A30. Bourke Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Minister for Health and NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning extend the “Brighter Beginnings” to include developmental screeners, closely reflective of the Royal Far West Healthy Kids Bus Stop, for three-year-olds in rural and remote areas.”

Moved by Amanda Bell, Bourke. Seconded by Patricia Bates-Canty, Bourke.

Carried

Explanation:

The Brighter Beginnings program, while welcomed, does not adequately address the early intervention identification needs of children in rural and remote areas. The Royal Far West Healthy Kids Bus Stop Program was tailored to each communities’ needs, and in Bourke, this included a collaboration between RFW and local health service providers for a detailed health and developmental screener, including Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Psychology, Dental, Hearing, Child and Family Health Nurse, Community Nurse, Aboriginal Health Service to access to these disciplines by families for children, and to create a child centered approach to care, and pathways to NDIS Early Intervention if required for three-year-olds. Providing a full developmental screener for three-year-olds enables families and preschools to work together through this process to develop strong partnerships with health providers into and through primary school to meet the needs of the states most vulnerable children.

Comments:

Rachael Nielsen, Louth. Louth Branch supports this wholeheartedly. On a personal note my two children attended the Bourke preschool. The first had access to the Healthy Bus program and I could not speak more highly to have access to all those allied health services particularly in a center like Bourke where they aren’t available or, if a visiting specialist comes there they are extremely difficult to get into and I was very disappointed to hear that such a wonderful program is , (a) not being funded again and (b) is not being replaced by such a comprehensive program. So we support this wholeheartedly.

Prue Ritchie, Bourke. I speak in support of this motion. In Bourke when we did have that Healthy Kids Bus coming to town to do those developmental screenings within our preschool, we were looking at three-year-olds. The current offering is for four-year-olds, so it is happening a year later. We don’t have those two years in preschool. It won’t have a full set of clinicians assessing the child so it will mean that it will limit access to early intervention particularly if the child requires NDIS pathways and that is a really big barrier for children in our area.

Nicole Piper, Namoi. I’ve had a family experience with Royal Far West many years ago now, but if you can get there in the first instance, and we used to have to go physically all the time, but as the technology improved, we were able to continue some of the therapies online through the school. We didn’t have a good enough internet to run it at home so keep Royal Far West in mind. You do have to get to Sydney to start the process that way, but you can do it remotely from thereon and not have to go to Sydney all the time. It is a shame that the Bus isn’t going on as well.

Joan Treweeke, Chair Royal Far West. I have to say that we have restructured our organisation

around three programs hoping to have a wider range in childhood families which is the Pediatric Development Program. I think Claire will be able to give you some more constructive news tomorrow because we have budget submissions to every government department which is likely to fund anything in this nation. So, we are in the holding pattern and waiting to hear but I am sure Claire will bring you up to date with what she can say at this stage. We haven't forgotten. We know we are needed, and we are doing our level best to make sure that it is properly funded so that it remains accessible to all.

Prue Ritchie, Bourke. Thank you, Joan, and the Bourke community really do appreciate the work of Royal Far West. I would say that while we hugely appreciate the work of Royal Far West it is probably the responsibility of the government to take on that funding and they need to step up to the mark for these kids, especially when they are isolated. I know that Royal Far West changed their entire program based on the commitments that were made by the state government at the time and what this was going to look like and how it has ended up are two completely different things. And now it is really unfortunate that now the children of Bourke who we have worked super hard for and with huge collaboration within our community and with a lot of philanthropic funding which also come through Royal Far West has also now disappeared and the next generation of kids will miss out if we don't get money in place. Nevertheless we appreciate the support.

Anna McCorkle, Bourke. I'd just like to speak also on a personal note. Something like Royal Far West, in its early intervention, is vital for our children. We wouldn't have screening programs like a Breast Van or cancer checks if screening wasn't proven to be an effective measure. So, if we've got those programs across the state for adults where are they in our children? Where is that screening for children? It should be seen as the same level of importance if not more so because these needs, if identified at a young age, are completely addressed for that child to undertake their learning future. We are all lifelong learners and to do that with a challenge where intervention could have helped you, the three, four, five, six, seven-year-old child is just frightening to see the effect. Thank you.

Myfi Kellahan, State Council. With our services at home and talking to our speech pathologist before she went on eighteen months of maternity leave which was replaced by a service one day a month, so, supporting what Prue was saying, the government needs to increase their game. The other thing that needs to be remembered is the teleconferencing and the online network for speech has problems because the sounds which are transmitted down aren't a true reflection of the sound that the child is actually making so the programs being implemented by the speech pathologists in real time and when they see them face to face, are not a true representation of the work that was required.

Joan Treweeke, Chair Royal Far West. I know that currently governments are looking at assessing all children at four however, assessment is one thing and if it can't be followed through with treatment it is just a data exercise and forever telling us how large the problem is and it is growing particularly after covid and particularly as pediatricians west of the mountains close their books.

A 31. Rankins Springs Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning to ensure that rural and remote schools have access to in-person counselling sessions for students.”

Moved by Sally Argent-Smith, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs.

Carried

Explanation:

There are students requiring counselling face-to-face in rural and remote schools, however, due to the lack of services being available locally, they don't have access to an appropriate face-to-face counselling service. Our local TP1 School, Naradhan Public School, has not had access to a regular school counselling service for over three years. The school has a significant need for regular face-to-face counselling to support students academically and emotionally and are being disadvantaged by not having this support. This year, there has been a change to the School Counsellor allocation from half a day a fortnight to the school (the same day is shared with another school in the district) to two full days and a half day per term. However, in this time the Counsellor needs to travel to the school and does not allow sufficient time for cognitive assessments to be administered in the school counsellor time allocations, nor does it allow for discussion with the staff about the next steps needed to be addressed for each of the students requiring any other services that may or may not be provided for through the Department of Education. The school is required to pay for occupational therapy and speech pathologist visits from its own budget and with this limited funding it is not sufficient to employ an SLSO (Student Learning Support Officer) to assist students. Schools are obligated to fund services for students' needs outside of Department of Education services due to wait times and lack of facilities in the area. The teaching staff are also feeling the absence of a regular school counsellor who had previously provided support with classroom management strategies and learning adjustments to ensure every student was supported.

A32. Monaro Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Regional Health, to prioritise workplace health capacity with targeted scholarships as part of a program to incentivise employers.”

Moved by Pam Fletcher, Monaro. Seconded by Tim Fletcher, Monaro.

Carried

Explanation:

There are many vacancies in some health fields, especially for professional medical technicians like sonographers. For example, to become a sonographer an individual must complete a post-graduate course. These courses require the student to be employed as a trainee in the field before they can enroll in the university course. However, employers want qualified employees not trainees who are a cost to their business. By offering rural students' scholarships the employer is freed of the financial obligation and will be more inclined to accept trainees. The final report of the

University Accord Panel recommended that postgraduate students who are undertaking work experience or internships be paid.

MISCELLANEOUS

A33. Walgett Branch

“That ICPA-NSW consider moving the State Conference to a slightly later time in the year to allow a little more time for the preparation and submission of motions.”

Cath Deshon, Walgett. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett.

Carried. (Vote count to determine outcome)

Explanation:

Submission dates for motions are usually very early in the year and often right after the Christmas holidays. January is a very busy time for members and State Council members themselves. Families are flat out juggling work and children at the same time as trying to have a break themselves, so are often away or too busy to contribute to these very important motions. We feel a few weeks extra to get the children back to school and then to work on motions would allow for a lot more member input, sharing of ideas and editing.

For those schools like Walgett, we have an extra week, a heat week, and we were also chasing members at the same time and Cath and I were at the beach drinking cocktails so we were just a bit flustered. As State Council need considerable time as well to work through all the motions, it may be of benefit them as well. The State Conference date may be too difficult to move, but we wanted to put it up for discussion to see if it might be of benefit and at all possible.

Tegan Barton, Louth. I would like to support this motion because having three young children and getting back into the swing after Christmas and back into the early learning for my kid it has been a real push to meet with people and be away from home so early in the term.

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. I would like to support this motion as a teaching supervising mum. It was really tough getting back into things this year even with the heat week and trying to get all the motions in. So, thank you to my branch members.

Louise Martin, President, ICPA (Aust). I think it is a great idea, but I wonder if it has implications for the constitution etc., because you have to have your meeting within a certain time after the end of the financial year so. I’m just raising that. It is a great idea, but it may have unintended consequences.

David Butler, State Council. I’d like to comment against the motion. I don’t think all the issues all happen in the first week of the year. You have most of the year to nut out your problems and your motions gradually throughout the year not in the first week after school goes back.

Libby McPhee, State Council. I just have a quick question for the branch. When were you thinking of having it?

Karen Ricardo, Walgett. We just thought that even a week would make a big difference. We were very grateful that Robert and Phillipa have their children in Queensland because while we were at the beach they were doing all the work, and we totally understand that motions don't just happen then, but the end of the year is busy if you are lucky to have a harvest and all that sort of thing then you run into Christmas. All those sorts of things. I find my priorities when I go back over the year is chasing up my membership and I think that I should be doing that before I go into these motions and I just know that any of the members that I contacted, I totally got it, I don't have little children anymore and I'm not putting them into school, that we didn't even ask. We sent out emails, but we didn't harass them anymore because we just sort of felt it a little bit more this year and we are not sure why. Just a week later and then even for our members to come to conference we expected all these lovely new young ones, but they were at swimming carnivals and that sort of thing, and I just think that by next week the dust would have settled a bit. We didn't think much later but maybe a week. The only other thing I was going to say was that we are at the whim of the convening committee when they want to hold it and we really leave that date with them. Rarely do we muck with whatever they come forward with and I know the Central West Plains did consider this quite considerably the fact that they were going quite early but that fitted and of course this year we have got Easter at the end of March, so it has made it a pretty difficult decision for everybody. We totally understand that and appreciate it. We just thought a week would make a huge difference to us and maybe there were other branches as well. We also understand the constitution and everything else but if you don't bring these things up for discussion, we may be in the same position another time.

Richard Stokes, CEO, ABSA. I love the fact that it is this week this year because it means that I can get to South Australia and Western Australia for their conferences as well and I thought that you organized it and that is why it actually happened. It was fantastic and I know that NBN Co felt the same because they are going to the same conferences., so, some of your presenters, for me for instance, it is interesting because I was in Alice Springs last Thursday, and here these two days and I'm in Perth next Friday and I'm in South Australia the one after. It would be really good, and I don't care when it is, as long as they don't clash because they have for the last three years.

Kate Yabsley, Nyngan. I fully support Walgett with what they are saying. I think the issue for Nyngan particularly this year was that we don't actually know who our members are, and we are trying to get people to have an input into our motions. I think that is probably more the issue for us.

Judith Bryant, Central West Plains. Convening Committee. It has been really tricky to be honest. Here in Dubbo we are quite a regional center. It is a fly-in-fly-out center for many of our workforce. Last weekend we had 9,000 visitors in Dubbo for a touch football competition. Next week is a state bowls competition. So, if we held it last week or next week, we'd all be camping on the river, and we would not have this facility. We would not have the zoo and we may not have Creo either. So, we had to work with the Dubbo Visitors Center, and we were also very mindful of when State Parliament was sitting because that will determine what politicians and senators and what have you were able to attend. We also had to work in with Easter and we had no control over that, and we were very mindful of the fact that a lot of families go away over Easter. So, there was quite a bit of toing and froing earlier on when we were planning. I do apologise that it doesn't fit with everybody, and it is really hard to juggle everything and come up with a very considered determination.

Tanya Mitchell, President, ICPA-NSW. Thank you very much everyone. I don't know if I'm

allowed to say anything, but I will. It was pretty tight for State Council to try and get themselves together and do their day jobs and get their kids back to school as well. Normally we do hold conferences in those last two weeks of March and that's how it has historically been, but Judith has absolutely described all the reasons it happened this week this year. So, the next couple of motions might actually help you or satisfy this motion if I can suggest that to you.

RURAL SCHOOLS

A34. Wentworth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Department of Education ensure the ‘Tell Them from Me’ parent and student feedback surveys are offered in all NSW small schools, regardless of number of students, with responses collected and actioned by the office of Director Educational Leadership to ensure anonymity is maintained.”

Moved by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth. Seconded by Laura Stalley, State Council on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried.

Explanation:

Families and staff of small schools have advised that in past years when they have been able to access the ‘Tell Them from Me’ survey, they have found the responses were valuable in being able to appropriately plan ahead. In a small school, the interaction between the school and the community is vital and families should have an appropriate avenue to report their educational experiences and expectations. It is our understanding that schools with less than 10 students are not able to participate in the survey, however we believe that it is imperative that these schools and their families have access to the survey as a way of providing feedback where needed. We understand the need for anonymity and therefore in a small school setting responses should go direct to the Director Educational Leadership’s office. They could then share across all small schools what is working well and what could be improved.

A35. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests that each Director, Educational Leadership initiate a meeting with a representative from ICPA-NSW State Council post State Conference.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Neilsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

We understand that previously, our representatives have been invited to ask for meetings with remote Directors, Educational Leadership (DEL) annually. We believe however that annual meetings would be more likely to happen if the DEL calendar invited ICPA to a meeting when the DEL is visiting particular areas. Then the DELs are able to be informed of issues before, in some cases, they become a problem.

A36. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to include ICPA-NSW as a permanent presenter at their annual principal conference.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Louth Branch welcomes sharing knowledge with professional staff and believes that all communities need to discuss issues with the aim of working collaboratively towards solutions.

A37. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning, to ensure that there is always a ‘handover’ between principals in remote and very remote small (TPI) schools.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

At the end of the schooling year via an online meeting, we ask the outgoing principal to provide the following to the new incoming principal:

1. A first term program would allow the teaching principal to
 - settle into the huge administrative load knowing that the students are starting their schooling in the first week.
 - become familiar with the multistage classroom environment.
 - assess the students’ academic progress and levels before having to set their own program.
 - check what resources are available at the school before purchasing new ones.know the students and their families which in a small community is integral to roles in which leadership is required.

2. It is vital a discussion is had between the incoming and outgoing principals to ensure the new principal has an insight into the school and the community.

3. Principal contracts should commence on the 1st of January, allowing the principal time to familiarise themselves with information applicable to the new school prior to the 1st day of the term.

A38. Bourke Branch

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Department of Education ensure that Connected Communities Directors of Educational Leadership are included in regular meetings held between ICPA-NSW and NSW Department of Education representatives.”

Moved by Amanda Bell, Bourke. Seconded by Patricia Bates-Canty, Bourke.

Carried

Explanation:

Many of our rural and remote areas have Connected Communities Schools but as a body Connected Communities are not present to hear the issues and concerns discussed at our conference or in deputations. It would be beneficial to have a representative from Connected Communities leadership attend as part of the regular meetings between the Department of Education and ICPA-NSW.

Comments:

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. These last four motions have been there for a number of years, and it is evident that nothing is happening but why isn't anything happening? Just curious to know if there is any movement for it to happen and what is stopping it from happening?

Ben Ballard, Executive Director, Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy Unit. Thank you for the opportunity and thanks for the motions. We know that they have been there for quite some time and some of these motions are motions that we have worked towards, and particularly with this one, we are very happy to invite Connected Communities Educational Leadership directors as well as the Executive Director to that meeting. Sometimes things change, and things don't happen. There isn't a principals' conference anymore as the cost of bringing 2,200 principals together at a time during the year is insurmountable and it is not something that the department has done in a long time. We are very happy, and I know that a lot of our Directors, Educational Leadership are very happy to meet with the ICPA and we have shared the contact details of all that with our people and they are very happy to meet so if you reach out directly you can organize meetings in most cases. So, some of these motions, while they are there and continuing, there are ways around it and there are ways we have been trying to address it. Maybe things have moved on since, and that is what we want to try and fix as part of this and the more we can meet with you and showcase how things are working I think that will address some of those items.

Annabel Strachan, State Council. Just on the DEL's meetings, we can reach out, but we would like for them to reach out when they come to our area. We are all volunteers, and it would be much easier if the DEL could make contact and just let us know that they are in that area and if there are any issues we would like to meet?

Anna McCorkle, Bourke. I would just like to explain to people that we are now ten years into Connected Communities in our schools in NSW and they started off with fifteen schools. They are now nearing nearly thirty schools in number with twenty-three communities that are affected through Connected Communities. So, it is vital that these people, the educational directors in that sphere, are with the other educational directors because the de board and they decisions and the impact of decisions are felt right across the board, and they need to be at the same table at the same time. It is really important that a motion like this comes to fruition.

A39. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to provide adequate and appropriate school staff accommodation at all remote schools.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth

Carried

Explanation:

Rarely there is any affordable accommodation in remote villages. It is simply disgusting that the DoE expect staff to accommodate casual staff or a second teacher, in their own homes whether they are there themselves or not, in substandard caravans or dongas nor at their own expense. There is no additional funding which allows for this extra expense. This is yet another disincentive for principals as they cannot leave their position for any amount of time as the school would be without a teacher.

Comments:

Rachael Nielsen, Louth. I would just like to thank Ben for his comments about the funding that has been allocated to Louth for casual teachers and other teachers to use and I would like to thank your team for putting that as one of your pillars when tailoring support because that is one of the major issues in our region. However, I would like to keep the motion there because it is still relevant for other areas.

Ben Ballard, Executive Director, Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy Unit, Department of Education. It is important that you keep this on the agendas it is ongoing and, as you can see, it is something that we are incredibly aware of and 100% something that we want to do something about, and it is a reason why it is a part of the pillar.

A40. Rankins Springs Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning to allow TP1 and TP2 Principals more autonomy on how Routine Planned Maintenance funding is spent.”

Moved by Sally Argent-Smith, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs.

Carried

Explanation:

Currently the Assets Management Unit identifies what projects will be funded with the Routine Planned Maintenance funds whilst the Principals of TP1 & TP2 schools don't have any say in where the money will be spent in their school. Often the money could be better spent in other areas that would be of immediate benefit to the students and staff. Funds associated with Routine Planned Maintenance are for carpets, painting, adjusting doors and windows, cupboards, and boundary fencing. A school where students of some of our members attend wanted to fix some old blinds in the staff room and place ceiling fans in some of the rooms. However, they could not use the money they had available to them in Routine Planned Maintenance fund as the items requested were classified as new fittings and fixtures. Improvements need to be included. ICPA-NSW State Council has completed a submission for the review into the Planning and Delivery of School Infrastructure in NSW where it is hoped that this issue will be addressed.

A41. Rankins Springs Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning holds Directors, Educational Leadership of rural and remote schools accountable when a complaint has been made about a teacher or school by a parent or parent body.”

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Sally Argent-Smith, Rankins Springs.

Carried

Explanation:

The Rankins Springs branch would like a clear and transparent outcome or resolution to any complaint that has been made regarding teaching staff in a rural or remote school or indeed any school. There seems to be a culture in some schools that sees students and their families discriminated against for standing up for what they feel is right for their children. School families and community members feel that there should be a written explanation or policy that parents can access to follow up complaints that have been made where there has been no clear resolution to that complaint. Some schools, teachers and principals seem to have a problem communicating with parents about their children and about what is happening within the school. Parents are finding it extremely difficult to access face to face interviews with some teachers regarding the progress of their children, due to the teachers not being resident in community. Appointments are difficult to obtain, and some parents are feeling excluded. It is crucial that parents feel that they can contact their children's teacher or the school principal whenever they need to. The previous principal of our TP2 school recently was successful in dismissing the current School Council which then reduced the opportunities for parents and community to work in partnership with school leaders to

achieve greater governance of the school. The Rankins Springs Public School has been involved in a school review recently and we would like to thank Mr. Keith Duran, Director of Educational Leadership in Monaro, for his leadership in this process. We are pleased to say that a positive outcome has been achieved with the mandatory guidelines being given to the school to assist in moving forward to rebuild relationships.

Comment:

Rachael Nielsen, Louth. I would just like to support this motion as it is particularly relevant to some of the TP1 and TP2 schools where there is a teaching principal. You are dealing with a teacher, a principal and a personality clash which is seen in our region. Some people leave and choose to go to distance education purely because of a personality clash with the principal or teacher. So, we would like to support this motion.

A42. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests that NSW Department of Education adopt a policy that ensures that school programs from TP1 & TP2 schools are physically observed by Directors, Educational Leadership.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

As part of the Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) we urge that the Director, Education Leadership needs to review biannually:

- the teaching principals’ program,
- register of work taught
- the students completed work which aligns to that program.

This level of support is necessary for the teaching principal who is working in professional peer isolation despite having access to online mentoring and the communities they are serving who deserve the best education possible for their children. We believe that the Director’s physical presence will engender friendships and networking which will allow the Director to understand issues between teaching principals and their communities before problems arise.

Comments:

Annabel Strachan, State Council. I believe that in the larger schools, programs are handed in by teachers every five weeks for either a supervising teacher or principal to review. That is not available in small schools so it would be great if someone was overseeing and making sure it was happening.

Charles Dwyer, Director Education Leadership, Mitchell Network, Department of Education. I believe that there is a policy process that exists to support this. I understand where Louth is coming from and I work with Louth Public School so I do understand. Through the professional development framework for teaching principals along with management leadership practice there is also observation of teaching practice which I can say is part of the role that I do. So, there is actually a policy that exists in that to monitor that. Also, through the curriculum policy monitoring cyclic

systematic process that looks at curriculum policy over a three year cycle where all schools will go through that so I actually believe that there are policies that do exist and I think that that is a point where we can work more closely with school communities so they can understand what that actually looks like because it may not necessarily be as front of house as it needs to be after listening to that motion.

A43. Rankins Springs Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning establish an independent body to receive complaints from parents or staff for TP1, TP2 and Central Schools as opposed to the designated Director, Educational Leadership (DEL) if an appropriate resolution has not been reached.”

Moved by Sally Argent-Smith, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs.

Carried

Explanation:

Parent concerns/complaints are continually being unexecuted through the current complaints process of bringing them to attention to the school’s designated DEL. Setting up an independent body to listen and direct the concerns or complaints to the relevant DoE departments would negate the communication issues and often limited or no understanding of rural and remote communities that are often experienced with DEL’s. Parents are not following up complaints or even making complaints because of how intimidating the DEL can be. Often parents are reduced to tears because of vindictive behaviour and frustrated that they are not being heard and are treated as second-rate citizens. In our branch we have parents of three schools experiencing the same behaviour of the DEL that is intimidating and disrespectful.

Comments:

Annabel Strachan, State Council. In our area we have been through a similar thing. It not only affects the school but also it affects the whole community and that can last for years. So, it is a very delicate thing.

Tegan Barton, Louth. This is a little out of my realm but I have three sons and one is in Grade One in distance education and until I joined ICPA I had no idea what a DEL was or anything like that so I feel that people who do live in rural and remote areas potentially need to be made more aware of the channels they can follow with issues around TP1 and TP2 schools and talking and how the resolutions come out.

A44. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the Chief Executive of the NSW Land and Housing Corporation ensure that agencies responsible for the maintenance of remote teacher housing do so efficiently.”

Moved by Rachael Neilsen, Louth. Seconded by Tegan Barton, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Currently we have many examples of inefficiency and negligence in the maintenance of teacher housing. Those agencies are responsible for conducting six monthly checks. Before a teacher begins an appointment, all residences must be watertight, cracks and gaps filled, paint work done.

Comments:

Charles Dwyer, Director Education Leadership, Mitchell Network, Department of Education. I am very much in support of this. Our work through the Rural and Remote Implementation Plan which Ben alluded to before well I am actually a part of the working group that is advocating for support in this area so, I can guarantee that that is work we are currently undertaking. I work across a lot of large area of rural and remote area of NSW and teacher housing is definitely something I am advocating for my teachers, my principals and my schools because we need to increase the standard and attractivity of those things and that is part of our plan in terms of that rural and remote implementation.

A45. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to include an appropriate vehicle in the incentive package for Rural Schools Principals whose school is on an unsealed road.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Neilsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation

Without a vehicle attached to the school, these very remote schools are at a disadvantage in attracting staff. An arrangement for a school car to be used as a part private vehicle such as there is for some other local government staff, for example, local shires. In small schools an added attraction is that students can be transported to school-based activities. Vast distances and unsealed roads in these isolated communities coupled with the fact that there are no essential services (for example health, emergency services and tele-communications) means that the school and students are even more isolated without an appropriate vehicle.

A46. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning separate the Rural Teacher Incentive and the Rental Subsidy to become individual enticements.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Neilsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Currently, the rental subsidy is deducted from the rural teacher incentive. The housing provided by NSW DoE in some rural villages is not up to a standard which the commercial rental market would be able to charge for. We feel that one incentive is negated by the other.

Comments:

Anna McCorkle, Bourke. I will comment from a personal nature. A person like me who chooses to live in Bourke and work at my local high school, is actually disincentivized by the change in this policy. I think it needs careful examination. I would believe leaving it in policy for ICPA to look at it but then you also have to consider that if you choose to have your own home in these communities then you get no more than anybody else that is a fly-in-fly-out person. You are choosing to make that town your home and your community and then I would be losing out so to speak. So, it is a really sensitive nature and I think it needs to be examined carefully and for a lot of people its what has brought people into our communities and our schools and I think the fact for a lot of teachers this motion, perhaps, came about because for a lot of teachers, they were unaware that their rental subsidy was being deducted from that rural teacher incentive payment. It was deemed a little bit underhand for those staff members who were unaware that they were going to lose it from their incentive payment, the rental subsidy. It is a little bit of a double-edged sword, but I think it is very important to sit down and have these discussions with the minister about what it looks like. Perhaps another system can be put in place, or some changes made to it. So, a little bit each way but just explaining it.

Ben Ballard, Executive Director, Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy Unit, Department of Education. The department is really aware of this situation and, as Anna just pointed out, aware of the bits and pieces that impact on each other, so it is being carefully looked at the moment and, hopefully very soon, we will be able to understand which way we can move in that space.

Rachael Neilsen, Louth. Thanks Ben and I take what you are saying on notice and Anna, I completely agree with what you are saying, and I think that a part of it is the way it is advertised as it is quite deceptive in the meaning. I agree that it is a delicate issue but maybe it needs to be printed on an advertisement and it needs to be clear that the incentive states that this is the full price of that, but you will be taking the rental subsidy off that. That needs to be clear.

A47. Rankins Springs Branch

“That ICPA-NSW urges the NSW Department of Education to ensure that the Hub and Spoke Program position in rural communities is retained for TP1 and TP2 schools so that relief teaching staff can be accessed when needed.”

Moved by Sally Argent-Smith, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs.

Carried

Explanation:

Our local schools currently have access to a Hub and Spoke Program teacher when covering teaching staff on leave or who are attending professional development. School principals are continually fighting for the positions to continue as casual teacher availability is extremely low in rural areas. These positions are vital in ensuring schools remain operational in the event of an unexpected illness or leave. TP1 and TP2 schools have a low number of staff and do not have the ability to split classes in the event of an unexpected absence. Another issue is that this Hub and Spoke Program position is shared with three small schools in the area whilst the teacher is based at a central school in the district. Whilst principals and teachers are accessing professional learning at the same time, each school can't access the relief teacher through the Hub and Spoke Program on the same day so accessing a very small bank of relief teachers is still an ongoing issue in rural areas. In the past there have been teachers assigned to this position that do not have experience or behaviour management skills to go from school to school and have not been suitable candidates. This position needs to be filled with proficient teachers. We acknowledge that these positions are three or five-year contracts, however, it is very rare that staff stay in this position for much longer than one or two years, therefore it is necessary to ensure that this position is retained for TP1 and TP2 schools. Perhaps the Hub & Spoke teacher could be based at a TP1 school, instead of the current central school model, which would also assist in alleviating the current issue of trying to secure a second teacher, a position that has been advertised for over six months and is not filled in the TP1 school, and in the times when other Hub & Spoke schools require a relieving teacher, the base TP1 school could cover it with the teaching principal position.

A48. Rankins Springs Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning and the Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy Unit to ensure that regional, rural and remote schools facilitate and provide letters of reference, letters of support and/or letters of recommendation for students to their families who wish to apply for secondary school scholarships, bursaries and/or funding from private, public or independent schools and/or community organisations that provide financial support for secondary education.”

Moved by Sally Argent-Smith, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs.

Carried

Explanation:

A family has asked our local rural primary school for a reference from a class teacher to add to a portfolio for their child to apply for boarding scholarships in 2023. The request was refused on the grounds that public schools do not liaise with private schools or other schools according to the Department of Education's policies. The family were also told over the phone that staff are too busy to write references at the end of the year and a school report should suffice. The concern was heightened as references have always been given upon request from the local primary school, even the previous year under the same Principal. The parent body is concerned that if simple requests like these are refused from rural and remote schools, isolated families, who already have hard decisions to make when it comes to the secondary education of their children, will be further impacted. More importantly, students will be impacted if they cannot access scholarships, bursaries and financial support from secondary schools and other community organisations. This reason alone puts families with boarding students at a severe disadvantage financially. Boarding is an additional fee that day students do not have the burden of. To bring this financial inequality back to a level playing field, any opportunity for boarding fees to be reduced must be supported. Moving forward, Rankins Springs Branch would like to see a stronger partnership formed between isolated families and small rural and schools. We would like to see such simple requests honoured. The well-being and educational goals of isolated rural students should be promoted and encouraged first and foremost. This motion was presented to the conference last year and to date there has been no clear decision about this issue. Whilst some Department of Education staff agree that schools supply a letter of reference when requested and there are some that are unsure. Rankins Springs branch is now requesting that the Department of Education advise ICPA-NSW, of a clear directive on this issue and that Department of Education staff, for example, DELs and principals, should be informed of the clear decision so this can be settled for all future student scholarship applicants.

Comments:

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. I would just like to speak personally to this motion. I had a Year 6 student last year and it was a very convoluted, complicated process to get a letter of reference from the school. So, I really see the need for it to be a very easy and clear process for families to approach the school to get a letter of reference.

A49. Rankins Springs Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning implements a mandatory minimum standard of qualification for Student Learning Support Officer, (SLSO) positions, either prior to or following employment.”

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Sally Argent-Smith, Rankins Springs.

Carried

Explanation:

Currently Student Learning Support Officer (SLSO) positions don't require any qualifications and schools are employing people with no previous experience in this area. Often these positions are not advertised but are simply filled by word of mouth within the school

communities. When there are behavioural issues such as meltdowns to be dealt with, the SLSO requires sufficient training/qualification to manage the situation effectively. We do understand that there are many courses that an SLSO can access to upskill themselves in this position, however, if they choose not to, then their role and the student, are being compromised.

Comments:

Prue Ritchie, Bourke Branch. I think this needs some very careful consideration. The example of early childhood education where we regulated for the minimum standards has actually driven a decrease in quality and sometimes by overregulating you end up with less in the way of quality. So, you cut down the staffing pool you've got, and you might have older people who are willing to work in your schools, but they are not prepared to engage in formal study, which is what we found in early childhood. It is great if you can get those qualifications through, but I think that sometimes when you mandate stuff and make it a regulation that is hard for small and remote communities to meet you can end up having an opposite effect to what you are trying to achieve.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I just wanted to add onto Prue's comment. In Home Care, which some families might use for their children, they were trying to put a restriction on that. You had to be a minimum Early Childhood trained to be able to get that job and that created a real shortage if that had come in. It hasn't come in for rural and remote areas yet but if that came in it would reduce our pool from which we can employ because they would have to have to be working towards a Certificate III in Early Childhood. So, sometimes if you do put those conditions on you limit your employment pool.

Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Is it worth rewording the motion to potentially say, "training" or "provided training" instead of "qualifications" so there is something, moving forward, to help people in these positions to support the children better and sport those in the workplace without narrowing the pool as such?

Fiona Aveyard, Central West Plains Branch. I would like to add to that comment that often in these schools it is a great introduction for people who didn't have access to tertiary or further education. They go into these roles as SLSO's and then it is a steppingstone for them to do further training. I'd also like to add that it is often an extra adult in the room, training or no training, brings a great benefit. It is hard enough to fill those positions so without having that extra person in the room the whole class could possibly be detrimentally affected.

John Fisher, Acting Coordinator Engagement, RRREP. My background is with disabilities and special education, so this resonates with me. The first thing I would like to acknowledge is the essence of the motion is about student outcomes, so I really understand the nature of the motion. However, you would like to consider that every staff member, like Charles Dwyer mentioned earlier, that every paid employee in our schools, whether you be a general assistant, lab assistant, front office staff, teacher, deputy principal, every employee in a school has to undergo a performance development plan with their supervisors which typically involves looking at areas of concern and highlighted in the plan for improvement and support. So, it is an ongoing plan and really, the essence of the motion should be making sure that those processes are followed. Again, like the last speaker said, quite often throughout my career, I've seen people flourish, who have come in with very, very little understanding of the role but we've picked them up because we needed someone right there and right then because a student with very complex needs landed on our doorstep and they were willing enough

to take on the role. I've seen them actually flourish with the right type of support and, particularly with that notion of "grow your own", we are actually building people up from being SLSO's to wanting to become teachers. So, I would like conference to consider those comments before they cast their vote.

Louise Martin, President, ICPA (Aust). I just wonder, seeing there was opposition to the motion that they need a right of reply.

Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch. Thank you for all the comments. Could we ask for a word change?

Tanya Mitchell, President, ICPA-NSW. Do we have conference permission for a word change?

Granted.

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Sally Argent-Smith, Rankins Springs that the word "qualification" be changed to "training". *Carried*

The motion A49 now reads:-

"That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning implements a mandatory minimum standard of training for Student Learning Support Officer, (SLSO) positions, either prior to or following employment."

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Sally Argent-Smith, Rankins Springs.

The Scrutineer, Richard Stokes, counted the votes.

Carried

SPECIAL EDUCATION

A50. Rankins Springs Branch

"That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning to ensure that Principals work with families of students with learning disabilities to implement educational support for these students."

Moved by Sally Argent-Smith, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs.

Carried.

Explanation:

Every student should be able to access professional services outside of the DoE to support their Independent Learning Plan (ILPs). ILPs need to be assessed on a regular basis with the support of independent disability trained staff along with the principal and classroom teacher. Parents of

a student from our branch with Level Two Autism at their local Central School are struggling to find support in implementing learning programs to address the educational needs of their son. The student has access to the NDIS funding to employ an OT and other disability trained staff independent of the DoE for assistance for english and math's for two hours per day. When the Principal was contacted by the parents about this support, they indicated that they have the final say as to whether they will allow it or not. The student has participated in regular online tutoring at home for math's and english and achieves 75% to 100% in all assessments but when he is in the classroom environment he struggles. It appears that the principal is not prepared to work with families for better outcomes for all students.

TERTIARY

A51. Louth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests University Administration Centre (UAC) to look at the way credits and advance standings could be transferred from one academic transcript to another when a student moves from one university to another.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth. Seconded by Rachael Neilsen, Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Louth Branch asks for this because we believe the circumstance is unfair when a university degree course unit has been completed and passed that a student is required to re-do and pay again for that same unit. When degree courses are certified by DoE, we feel the lack of unit acknowledgment is an inequitable deterrent for students' success in achieving qualifications, requiring more time to complete, increased accommodation costs, and having to pay twice for the unit.

Comments.

Robin Beckwith, State Council. I think we are going to see more of this because it does affect their business but when courses are mapped to an education department standard this should be a given and in a recent meeting with Steve Wahn MP, he agreed that this was a commonsense thing so, hopefully we can force something along that.

Anna McCorkle, Bourke. People may not think of it from this point of view, but it is very much something we need to take up with UAC and I would encourage you to do that in NSW. But this also becomes a federal issue when the fact that students change from state to state. It is very important that across the nation that we have a level playing field for this because that cost of redoing things doesn't only happen with tertiary qualifications in terms of a degree but also happens with your working with children check. It could also happen in other areas and things you need to do with

what your credits are, and your advance standings are to take to another course. So, recently in my other hat on federal we did respond and put in an added submission on an Australian skills passport and we clearly articulated that it was very important that, should something like that come in, rural students don't need to be disadvantaged and highlighted that they can't access these things by making them compulsory but it needed to provide a level playing field across the Australian qualification framework of where these qualifications sat including each component within those qualifications. So, you don't see a doubling up and therefore repaying for that expense particularly if you transferred something and created a HEX debt you don't want to be paying for that twice. Once is enough.

A52. Monaro Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education to support rural and remote communities by collaborating with the Country Universities Centre to establish Regional University Study Hubs in TAFE Connected Learning Centres, so that communities with TAFE Connected Learning Centres can have improved and streamlined local access to both higher educational and vocational opportunities provided from one facility in the town.”

Moved by Pam Fletcher, Monaro. Seconded by Tim Fletcher, Monaro.

Carried

Explanation:

TAFE NSW have established 22 Connected Learning Centres across regional NSW to support vocational students. These CLC's have modern and appealing learning spaces, fast connectivity and technology, and staffing support. Country Universities Centres have also been established in a number of NSW communities with very similar modern and appealing facilities and technology. This is really a co-location issue as we don't want to build it twice. Smaller regional and rural communities that have TAFE CLC's include Hay, Bourke, Cobar, West Wyalong, Deniliquin and Jindabyne. We suggest that a partnership between TAFE NSW and the CUC supported by the NSW Government could relatively easily and inexpensively broaden out the vocational utilisation of TAFE CLC's to support local students in studying higher educational courses from any provider, in addition to current support for vocational courses delivered through TAFE NSW. We request that the NSW Minister through TAFE NSW and Country Universities Centre collaborate to explore opportunities such that existing resources in the 22 regional and remote TAFE Connected Learning Centres be better utilised by broadening access to university as well as vocational courses. Smaller regional and rural communities might then have one single location in town with streamlined access, support, industry engagement, school outreach and widening participation activities across the whole range of tertiary education.

Comments:

Louise Martin, President ICPA (Aust). Just some feedback from Federal Council. I mentioned earlier the Australian Universities Accord final report was recently handed down and

Recommendation 39 says,

- Consider further expanding the Regional University Programme by increased use of existing tertiary education infrastructure like TAFE's allowing eligibility for existing universities to host a regional University Study Hub.
- Changing the name of the programme from Regional University Study Hubs to Regional Study Hubs to recognise their role across both VET and higher education.

So, hopefully with that recommendation your motion will get some traction.

Michelle Spence, Hay. As you heard in the explanation Hay is on that list. I would like very much to back this motion. It just seems a no-brainer that you would use facilities that are already there, and we would benefit. Obviously, Hay is a distance from any other facility, and I think the closest one is about 200 kilometers.

A53. Walgett Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education to increase the allowance rates for VTAS (Vocational Training Assistance Scheme) for travel, accommodation, relocation and rental assistance for Apprentices and Trainee’s in NSW.”

Moved by Cath Deshon, Walgett. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett.

Carried.

Explanation:

Regional and remote apprentices and trainees travel vast distances to attend TAFE and other off the job training. These students often travel to regional cities for a block release of between three and five days which often means they must travel the day before and sometimes the day after it finishes. This is required anywhere between every three to six weeks throughout the year. These expenses are a heavy burden on these students who are mostly low-income earners. The current VTAS rates are \$0.33 per kilometer for travel and \$56.00 per night for accommodation. The ATO in the year 2023-2024 works on \$0.85 per kilometer to run a private vehicle. In most regional cities it would be unlikely to be able to get a motel room for under \$100.00. VTAS relocation and rental assistance is up to \$2,500.00 per year. In comparison Relocation Scholarship recipients for University Student’s receive \$5,385 in the first year, \$2,693 and \$1,345 after that. Last year the Apprentices Travel Card worth \$250 to regional and remote apprentices and trainees was axed because it could be used to purchase anything. The cost to the government of each card was approximately \$900 due to administration costs. As the VTAS system is already in existence it would only require a change of rates to allow for significant help for apprentices and trainees.

Comments.

Michelle Spence, Hay. I would like to support this motion. Obviously being in Hay, our apprentices have to travel a long way and the big drawback for having some support here would mean that we wouldn’t lose these kids. They would come back and work in our towns.

Robin Beckwith, State Council. Both my apprentices and I have benefited from the VTAS system but it is amazing how many people haven't heard of it. When we were meeting in Sydney, I think I was one of the few who had actually come across it. It's a simple system. It's common sense as they can just change rates. The travel card was nice, but this gave far more help. When you go back to your communities just check in and if you have a tradie at your house and they have an apprentice just make sure that they are benefiting from this because it's there and it is really easy. TAFE actually do a pretty good job of making sure that they fill in their forms every week but just check in and make sure that they are claiming it.

A54. Bourke Branch

“That ICPA-NSW request ICPA (Aust) to seek support for regional and rural tertiary students and apprentices who have to undertake placements to complete their qualification.”

Moved by Amanda Bell, Bourke. Seconded by Lilly Hand, Bourke.

Carried

Explanation:

A final year Radiography student must undertake a 12-month full time unpaid placement to complete her degree. This student must relocate to where she has been sent for the placement, to work full time without payment, find and pay for accommodation, transport, and support herself for the year with a second job, after being a student for three years. A nursing student has regular six-week placements during her course. She is bound to go where she is placed. She not only has to find accommodation for this time but still must pay rent where she attends university, car payments and support herself during the placement but is unable to work at the part-time job she usually does in the evening to pay her bills. She is essentially paying double rent or accommodation.

Comments:

Myfi Kellahan, State Council. I'd like to add to this too. With speech pathology I know you have to do an eight-week placement and that has to be done in an eight-week block. I know personally of a friend who actually left that course because she couldn't afford the time away from farm and the family to do a solid eight-week block.

Tim Fletcher, Monaro. I think going forward the final report from the University Accord Panel, which actually has a recommendation on paid experience as well, is something we need to get a good read of.

Louise Martin, President, ICPA (Aust). In addition to what you just said, Tim. The Australian Universities Accord final report Recommendation 14 reads, *“Introduce support for unpaid work placements. Federal government to work with tertiary education providers, state and territory governments, industry, business, and unions, including funding by governments for the nursing, care and teaching professions and funding by employers generally. Public and private for other fields.”*

In addition to that we also encourage Bourke Branch to bring this motion to Federal Conference and put your voice and your passion there as well.

Anna McCorkle, Bourke. Just to continue further. In terms of it does happen in Bourke for this but we would be the only school that we know of where our principal was able to secure some teacher housing for preparation teachers, preservice teachers to come and do some placements for us knowing that that taste of a rural placement may be what brings them to work permanently in a rural space. So, it might be something to add to your argument when you take that motion further that it is vital to get that time in these communities whilst you are still in your training whatever your profession may be to make sure you come back to that area, or you may relocate to that area.

TRAVEL

A55. Collarenebri-Mungindi Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Local Government and the Local Government Association to instigate clearly marked school bus routes with lime green school bus route signs, instead of the yellow and black signs currently used.”

Moved by Libby McPhee, State Council on behalf of Collarenebri-Mungindi. Seconded by Robin Beckwith, State Council on behalf of Collarenebri-Mungindi.

Carried

Explanation:

The lime green sign attracts the attention of motorists because it is different to any other signs on the road. Road users should be made aware of the fact that they are travelling on a road that is also being used by a school bus. There are many factors requiring motorists to be cautious on rural roads shared by school buses. Some of these factors are dust, frequent stops that may not be visible to other road users, and rough roads. Queensland has lime green signs already in use and they are very noticeable.

A56. Broken Hill Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests Transport for NSW to increase their allowable trips under the School Drive Subsidy program for full time boarders.”

Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill Branch. I ask conference permission to withdraw this motion. Conference permission granted.

Motion withdrawn.

A57. Wentworth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests Transport for NSW to produce an information document that families can present to their new school when their children are eligible for School Drive Subsidy.”

Moved by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth. Seconded by Laura Stalley, State Council on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried

Explanation:

It is exceptionally difficult for families to navigate the School Drive Subsidy with schools who are not already familiar with the program or Transport for NSW. It’s even more so for the numerous families who need to send their children interstate and the schools being completely unfamiliar with the School Drive Subsidy. A simple one-page document of information that the family can hand to the school to explain what they need to do and who they contact for assistance would save time, money, and an enormous amount of frustration. This could be made available to ICPA-NSW or in the School Drive Subsidy portal with a little button that says, ‘print and hand to school’.

Comments.

Holly Davies, Director, Regional Community Partner, TfNSW. I can speak to this motion that, yes, Transport is more than happy to take that on board and work with the Department of Education and develop a resource a simple such as this.

A58. Hay Branch

“That ICPA Hay Branch wish to thank the ICPA-NSW Travel Portfolio team for their continued work and support to members when dealing with Transport NSW, to solve issues with School Drive Subsidy (SDS) applications and payments and support them in their continued advocacy for improvements to this program.”

Moved by Michelle Spence, Hay. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs on behalf of Hay.

Carried by acclimation.

Explanation:

Members of our branch needed the team from the transport portfolio to assist them with issues arising from the difficulty navigating the SDS application program and parent portal. Without this support members would not have been able to get the assistance they are entitled to. Upgrades to the system have made important improvements and it is more user friendly but there are still issues for both members and schools dealing with the processes.

*Case studies can be provided. We are very grateful for the hard work and support given by the ICPA-NSW transport portfolio team.

A59. Wentworth Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests Transport for NSW to provide schools with detailed guidelines on what trips can be approved for all types of students who are eligible for School Drive Subsidy.”

Moved by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth. Seconded by Laura Stalley, State Council on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried

Explanation:

Since the inception of School Drive Subsidy, ICPA-NSW have heard from members who have experienced confusion over the details of the program. Schools, and especially schools with a minimal number of students on School Drive Subsidy, have little knowledge or understanding of which and how many trips to approve for individual students. We feel that more education needs to be given to schools, so they can approve the appropriate number of trips per student. This could also include Transport for NSW providing a generic form where families list the trips that they can claim each semester. Alternatively, allowing families to load each trip in the portal and then schools could log in and approve would fast track the process. Schools could then use this to cross reference with their records and assist them with approving the correct number of trips.

A60. Broken Hill Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests QANTAS, Rex and other regional airlines to offer reduced, capped priced fares on available seats to secondary and tertiary students travelling between their place of education and their home at any time on any flight.”

Moved by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill. Seconded by David Shrimpton, Broken Hill.

Carried

Explanation:

For many secondary and tertiary students living in rural and remote communities, air travel is often the most time efficient form of travel. Our branch members have students travelling vast distances to attend their educational facilities. This can result in a whole day or two days’ travel by rail or road, when there are time constraints, this is not possible. Having reduced, capped prices would enable students to travel between home and the location of their education. This would encompass secondary and tertiary students travelling for leave, practical and theory components of their course requirement and allow the security of travel to and from the closest airport when unplanned situations arise.

A61. Nyngan Branch

“That ICPA–NSW impress upon the NSW Minister for Transport to provide tertiary students with a travel subsidy, similar to the School Drive Subsidy.”

Moved by Kate Yabsley, Nyngan. Seconded by Laughlin Ross, Nyngan.

Carried

Explanation:

Following the abandonment of the regional student travel card trial we suggest providing a subsidy based on the distance from their home to the tertiary institution as a kilometre rate, assisting with travel costs at the start and end of each semester. Dependent tertiary students still live at home with their parents but are required to move away from home during semester time to access their tertiary education. With limited access to transport links in rural and remote NSW, it is an equity issue that these students have access to a travel allowance like the School Drive Subsidy for travel at the beginning and end of each semester. We are aware of the Fares Allowance but not all students meet the criteria to receive it.

A62. Tibooburra-Milparinka Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests Transport for NSW to investigate solutions for enrolled day students at remote and very remote schools who require transport to a large Centre to participate in school activities and educational opportunities.”

Moved by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill on behalf of Tibooburra/Milparinka.

Carried

Explanation:

Most students enrolled in Tibooburra Outback Public School have no need to access the School Drive subsidy on a daily basis. The school has always been included in the wider Broken Hill School of the Air community as well as other remote schools in the area. Educational opportunities such as annual athletics and swimming carnivals in Broken Hill inclusion in stage two and three excursions to places like Canberra and science focus days at White Cliffs and Tibooburra. These students need to be transported most often to Broken Hill, which is 330 kilometers away to attend these educational opportunities. Currently these students do not meet any criteria to access the School Drive Subsidy to support them attending such important educational opportunities.

Comments.

Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill. We strongly support this motion as we have students who are coming in to join the School of the Air carnivals and without this support it makes it very hard or impossible for the White Cliffs or Tibooburra students to attend.

Holly Davies, Director, Regional Community Partner, TfNSW. Just like to speak to the motion. Yes, TfNSW is more than happy to work specifically, Bernadette from Tibooburra, and Belinda and I are here to engage with you today about that. We do have a very small program that can assist those who are regional and remote and therefore disadvantaged and this is a classic case for small schools like this, so we are happy to engage with you personally.

A63. Rankins Springs Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Transport to allow preschool children to travel on rural and remote bus runs in the year prior to commencing school enabling them to be included in the School Drive Subsidy and the School Students Transport Scheme for that year.”

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Sally Argent-Smith, Rankins Springs.

Carried

Explanation:

The costs relating to getting preschool children to the service’s front gate are a significant barrier for many rural and remote families. If the preschool children were included in the contract between the bus operator and Transport for NSW this would result in certainty of numbers and financial remuneration for the bus operator, as well as a definite seat for the child. For those families who do not have the option of putting their preschool child on the local school bus, the ability to receive the School Drive Subsidy to transport their child from home to preschool would be of great benefit. This would alleviate some of the costs relating to driving their own vehicle to transport the child to the preschool’s front gate. This is in line with their operator accreditation requirements which would include consultation with the preschool provider and the parents.

Comment:

Tegan Barton, Louth. I live between Louth and Wanaaring and I choose to take my three sons twice a week to Louth which is 100 kilometers each way to enable my child to attend preschool. My youngest child is only three and he has no access to three-year-old preschool. If I did choose to go I would have to go to Wanaaring which is the other direction and which is another 100 kilometers. I feel that this is very important for people like me where there is quite a small community of people who wouldn’t be able to afford to do this. It would cost me \$120 to \$150 each week in diesel to take my child to preschool.

A64. Rankins Springs Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and Transport for NSW to lower the number of students required to start a non-commercial bus run as a matter of urgency.”

Moved by Sally Argent-Smith Rankins Springs. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs.

Carried

Explanation:

Rankins Springs has had two bus runs for many years – one for the eastern and southern side of the town and one for the western side of the town. The bus run on the western side of Rankins Springs began as a community owned bus run that was run under a Transport for NSW contract. When there was only one student left on this run, the contract was lost with Transport for NSW. This bus run is now funded solely by the community and has four students. The concern has always been that if families moved back into the area serviced by the community run, we would need 15 children to apply for a new contract. This is never going to happen, but if the community thought that the number to apply for a new run was eight, they may think this was more achievable. It is the perception of getting to 15 that is the barrier. Although a bus run may be maintained with eight students, 15 students are required to start a new bus run. This requirement means that an operator needs to purchase a Category II, which is a 14 to 24 Authorised Adult Seating Capacity (AASC - excluding the driver), bus to service the run. This would mean for example a Toyota coaster or similar bus. If the required number to commence the run was brought back to eight then a Category I, which is an eight-seater or a 13AASC bus, is all that would be required, a Toyota commuter bus or similar. We understand that the larger bus allows for a significant growth of student numbers but would argue that the lower number of eight is hard enough to attain in most rural and remote communities so that much room for growth is not necessary. All communities are different, and consideration of this should be considered. Perhaps it is time that the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and Transport for NSW again looked at community owned bus runs where feasible, which would be less expensive to support. The argument that Transport for NSW continually uses is that each application to commence a bus run would be considered on a case-by-case basis. If this is their position, then making the required change to the wording in the regulations (simply changing fifteen to eight) should not be an issue and this motion would then be resolved. Operators researching and reading these regulations would know straight away if an application for a new commercial bus run would be worth the effort. This motion has been presented and passed at conferences for over 20 years now and it's well overdue to have a resolution on this issue.

Comments.

Judy Newton, Federal Membership Officer. I support this motion one hundred percent and as was said it has been on the books for so many years. Just reflecting what Fiona Nash said that sometimes things just don't make economic sense, but it is something that is required. Somewhat but thing I always like to point out to the department is that while it might be an economic, viable situation, every time you have to take one family member out of the workforce to do distance education with these kids is a \$50,000 cost to the family. Who should foot the bill? The state government or the family?

Holly Davies, Transport for NSW. I have got some great holding lines here and I can tell you that we look at these applications on a case-by-case basis, but I won't say back to you what you are saying back to me that this is the response you have got from Transport. I do want to speak to this motion that that is the current stand and Transport as an agency, that is the current stance we are sitting with. All I can do is urge you to continue challenging that so that is what, politically, they are endorsing, and Transport is administering. That is the current policy that they say that 15 is the nominated number and they will assess it on a case-by-case basis. That is done internally by Transport in a team, Transport Partnerships, and I work with them closely. Also within the region I am aware of three particular case studies where people have come connected with us where you have X number of students and again, I urge exactly what you were saying about the cost to the business. Again this is not Transport speaking, this is Holly speaking. It is actually not about a dollar per kilometer because there is an SES payment for that. It is about that loss of business and the time taken by that person to drive the child to school and back and so I urge you to include that. But if you could come with us at a regional level about other cases regarding numbers. There is one down south as well as others that we are aware of, and we internally help support that need for the existing requirement that is sitting there to be revisited. That is how it stands right now and as an agency that is what we are practicing. I can only urge you to continue asking politically, that that gets reconsidered. On a separate note while I have got the floor, it was mentioned yesterday in some private discussions about a programme that Transport does fund about recreational transport programme. So, again it is about sporting access for your teams. This is a programme that is really unknown, and we are doing our very best to circulate it, but I would really love you to be advocates back in your communities and talk to your sporting groups and see where possible you can apply for that. There'll be flyers on our table and again, I'll leave my card there for those additional case-by-case studies with your school bus stories.

A65. Lord Howe Island Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Transport and Transport for NSW (TfNSW) to review the current School Transport Subsidy Flight booking policy for boarders travelling from Lord Howe Island.”

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council on behalf of Lord Howe Island. Seconded by David Butler, State Council on behalf of Lord howe Island.

Carried

Explanation:

Lord Howe Island, located off the coast of Australia, is home to a small community of resident (approximately 270 permanent residents). Due to its remote location, transportation options for residents are limited, especially for the island's high school children who need to commute to access education opportunities. Qantas is the only airline servicing Lord Howe Island. The current lack of accessibility in booking airfares poses a significant challenge for families. The two booking options are: Book online through the Qantas portal at full price (\$600 - \$900 depending on season) or Port Macquarie Travel with the ten-day islander /local fare. The local fare has restrictions and additional costs for changes etc. in which parents are required to pay out of pocket. This fare is also only available within ten days, which sometimes often sold out with no

seats available. Parents currently must pay for airfares and are reimbursed. This is a significant financial burden on families. The current arrangement with Transport NSW has been unsuccessful with reimbursement never on time with parents having to chase the money. It is requested that a system or process be adopted for Lord Howe Island families to book.

A66. Lord Howe Island Branch

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Transport and Transport for NSW (TfNSW) to review the current School Transport Subsidy (flights) for boarders to include travel from place of residence to School of enrolment.”

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council on behalf of Lord Howe Island. Seconded by David Butler, State Council on behalf of Lord howe Island.

Carried

Explanation:

Lord Howe Island is located 600 kilometers off the coast of NSW. Qantas is the only airline servicing the Island. Students currently enrolled in country or regional boarding schools such as Yanco are required to pay for additional transportation costs from Sydney to the school of enrolment. The current system is restrictive on parents and schooling opportunities for Lord Howe Island children. It also places an unnecessary financial burden on families who already can't afford the exorbitant boarding and tuition fees. It therefore stands for reason to extend the flight policy to include place of residence to school of enrolment.

Comments.

Bree Wakefield, State Council. This is just a comment to say that it is important to note that currently the Transport for NSW policy states that they will cover the cost for travel from the place of residence to the mainland and what this motion asks for is covering the cost of transport from their residence to the school.

MISCELLANEOUS

33. Walgett Branch

“That ICPA-NSW consider moving the State Conference to a slightly later time in the year to allow a little more time for the preparation and submission of motions.”

Cath Deshon, Walgett. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett.

Carried. (Vote count to determine outcome)

Explanation:

Submission dates for motions are usually very early in the year and often right after the Christmas holidays. January is a very busy time for members and State Council members themselves. Families are flat out juggling work and children at the same time as trying to have a break themselves, so are often away or too busy to contribute to these very important motions. We feel a few weeks extra to get the children back to school and then to work on motions would allow for a lot more member input, sharing of ideas and editing.

For those schools like Walgett, we have an extra week, a heat week, and we were also chasing members at the same time and Cath and I were at the beach drinking cocktails so we were just a bit flustered. As Sate Council need considerable time as well to work through all the motions, it may be of benefit them as well. The State Conference date may be too difficult to move, but we wanted to put it up for discussion to see if it might be of benefit and at all possible.

Tegan Barton, Louth. I would like to support this motion because having three young children and getting back into the swing after Christmas and back into the early learning for my kid it has been a real push to meet with people and be away from home so early in the term.

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. I would like to support this motion as a teaching supervising mum. It was really tough getting back into things this year even with the heat week and trying to get all the motions in. So, thank you to my branch members.

Louise Martin, President, ICPA (Aust). I think it is a great idea, but I wonder if it has implications for the constitution etc., because you have to have your meeting within a certain time after the end of the financial year so. I’m just raising that. It is a great idea, but it may have unintended consequences.

David Butler, State Council. I’d like to comment against the motion. I don’t think all the issues all happen in the first week of the year. You have most of the year to nut out your problems and your motions gradually throughout the year not in the first week after school goes back.

Libby McPhee, State Council. I just have a quick question for the branch. When were you thinking of having it?

Karen Ricardo, Walgett. We just thought that even a week would make a big difference. We were very grateful that Robert and Phillipa have their children in Queensland because while we were at the beach they were doing all the work, and we totally understand that motions don't just happen then, but the end of the year is busy if you are lucky to have a harvest and all that sort of thing then you run into Christmas. All those sorts of things. I find my priorities when I go back over the year is chasing up my membership and I think that I should be doing that before I go into these motions and I just know that any of the members that I contacted, I totally got it, I don't have little children any more and I'm not putting them into school, that we didn't even ask. We sent out emails, but we didn't harass them anymore because we just sort of felt it a little bit more this year and we are not sure why. Just a week later and then even for our members to come to conference we expected all these lovely new young ones, but they were at swimming carnivals and that sort of thing, and I just think that by next week the dust would have settled a bit. We didn't think much later but maybe a week. The only other thing I was going to say was that we are at the whim of the convening committee when they want to hold it and we really leave that date with them. Rarely do we muck with whatever they come forward with and I know the Central West Plains did consider this quite considerably the fact that they were going quite early but that fitted and of course this year we have got Easter at the end of March, so it has made it a pretty difficult decision for everybody. We totally understand that and appreciate it. We just thought a week would make a huge difference to us and maybe there were other branches as well. We also understand the constitution and everything else but if you don't bring these things up for discussion, we may be in the same position another time.

Richard Stokes, CEO, ABSA. I love the fact that it is this week this year because it means that I can get to South Australia and Western Australia for their conferences as well and I thought that you organized it and that is why it actually happened. It was fantastic and I know that NBN Co felt the same because they are going to the same conferences., so, some of your presenters, for me for instance, it is interesting because I was in Alice Springs last Thursday, and here these two days and I'm in Perth next Friday and I'm in South Australia the one after. It would be really good, and I don't care when it is, as long as they don't clash because they have for the last three years.

Kate Yabsley, Nyngan. I fully support Walgett with what they are saying. I think the issue for Nyngan particularly this year was that we don't actually know who our members are, and we are trying to get people to have an input into our motions. I think that is probably more the issue for us.

Judith Bryant, Central West Plains. Convening Committee. It has been really tricky to be honest. Here in Dubbo we are quite a regional center. It is a fly-in-fly-out center for many of our workforce. Last weekend we had 9,000 visitors in Dubbo for a touch football competition. Next week is a state bowls competition. So, if we held it last week or next week, we'd all be camping on the river, and we would not have this facility. We would not have the zoo and we may not have Creo either. So, we had to work with the Dubbo Visitors Center, and we were also very mindful of when State Parliament was sitting because that will determine what politicians and senators and what have you were able to attend. We also had to work in with Easter and we had no control over that, and we were very mindful of the fact that a lot of families go away over Easter. So, there was quite a bit of toing and froing earlier on when we were planning. I do apologise that it doesn't fit with everybody, and it is really hard to juggle everything and come up with a very considered determination.

Tanya Mitchell, President, ICPA-NSW. Thank you very much everyone. I don't know if I'm allowed to say anything, but I will. It was pretty tight for State Council to try and get themselves

together and do their day jobs and get their kids back to school as well. Normally we do hold conferences in those last two weeks of March and that's how it has historically been, but Judith has absolutely described all the reasons it happened this week this year. So, the next couple of motions might actually help you or satisfy this motion if I can suggest that to you.

SUPPLEMENTARY MOTIONS

S1 Tibooburra-Milparinka

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education clarify why break out rooms can't be used during live video calls for Distance Education students”.

Conference permission granted for a word change. The motion now reads: -

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education allow breakout rooms to be used during live video calls for Distance Education students”.

Moved by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka. Seconded by Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill on behalf of Tibooburra/Milparinka.

Carried.

Explanation:

The current guidelines from the NSW Department of Education restrict the use of breakout rooms during all live video call lessons. Guidelines state “The use of breakout rooms is not permitted during a lesson, as a teacher will be unable to supervise students in different rooms at the same time. If a teacher believes it is necessary to use break out rooms this should only occur with the prior approval of the principal or by ensuring supervision of each breakout group for the duration.” quoted from following document at the web address: - [technology/guidelines-for-using-live-video-with students?](#) These guidelines were created during Covid, and circumstances and platforms used have dramatically changed now for lessons provided online, in particular for Distance Education students. Breakout rooms are initiated by the teacher. All students log into their initial online class. Breakout rooms can be used by the teacher as a classroom management strategy. They allow the teacher to respond to students' learning needs by moving students into their own online space for extension or support for the learning for that lesson. They can also be used by teachers to support group work or for behavioural management. We are requesting if these guidelines allow teachers to use these breakout rooms for live video lessons in particular for those students whose main teaching is provided online such as School of the Air Broken Hill students.

Comments:

Rebecca Pearce, Broken Hill. I would like to speak for this motion. We have received lots of feedback from some of our branch members who have positive experiences using breakout rooms which are used by independent schools for online teaching.

FLOOR MOTIONS

F1.

“That ICPA Balranald Branch host the 2025 ICPA-NSW State Conference in Euston in March 2025.”

Moven by Kirsty Wilson State Council on behalf of Balranald. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State council on behalf of Balranald.

Carried by acclamation.

F2.

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Minister for Health support Royal Far West’s proposal to pilot rural pediatric clinics in Dubbo and Wagga Wagga.”

Moven by Kirsty Wilson State Council on behalf of Balranald. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State council on behalf of Balranald.

Carried

Explanation:

Having listened to day to Clair Taylor’s presentation and the pilot programme that they are putting together, Claire did request our support and we have the utmost faith in Royal Far West’s expertise. They have confidence that they will have professionals on the ground who will be able to execute this programme which will benefit lots of country kids.

Comments.

Anna McCorkle, Bourke. Totally support this motion for the reason that we also heard it yesterday when the guest speaker was talking about McQuarie Home Stay. The fact that they were having to reassess that site in terms of the family nature that it catered for. Fortunately, in my family, or unfortunately however you look at it, we only have one child so when we accessed Royal Far West, and we went to Sydney that was a little bit easier on us because of only having to navigate one person who also happened to be the student who was attending. But I found myself watching families who had more than one child. How do you negotiate that? Siblings having to go along if both parents couldn’t. You are taking not only the bus drive, not only as the home tutor, but you are also taking a person out of that business and that household to be there. There is the flow-on effect of this so having it in a center that is more assessable to rural and remote families is vital because the level of assessment, when you can get that multi-faceted approach, it is incredible the depth and detail they can provide to you. It takes time. It needs to take time and space so as a family to support that it can be very difficult when you add the tyranny of distance. So, totally support this.

Tanya Mitchell, President, ICPA-NSW

I want everyone to say a really special thank you to the convening committee. It has been an amazing conference and it's been wonderful to work with you and I think everyone will agree that the events have been amazing and I'm sure, having been to Down the Lane, it's lovely and tonight will be another great evening. So, everyone that can join us, please, please do. But thank you to these ladies because it is a huge effort that goes into preparing all this organising. The accommodation and the transport and the registrations and everything that goes on in the background and they've pulled it off and made it look absolutely seamless and I know that there's been a couple of little hiccups, but no one would ever know because these ladies have done an absolutely amazing job. So, thank you so much for convening the 52nd ICPA-NSW State Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my Secretary, Libby, because seriously, without her, none of this would happen at all. The hours and the work that has gone into conference is huge. Libby and a few of us councillors were diligently working over Christmas and the school holidays and ever since to get here today and, as I said, the conveners have made it seamless, but what Libby and the rest of the State Council team put into making this happen and then the rest of the year. This is actually just the start of our year. We now go on to advocate and fight for your issues, so we will keep doing that until we see you again at Federal or at State Conference. I really do encourage everyone to come along to the Federal Conference. The Federal Conference convening committee are preparing something really amazing as you heard from that little snippet from Laura, but it is also an opportunity to hear and meet people from all over Australia, from all different walks of life who have similar issues to us, although sometimes it's on a bit of a different scale. But they're just all amazing, like-minded people and I really welcome you to all come and register for Federal Conference. So, I do hope to see you all there. I would like to say to the convening committee that we are thinking of Sue Nichols, who has been part of your team as well and so I'd like to acknowledge her efforts and the work that she has done. Unfortunately, she's unable to be with us today. Thank you to all my State Council and to all of you as members as well, because without you, we don't exist. And thank you for bringing your issues to conference for us. And we'll see you all tonight because we might all be a little bit more relaxed tonight. Thank you.

The 2024 Annual Conference of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW Inc. was officially closed on 7th March 2024 at 3.50 pm.

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Tanya Mitchell

President, ICPA-NSW

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Libby McPhee

Secretary, ICPA-NSW

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