

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association  
of Australia Incorporated



# Minutes

of the

53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference

**'Bridging the Divide'**

24 & 25 July 2024

Doltone House, Hyde Park  
Sydney, New South Wales

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**Index to Motions by Portfolio Areas**

The numbering of motions is as recorded in these minutes - the number following in parenthesis refers to the number as it appeared on the Agenda at Conference, e.g. M15 (A14) refers to motion 15 which was agenda motion 14. "F" stands for floor motion and "S" for supplementary motion.

<b>BOARDING/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME</b>	M61(A1), M62(A2), M63(A3), M64(A4), M65(A5), M66(A6), M67(A7), M68(S1), M69(S5) M70(A8), M98(S2), M99(A9), M100(A10), M101(A11), M102(S3), M103(S4)
<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>	M11(A14), M12(A15), M13(A16), M14(S6) M15(A17), M71(A13), M72(A12)
<b>DISTANCE EDUCATION</b>	M52(A18), M53(A19), M54(S7), M55(A20), M56(A21), M57(A22), M58(A23), M59(A24), M60(A25), M104(FM1)
<b>EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE</b>	M77(A26), M78(A27), M79(A28), M80(A29), M81(A30), M82(A31), M83(A32), M84(A33), M85(A34), M86(A35), M87(A36), M88(A37), M89(A38), M90(A39)
<b>RURAL SCHOOLS</b>	M10(A40)
<b>SCHOOL TRAVEL</b>	M1(A41), M2(A42), M3(S8), M4(S9), M5(S10)
<b>SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS</b>	M73(A43), M74(A44), M75(A45), M76(A46)
<b>TERTIARY</b>	M16(A47), M17(A48), M18(S11), M19(S12), M20(S13), M21(A56), M22(A57), M23(A58), M24(A59), M25(A60), M26(A61), M27(A62), M28(A63), M29(A64), M30(A65), M48(A66), M49(S14), M50(S15), M51(S16), M91(A49), M92(A50), M93(A51), M94(A52), M95(A53), M96(A54), M97(A55)
<b>TRAINING</b>	M6(A67), M7(A68), M8(A69), M9(A70)
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	
<b>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</b>	M31(A71), M32(A72), M33(A73), M34(A74), M35(A75), M36(A76), M37(A77), M38(A78), M39(A79), M40(A80), M41(A81), M42(A82), M43(A83), M44(A84), M45(A85), M46(A86), M47(A87)

**ICPA Federal Council 2023 - 2024**

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Tambo QLD

**Assistant Secretary**

Shennah Joiner  
Primrose Valley NSW

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Alana Moller  
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**Committee**

Anna McCorkle  
Bourke NSW

**Committee**

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**Archivist**

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**Vice President**

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**Treasurer**

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**Committee**

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**Committee**

Naomi Obst  
Mingenew WA

**Committee**

Miffy Waugh  
Stoneleigh QLD

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Nikki Macqueen  
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York Plains TAS

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Tracy Alder  
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Sally Brindal  
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**Secretary**

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**Publicity Officer**

Kym Ross  
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**Committee**

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**Committee**

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Bourke NSW

**Pedals Editor**

Hannah Calcino  
Brisbane QLD

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**Committee**

Amber Driver  
Alice Springs NT

**Membership Officer**

Louise Winten  
Morven QLD

## BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

### Conference Program Day 1 – Wednesday 24 July 2024

9.00am	<b>Welcome</b> <b>National Anthem</b> <b>Acknowledgement of Country</b>	Louise Martin Latiah McMillan Pymble Ladies' College Isabella Walford Kincoppal-Rose Bay School of the Sacred Heart
	<b>Conference Arrangements</b>  <b>Introduction of Delegates and Guests</b> <b>Confirmation of 2023 Federal Conference Minutes</b>	Co-Convenors Laura Stalley and Káren Ricardo Kim Hughes Kim Hughes
9.30am	<b>Official Opening of Conference</b>	Rory Treweek AM, Federal Life Member
9.45am	<b>Address from the Regional Education Commissioner</b>	The Hon Fiona Nash
10.00am	<b>Federal ICPA President's Report</b>	Louise Martin
10.20am	<b>New South Wales ICPA President's Report</b>	Tanya Mitchell
10.30am	<b>Morning Tea</b>	
11.00am	<b>School Travel Portfolio Update</b> <i>Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Jennifer Ruska
11.30am	<b>Presentation</b> Telstra  <i>Communication Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Lyndall Stoyles, Telstra Executive Legal, Regulatory, Government and Sustainability
11.55am	<b>Rural Schools Portfolio Update</b> <i>Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Naomi Obst
12.05pm	<b>South Australia ICPA President's Report</b>	Belinda Hatcher
12.20pm	<b>Presentation</b> Country Education Foundation	Wendy Mason, Chief Executive Officer
12.30pm	<b>Lunch</b>	
1.30pm	<b>Keynote Speaker</b>	Jana Pittman, World Athletic Champion
2.30pm	<b>Training Portfolio Update</b> <i>Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Anna McCorkle
2.45pm	<b>Queensland ICPA President's Report</b>	Wendy Henning
3.00pm	<b>Afternoon Tea</b>	
3.30pm	<b>Tertiary Portfolio Update</b> <i>Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Kate Thompson
4:40pm	<b>Introduction of Candidates for Federal Council</b>	Judy Newton, Returning Officer
5.00pm	<b>Close of Business Day 1</b>	

6.00pm Conference Dinner-NSW Parliament House, Strangers Room  
Theme: Glitz, Glamour & Sequins

## Conference Program Day 2 – Thursday 25 July 2024

8.00am	<b>Annual General Meeting</b> <b>Introduction of Delegates</b>	Kim Hughes
9.30am	<b><u>Conference Resumes</u></b> <b>Introduction of Guests</b> <b>Announcement of new Federal Council</b>	Kim Hughes Louise Martin
9.45am	<b>Distance Education Portfolio Update</b> <i>Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Louise Martin
10.30am	<b>Morning Tea</b>	
11.00am	<b>Presentation</b> <i>‘Artificial Intelligence’</i>	Julian Moore, Strategic Membership Solutions
11:20am	<b>Presentation</b> <i>‘Boarding School Update’</i>	Richard Stokes, Australian Boarding Schools Association
	<b>Boarding Portfolio Update</b> <i>Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Jennifer Ruska
12:15pm	<b>Presentation</b> NBN	Gavin Williams, Chief Development Officer, Regional and Remote
12.30pm	<b>Lunch</b>	
1.30pm	<b>Communications Portfolio Update</b>	Sally Brindal
	<b>Presentation</b> Regional Tech Hub <i>Communications Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Jennifer Medway, General Manager
1.50pm	<b>Specific Education Needs Portfolio Update</b> <i>Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Miffy Waugh
2:10pm	<b>Western Australia ICPA President’s Report</b>	Jane Cunningham
2.20pm	<b>Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Update</b> <i>Portfolio Agenda Motions</i>	Julia Broad
3.00pm	<b>Afternoon Tea</b>	
3.30pm	<b>Presentation</b> Country University Centre  <i>Portfolio Agenda Motions continued</i>	Duncan Taylor, Non-Executive Director
4.00pm	<b>Curriculum Portfolio Update</b>	Naomi Obst
4.10pm	<b>Northern Territory ICPA President’s Report</b>	Maira Lanzarin
4.20pm	<b>Motions continued</b> <b>Floor Motions</b>	
5.00pm	<b>Presentations</b> <b>Vote of thanks and acknowledgements</b> <b>Close of Conference</b>  <i>6.00pm Post-Conference Function – ‘The Rocks’ Glenmore Hotel</i>	



**DAY ONE Wednesday 23 July 2024**

**9:00am Conference commences**

**National Anthem**

Latiah McMillan - Pymble Ladies College

**Acknowledgement of Country**

Isabella Walford - Kincoppal-Rose Bay School of the Sacred Heart

**Welcome by Federal ICPA President**

Louise Martin

**Conference Arrangements**

Laura Stalley and Káren Ricardo

**Introduction of Delegates and Guests**

Kim Hughes

**Confirmation of the 2023 Federal Conference Minutes**

“That the 2023 Federal Conference Minutes as circulated on 6 June 2024 be accepted.”

**Moved:** Kim Hughes ICPA Federal Council

**Seconded:** Kate Thompson ICPA Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Official Opening of Conference**

Rory Treweek AM

ICPA Federal Life Member

**Conference Address**

The Hon Fiona Nash

Regional Education Commissioner

**Federal ICPA President’s Report**

Louise Martin

**Join Federal Council Video**

**New South Wales ICPA President’s Report**

Tanya Mitchell

**School Travel Portfolio Presentation**

Jennifer Ruska

**School Travel Portfolio Motions**

**M1 (A41) Alice Springs Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services to apply the framework used for ABSTUDY to geographically isolated children as identified with the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) to obtain transport between their home residence and the educational establishment they attend.”

**Moved:** Danyelle Haigh Alice Springs (NT)

**Seconded:** Katy Hayes Alice Springs (NT)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Students who fit this Category should be able to book tickets by Air or Road at any point during the year without being subject to inflation caused by peak tourist season, holidays, limited tickets, and any number of other reasons ticket prices fluctuate.

There are geographically isolated families whose children attend schools interstate or intrastate that have all their travel costs covered and/or organised; home to the closest airport, then airport to interstate school. There are examples of how such a policy mechanism can work through allowances such as ABSTUDY.

We would like to suggest that this existing framework (used by agencies such as ABSTUDY, to book and secure travel for students) be extended to all geographically isolated families when travelling between their home residence and the educational establishment they attend. At the very least to secure capped student travel fares.

**M2 (A42)      Namoi Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government contacts rural/ remote local councils and make school bus routes a priority for repairs, maintenance and edges being mowed.”

<b>Moved:</b>	Libby McPhee	New South Wales State Council on behalf of Namoi (NSW)
<b>Seconded:</b>	Tanya Mitchell	New South Wales State Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The state of some rural/ remote roads is very bad at the moment. Priority should be given to the school bus routes to ensure safety for the school buses and their passengers.

**M3 (S8)      Northern Territory State Council**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Qantas to extend the Resident Fares Scheme for travel for geographically isolated students.”

<b>Moved:</b>	Jacinta McInnerney	Northern Territory State Council
<b>Seconded:</b>	Moira Lanzarin	Northern Territory State Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The Northern Territory has a large number of geographically isolated students living remotely with their families who need to attend educational institutions interstate to complete their education. The Northern Territory has a very limited number of boarding school places available for students, therefore, a large number of families have no choice but to send their children to boarding schools interstate. Choices for tertiary and trade training are equally limited. NT residents can access the Qantas Resident Fares but only for flights from Alice Springs to Darwin (return) or Alice Springs to Adelaide (return). These are useful and much appreciated but more options are needed.

There are a large number of families not even living close to Darwin (up to approx. 1,000km away) that have children studying interstate in locations such as Townsville, Charters Towers, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sydney, Adelaide, and Melbourne who need to drive up to 1,000km and then fly from Darwin but have no access to resident fares.

There are two/three airlines operating from Darwin, and during the hugely popular ‘dry season,’ parents are competing with tourists for flights that can range from \$300 - \$3,000 one way to get

children to and from boarding school. There is no consistency for reasonable fares for parents, particularly during the peak dry season.

**M4 (\$9) Julia Creek Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to work with Qantas to enhance the Frequent Flyer Resident Fares program to enable families to use multiple eligible departure and return points within the Resident Fares program to better suit the needs of rural and remote students attending educational institutions.”

**Moved:** Haylee Ruska Julia Creek (QLD)

**Seconded:** Rachael Anderson Julia Creek (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Currently students based near both Cloncurry and Mt Isa are unable to book a resident fare leaving from one location and returning to the other depending on the best option for families at the time. Resident fares should be able to be booked departing from one eligible location and returning to a different eligible location, within the Resident Fares program. Due to unpredictable weather it is sometimes necessary to have access to multiple eligible locations within the resident fares program.

**M5 (\$10) Julia Creek Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to work with Qantas to establish a discount code that would enable all rural and remote students to attend their educational facilities without the added burden of exorbitant flight costs.”

**Moved:** Haylee Ruska Julia Creek (QLD)

**Seconded:** Rachael Anderson Julia Creek (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The Julia Creek Branch understands and thanks Qantas for their Resident fares program, however this only encompasses a very limited amount of Qantas customers in Northern Queensland, Northern Territory and North Western Australia. It is also only for an allotted amount of seating per flight. Rural and remote students located within New South Wales, Tasmania and South Australia are currently unable to access these discounted fares. These students and their families are also paying high prices every year to transport their children to school.

Case Study

Currently students who live on Lord Howe Island have no option but to fly Qantas to attend their secondary education. With the average flight costing over \$600 per student. One Lord Howe Island family is paying over \$3500 per term to send their 3 children to school. This is just the cost to get them to Sydney, some students are then required to fly onward to their chosen school.

**Training Portfolio Presentation**

Anna McCorkle

**Training Portfolio Motions**

**M6 (A67) Richmond Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Government and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to establish a relocation allowance for rural and remote Australian Apprentices who have to relocate from their place of residence to undertake their apprenticeship.”

**Moved:** Wendy Hick Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD) on behalf of Richmond (QLD)  
**Seconded:** Margaret Brock Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

At present, no relocation assistance exists for apprentices who reside in rural and remote locations and must relocate to access their chosen pathway.

The Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA) is a rent assistance payment and can only be accessed once rental status has been proven.

Furthermore, the very few apprentices who qualify for Youth Allowance as a dependent are excluded from the Relocation Scholarship, which is an adjunct payment to Youth Allowance available for higher education study.

There is also no provision for apprentices to receive the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) which provides assistance for relocation costs to access higher education.

The costs of relocation, often hundreds of kilometres away from the family home, are significant and include setting up a home, including rental bond, furniture, linen, kitchen utensils and much more, all on a first year apprentice wage which is extremely low. This is all before even considering the actual cost of living, which continues to increase at an exponential rate.

Whilst our branch is appreciative of the various incentives currently provided for apprentices in trade shortage areas included on the Priority List, we believe a relocation allowance should be provided for all rural and remote apprentices who need to relocate, regardless of their trade, as this is an access issue.

Rural and remote apprentices are highly sought after and valued due to their hands on skills and strong work ethic. Without assistance for relocation, many young people simply cannot access an apprenticeship placement, thereby thwarting the potentially life changing career opportunities and increasing the skills and talent of the Australian workforce.

**M7 (A68) Bourke Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations for financial supports to Australian Apprentices who relocate from rural and remote regions to commence their employment and trade training.”

Prue Ritchie, Bourke Branch (NSW) requested conference’s permission for A68 (M7) to be deemed covered by A67 (M6).

**Conference permission granted**

**DEEMED COVERED by M6 (A67)**

**Explanation:**

The process of relocating away from family and community support, often for the first time is a financially and emotionally difficult time for young apprentices. These young people need to set up a place of residence, live independently including undertaking activities such as shopping and household management for the first time while also commencing a new occupation. Coupled with this, the on-going living costs and that apprentices are on very low wages, often with minimal financial assistance.

Trade pathways are often avoided due to the financial barriers that prevent many rural and remotes students from commencing or continuing along this pathway. It was disheartening for a branch

family to learn late last year that their son was overlooked for an apprentice position as the employers knew the relocation requirements would make it too difficult for him to sustain the apprenticeship.

Access supports such as Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) are available to tertiary students to offset the high costs of relocation. Despite ICPA (Aust) requests to the relevant department and ministers, Australian Apprentices remain ineligible under the current criteria.

#### Case Study

My son lives in remote NSW 125km from Bourke in far western NSW. Upon completion of his HSC last year, he decided to apply for apprenticeships. He applied for an apprenticeship based in Wollongong where he had a successful first interview. He was not given a second interview and upon enquiring as to how to improve for his next application he was told that he was a very strong candidate, but they were concerned about his ability to relocate so far from home due to affordability, as the opportunity was 947km away from home.

He successfully gained an apprenticeship in Dubbo which is 500km from our home. He would not have been able to do this financially except that we have a small block of land 20km from Dubbo that has a relocatable basic building on it where he can live. There are no services connected (power or town water). He spends \$120 per week on fuel for a generator to get power and by the time he pays \$100 for fuel for his ute to go to work and food for the week, there is very little left over. Due to low rainfall, 2 weeks ago he ran out of rainwater, and we had to get a truck in, to resupply water (a cost of \$450 which we paid for as he could not afford to).

He has also had the costs of buying tools for his apprenticeship and has spent over \$2500 in the first 3 months on them. He does not have internet and has limited mobile service where he is located. We have helped through buying household appliances and furnishings to make his situation more comfortable, however cannot afford to support him more than this due to still having twins in Year 8 away at boarding school that we are paying for. There is no way he could have afforded to relocate to Dubbo and rent commercially and still have enough money to buy the basics.

He luckily has a very good employer who helped him get medical treatment last week when he was sick and also paid for the medication that he needed.

He has met with his ASSN but has had no information about applying for LAFHA despite them being told of his home address. He has only been informed of Apprentice Training Support Payments.

#### **M8 (A69) Bourke Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to amend guidelines, so that the Australian Apprenticeship Support Service (AASS) providers ensure rural and remote Australian Apprentices are fully supported by each provider and are recognised as a Service Specialisation within the 2024-2026 AASS contract guidelines.”

<b>Moved:</b>	Prue Ritchie	Bourke (NSW)
<b>Seconded:</b>	Amanda Bell	Bourke (NSW)

**CARRIED**

#### **Explanation:**

Recognition that ‘rural and remote’ are a separate specialisation group is required to ensure appropriate assistance is provided so those in need have equity of access to post school qualifications. Bourke Branch appreciates that this has been somewhat addressed in the recent

review of non-financial support for apprentices where the four Key Client Groups to be supported by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations contracted AASSs are:

- Australian Apprentices in Remote Australia, along with
- Women in Male Dominated Trades
- First Nation Australian Apprentices
- Australian Apprentices with Disability.

Although the guidelines contain positive changes the latest contract for AASS's has not placed Australian Apprentices in Remote Australia as a Service Specialisation, as it has for the other three Key Client Groups. (section 2.3 of Request for Tenders for AASS 2024-6 document page 29)

Under the new contract commencing July 2024, AASSs will no longer be the provider of the full non-financial support system for Australian Apprentices as was previously the case. Within the new structure our understanding is that if an AASS has not received the contract for specialist areas of support, who is supporting these apprentices who require the specialist support but sit within the geographic area the AASS has been contracted to cover? Should an apprentice require specialist support, it is concerning that if their AASS is not contracted to offer this support they may either not receive the identified support or will have to navigate contact and assistance from a second AASS.

**M9 (A70) Bourke Branch (NSW)**

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to extend the data collected on a commencing Australian Apprentices' Training Plan (AATP) to identify those who relocate from rural and remote regions to engage in the trades training."

**Moved:** Prue Ritchie Bourke (NSW)

**Seconded:** Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Many rural and remote students undertake an Australian Apprenticeship without the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN), Employer or Registered Training Organisation (RTO) knowing they have relocated away from family and supports to engage in employment as a trainee or apprentice and Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Prior to an apprenticeship sign up, coordinated by the AASNs, all stakeholders contribute details and information that generate the training plan that is signed off on by all involved parties, the signed plan is then submitted and registered with the relevant state training bodies. To add the apprentices' home address as well as the residential address to the training plan, and to add a Relocation Required option, would allow all stakeholders to see the distance many employees/apprentices have relocated and may also still be travelling considerable distance for the relevant VET delivery.

On the current NSW Apprenticeship/Traineeship – Training Plans there are multiple address options for the Employer, and also for the Training Details (including mode of delivery and training address) but only one address format for the Apprentice requiring a Street Address and Suburb.

Once collected, the relocation data could be part of the financial and non-financial support process, for organisations who collate Apprenticeship data to inform policy and practices in the apprenticeship space. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) could utilise the additional data to build a more informative profile on those who relocate to undertake an apprenticeship – our branch understands that they currently categorise apprentices as rural and remote through the data they do have which is the address of the employer.

**Rural Schools Portfolio Presentation**

Naomi Obst

**Rural Schools Portfolio Motions**

**M10 (A40) Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government for funding to be sought to further incentivise experienced teachers to take up contract and long term rural, regional and remote positions.”

**Moved:** Katie Hall Goldfields Eyre (WA)  
**Seconded:** Tallaya Wood Goldfields Eyre (WA)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Students from rural, regional, and remote areas are facing, at times constant, disruptions to their education in the form of teacher shortages. Teacher retention in rural areas can be problematic and even in those schools where teachers are committed long term their ability to access vital professional development days, long service leave and even sick days is limited due to the lack of relief teachers and/ or support staff. It is not uncommon for small schools to have only two classroom teachers across all year levels and minimal funding for additional support staff such as Education Assistants (EAs) or Library Technicians. When one teacher is away from the classroom the other teacher must take the whole school and/or EAs are being asked to step in and take classes. In some cases, teachers are called in without completing their training, which affects the students and teacher alike. Additionally, the mental health of teachers is becoming increasingly worrisome due to their burdensome workload.

The states all have varying incentives to encourage teachers to rural schools however it has been our experience that these incentives are not always well advertised and experienced teachers often think these are graduate positions only when they are actually open to all teachers. As well as federal funding we suggest the Federal Government run an advertising campaign to get teachers into the bush pitched at experienced teachers and their families.

Additional incentives to those already on offer could include:

- Financial incentives for short term or contract work in the regions
- Increased childcare rebates for teachers with young families wanting to take up rural positions
- At present only high school teachers are allowed in on special visas, this could be extended to primary teachers also
- Clear potential for permanency
- Increased potential for permanency in the city after completing a set amount of time in a rural, regional or remote school.

**South Australia ICPA President's Report**

Belinda Hatcher

**Presentation**

Country Education Foundation  
Wendy Mason, Chief Executive Officer

**Key Note Speaker**

World Athletics Champion, Mum and Doctor  
Jana Pittman

**Presentation**

Telstra  
Lyndall Stoyles

**Communications Portfolio Motions – Mobile Coverage/Service****M11 (A14) Namoi Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to ensure that some form of funding/rebate is given to rural and remote people having to upgrade devices and infrastructure to access basic communication services for education.”

**Moved:** Libby McPhee New South State Council on behalf of Namoi Branch (NSW)  
**Seconded:** Tanya Mitchell New South State Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Rural and remote people are incurring a large expense to continue to be compatible with 4G/ 5G systems.

**M12 (A15) Namoi Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that Telstra Corporation ensures that when major network disruptions are occurring in rural and remote areas for greater than 24 hours, an alternative temporary network is supplied to the town/ area to ensure a lack of disruption to students’ education.”

**Moved:** Libby McPhee New South State Council on behalf of Namoi Branch (NSW)  
**Seconded:** Tanya Mitchell New South State Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Recently Wee Waa (NSW) had scheduled mobile tower upgrades that left the town/ area without Telstra mobile coverage for 5 days. No alternative was provided. Alternatives such as portable towers are available and should be automatically allocated to areas that are going to be left without service for a significant amount of time

**M13 (A16) Kindon Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government and all stakeholders to provide connectivity to ensure the safety of rural and remote school students, their families and school staff at standalone schools.”

**Moved:** Lisa Waugh Kindon (QLD)  
**Seconded:** Andrew Waugh Kindon (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The lack of phone coverage in and around rural and remote schools is a major concern for the staff of these standalone schools. These schools are isolated from rural townships and there are no other buildings in the vicinity. Due to their location, schools are constantly managing passing people who have no business being on the school grounds when they come inside the school boundary to receive help. This is a major safety concern for both staff and students. These schools have limited staff and when one is called away to assist a visitor to the school, this interrupts the students’ learning and places them in a vulnerable position without adult supervision.



Schools who need Cel-Fi boosters are affected once they move out of range of that device so if there is an incident away from the main building, they do not have service where the incident is. This is not good enough and would not happen in a city school.

Currently at Kindon State School there is a Telstra tower at Wyaga which is ten kilometres away. This tower gives coverage approximately three kilometres on either side and the next structure heading east is Kindon State School. Of course, people are going to go to the school to call for assistance if needed because they have no other choice. In the meantime, our staff and students are subject to safety issues which could be fixed if there was enough connectivity surrounding the school.

**M14 (S6)      New South Wales State Council**

“That ICPA (Aust) asks the Minister for Communications for a guaranteed action plan including an appropriate timeline should the switch from 3G to 4G not deliver the ‘equivalent or better coverage’ roll-out proposed for families who have students relying on the service for education, care and safety.”

<b>Moved:</b>	Libby McPhee	New South Wales State Council
<b>Seconded:</b>	Tanya Mitchell	New South Wales State Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Members are sceptical about the reliability of 4G because there have been noticeable reductions in service whilst the transition has been implemented on local towers. Emergency calls are not even able to be made in some cases.

Mobile connectivity is very important for rural and remote families. The importance of service is for education, care and safety of children.

One example of the deterioration is that for some members who have the NGWL for landlines - a service that traditionally has relied on 3G technology - the option offered is now Starlink, this potentially reduces capacity and preparation for emergencies because if the power goes out, the landline will also go down, rendering no communications at all. It also means that a consumer is reliant on one platform for all their communications, instead of the traditional landline and satellite internet, where if one service is down usually the other remains.

Another issue of concern is that remote families on the outside of the 3G mapping have been able to get 3G with the use of boosters, but because they are outside the mapping, there is no guarantee by Telstra that they will get 4G. In many instances, users with 3G Boosters, over the years have removed their landline service because having access to mobile connectivity gave them suitable voice call access. There is now uncertainty and risk that these people could be facing the reality of a reduced voice service or no voice call service with unlikelihood of reconnecting their landline due to ageing HCRC infrastructure.

It is concerning that the Universal Service Obligation for a baseline landline has deteriorated because of the 3G 4G switch.

**Communications Portfolio Motions – Telephone**

**M15 (A17)      Katherine Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to request the Minister for Communications to ensure Telstra meets their Universal Service Guarantee of providing quality, efficient, and reliable voice services to rural

and remote premises to access education, including fixed address pastoral leases, remote communities, and remote roadhouses.”

**Moved:** Constance Wood

Katherine (NT)

**Seconded:** Melissa Kerr

Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Through the Universal Service Guarantee, Telstra are paid by the Australian Government to ensure all Australians have access to a standard telephone. With the announcement that Telstra would be phasing out landline services in the coming years it’s important that they are replaced with the same quality and reliability as provided in metropolitan areas. Including no delays and interruptions such as those experienced when using satellite phone systems. It is essential that these services be efficient and reliable during all Australian weather conditions with appropriate backup power supply to ensure students can access education/schooling without interruption. In areas where a mobile network has already been established, it’s important that these are upgraded to current standards such as 4G or 5G, and the area covered in maintained or improved.

**Queensland ICPA President’s Report**

Wendy Henning

**Presentation**

Farewell to Federal Councillor Wendy Henning

**Tertiary Portfolio Presentation**

Kate Thompson

**Tertiary Portfolio Motions – Access Allowance**

**M16 (A47) Hay Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant ministers expand the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) to include those rural and remote students who do not go directly from secondary education to tertiary.”

**Moved:** Pip Ryan

Hay (NSW)

**Seconded:** Carol Huggins

Hay (NSW)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Rural and remote tertiary students struggle with the financial commitment of accessing University away from the family home, especially those who have done a year or two working since school as they do not qualify for the Tertiary Access Payment funds.

Some Universities require the students to have at least 2 gaps years to gain experience before they can apply and enrol in the course. These students are then not eligible to apply for the TAP funding even though they must move away from the family home to attend University.

**M17 (A48) Tambo Branch (QLD)**

““That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate for the inclusion of students who take one gap year in the eligibility criteria for the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP).”

Kimberley Rains, Tambo Branch (QLD) requested conference’s permission for A48 (M17) to be deemed covered by A47 (M16)

**Conference permission granted.**

**DEEMED COVERED by M16 (A47)****Explanation:**

Many students who are eligible for the TAP have spent up to six years at boarding school in order to access secondary education. Often those students who wish to continue to tertiary education need a break for one year after an extended time away from home and family at boarding school. It is not an unreasonable expectation to increase the TAP eligibility to those students who wish to take one year off from study in order to refresh themselves for the tertiary years to come.

**M18 (S11) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)**

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Education to amend the timing of payments of the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP)."

**Moved:** Margaret Brock Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**Seconded:** Wendy Hick Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

A very remote student in our branch relocated 1,800km to commence studying a full-time nursing degree in Toowoomba Queensland. The student applied for TAP in January and was advised that her claim would be finalised within a week of the Universities census date, approximately 21<sup>st</sup> March or Week 6 of her course. The TAP Program Guidelines 2022-2024 say that the TAP first instalment for outer regional, remote and very remote (or single instalment for inner regional applicants) is *"to be paid 42 days (six weeks) after the qualifying tertiary course commencement date, after*

- *your enrolment is confirmed*
- *the final decision to approve the instalment is made."*

As of 6 May, which was 12 weeks after commencing her course, her application still had not been processed. If the Assistance for Isolated Children Distance Education Allowance and Boarding Allowance can be paid to isolated families, the week prior to the commencement of school term, why can't the Tertiary Access Payment be paid to students once they have accepted their university offer? On the Services Australia website, it says the TAP is *"A payment to help students with the cost of moving from regional or remote areas for tertiary study. The Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) is a one-off payment of up to \$5,000. It's to help eligible students with the cost of moving to study."*

**M19 (S12) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and Services Australia to reduce the claim processing times for the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP)."

**Moved:** Wendy Hick Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**Seconded:** Margaret Brock Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

A very remote student claimed for the TAP on 28 May and was advised that "We expect to finalise your claim between 26 August 2024 and 2 September 2024." That is a claim processing period of 12-13 weeks and unacceptably slow. At the 3 June 2024 Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee 2024-25, the Services Australia CEO tabled documents that showed from the period 1 January 2024 to 1 May 2024 68.1% of Tertiary Access Payment Claims took longer to process than the agreed timeliness standard.

<https://www.aph.gov.au/->

[/media/Estimates/ca/bud2425/Social\\_Services/02\\_TabledDoc\\_ServicesAustralia\\_ResponseToSenatorsRequest.pdf?la=en&hash=2648D391C4BD550FD918E8BAB026044C45EAA97A](https://www.aph.gov.au/-/media/Estimates/ca/bud2425/Social_Services/02_TabledDoc_ServicesAustralia_ResponseToSenatorsRequest.pdf?la=en&hash=2648D391C4BD550FD918E8BAB026044C45EAA97A)

**M20 (S13) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education to add the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) to the list of scholarships that are exempt from the Youth Allowance Income Test."

**Moved:** Margaret Brock Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)  
**Seconded:** Wendy Hick Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

Currently the Youth Allowance personal income test allows for up to \$9,724 per year in scholarships received to be exempt from the income test. Some scholarships including Commonwealth Scholarships and the Relocation Scholarship are exempt from the income test and yet the Tertiary Access Payment isn't. A student from remote Australia who is fortunate enough to receive a University Scholarship or Bursary (many of which give preference or are targeted at students from regional, remote and very remote areas) will find that combined with the \$5,000 TAP payment that they exceed the scholarship threshold, and this affects their dependent Youth Allowance payment rate. <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/income-from-scholarships-for-students-and-apprentices?context=43921>

**Tertiary Portfolio Motions - Other****M21 (A56) Julia Creek Branch (QLD)**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to commence a pilot program to waive the HECS debt for new university education degree enrolments where graduates are willing to hold a teaching position in a remote area for a period equivalent to their tertiary education."

**Word Change:** Haylee Ruska, Julia Creek Branch (QLD) requested conference's permission for a word change to remove 'pilot'

**Conference permission granted.**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to commence a program to waive the HECS debt for new university education degree enrolments where graduates are willing to hold a teaching position in a remote area for a period equivalent to their tertiary education."

**Moved:** Haylee Ruska Julia Creek (QLD)  
**Seconded:** Rachael Anderson Julia Creek (QLD)

**LOST****Explanation:**

Programs of this kind have the possibility of enticing new teachers into rural and remote areas that they may previously not have considered. Having them hold the teaching position for the equivalent of the course time allows them to form relationships and strong bonds within communities within those isolated towns. With the cost of living increasing, removing one of the financial burdens on a new teacher would be a hard offer to turn away.

**M22 (A57) Julia Creek Branch (QLD)**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to waive the HECS debt for primary and secondary teachers who have or are willing to take up geographically isolated teaching positions in Australia's rural and remote schools for a minimum of three years."

**Moved:** Haylee Ruska Julia Creek (QLD)  
**Seconded:** Rachael Anderson Julia Creek (QLD)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

This kind of program could attract seasoned teachers into isolated communities, potentially bringing their families which increases school sizes and funding and adds to local communities.

**M23 (A58) Julia Creek Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education and the Federal Department of Education, for the reduction of HECS fees when an education, allied health or medical/nursing student chooses to do their compulsory placements hours in remote and geographically isolated areas.”

**Moved:** Haylee Ruska Julia Creek (QLD)

**Seconded:** Rachael Anderson Julia Creek (QLD)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

Attracting new Teachers, Speech therapist, Occupational therapists, nurses and early childhood educators to our remote and isolated areas is becoming exceptionally difficult. The government needs to find new ways of enticing Tafe and University Students to these areas, allowing them to see these options for their future employment. Allowing higher education students to decrease their HECS debt with the compulsory hours of UNPAID work they must undertake to complete their course will give them a glimpse into a rural and remote lifestyle.

The Julia Creek Branch understands the government has implemented a similar program. However, this program is means tested and will ONLY pay the student \$319.50 a week or \$8.40 an hour over a normal pay week of 38 hours. The current basic casual award rate is \$29.04.

**M24 (A59) Rankin Springs Branch (NSW)**

““That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education and the Federal Treasurer to change the timing of HECS-HELP debt indexation applied to compulsory repayments.”

**Moved:** Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council on behalf of Rankin Springs (NSW)

**Seconded:** Kerrie Johnston Rankins Springs (NSW)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

The indexation of Higher Education Loans Program (HELP or also known as HECS) debts has long been an issue for university graduates. Although HECS has been promoted in the past as ‘interest free’, the loan has always had indexation applied at the rate of the current CPI at the time of indexation, June 1. Recently, the Federal Government announced that they would implement a recommendation from the Australian Universities Accord where indexation would be set at either the current Consumer Price Index (CPI) or the Wage Price Index (WPI), whichever is lower, backdated to 1 June 2023. This will cancel the 7.1% CPI indexation applied to HECS-HELP debts in 2023, as well as the predicted 2024 increase of 4.7%, dropping the rate applied to both years to 3.2%. This is a very welcome change for university graduates and apprentices who have debt.

Another recommendation from the Australian Universities Accord is to change the timing of indexation. Currently, once a graduate earns above the compulsory repayment threshold of \$51,550, repayments are deducted from wages through the tax system and held by the government until the graduate lodges their tax return when it then applied to reduce the debt. The total amount deducted from wages over the financial year is not applied to the loan until after the graduate lodges their tax return. The unjust issue is that indexation is applied to the debt on 1 June, which is before the repayments have been applied to the loan, disregarding the fact that the graduate has had

repayments deducted from their wages over the previous 11 months. We understand that this is a complex system for the tax office to administer, and that any changes would not be easy to make, but we feel that the timing of the indexation of the debt is unfair. Applying indexation after the repayments have been deducted from the debt would be far more equitable.

This could be remedied by indexation being applied 1 November each year after the Individual Tax Return due date of 31 October. If this indexation date was adopted, any repayments deducted from wages during the previous tax year would be included in the balance of the HECS-HELP debt before indexation is calculated and applied.

**M25 (A60) North West Branch (SA)**

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education and the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations to investigate the real cost rural and remote students face whilst completing compulsory placements during their degree."

**Moved:** Edwina Bowie North West (SA)  
**Seconded:** Jill Greenfield North West (SA)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

We thank the government for introducing a Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) of \$319.50 from July 2025. However, we do have many questions; What is the means tested component of the payment? Do the students who do not qualify for the Australian Government income support still receive the CPP? Is the CPP enough for a student who cannot be paid for their placement period, which can be for months?

Often students have a minimum of six months placement throughout their degree. The recently announced payment is for teachers, nurses, midwives and social workers. There are many other students in degrees that need financial support for their placements.

We have two remote students in our branch who are studying externally while holding full to part-time jobs, away from home. These jobs must be flexible, so they are able to leave for compulsory placements for many weeks at a time. Their placement locations are limited to places where they can couch surf or stay with relatives or friends. Paying extra rent for a short time is expensive and not viable for many. For our children who already reside away from home to study, the mandatory unpaid practical placements add an extra financial and emotional burden as they juggle paid work, study obligations and full-time placement.

**M26 (A61) North West Branch (SA)**

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education and the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations to fast track the commencement date of the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) to 1 August 2024 to help alleviate the financial hardship current rural and remote students are facing whilst trying to complete their degrees."

**Moved:** Edwina Bowie North West (SA)  
**Seconded:** Jill Greenfield North West (SA)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

We appreciate that the Prime Minister is 'proud to be backing the hard work and aspiration of Australians looking to better themselves by studying at University' but why wait another full year to do so

**M27 (A62) Western Australia State Council**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Minister for Education and Minister for Skills and Training to expand the cost-of-living Commonwealth Prac Payment to include students who are undertaking a vocational education and training or university qualification in the allied health field, in order to help address the shortage of these professionals in rural and remote areas.”

**Moved:** Jane Cunningham Western Australia State Council

**Seconded:** Kym Ross Western Australia State Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

In May 2024, the Albanese Government announced it would establish a Commonwealth Prac Payment to support students undertaking mandatory workplace placements required for university and vocational education and training qualifications.

Australians studying to be a teacher, a nurse, a midwife or a social worker will be eligible for this payment.

We acknowledge the skills shortage in these fields; however, our geographically isolated students are also affected by the shortage of services provided by allied health professionals. Without the services provided by these professionals, students' educational outcomes are compromised.

As quoted by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese “Teachers give our children the best start in life, they deserve a fair start to their career”, our geographically isolated students equally deserve the best in health support services to ensure they have the opportunity to achieve optimal educational outcomes.

**M28 (A63) Bourke Branch (NSW)**

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

**Word Change:** Prue Ritchie, Bourke Branch (NSW) requested conference’s permission for a word change to add ‘financial’.

**Conference permission granted**

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

**Moved:** Prue Ritchie Bourke (NSW)

**Seconded:** Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

This Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship Program or similar program needs to be extended beyond the commitment of the 2023 scholarships to benefit rural and remote students in the future.

Children of Hay Branch members, who have commenced Tertiary Studies for the first time in 2023, had tried to apply for the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship through the QTAC web site since February 2023. Unfortunately, when they have accessed the web site the information only showed the previous 2022 Scholarships. After phone calls to the QTAC office they had been told that the government funds have not been received to fund this program yet and to check back on the web site for updates. Fortunately, just when the first trimester of university was nearly complete in May

2023, they were alerted that the Scholarship round had opened. We are thankful that this scholarship is available for 2023.

However, tertiary students, especially those who have done a year or two working since school and don't qualify for the Tertiary Access Payment have budgeted on receiving this funding (as other students or siblings have received it in previous years) for the duration of their course. They need a firm commitment that these funds will be available as they struggle with the financial commitment of accessing university away from the family home.

**M29 (A64) Charleville Branch (QLD)**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Government to extend the Commonwealth Prac Payments for practicums undertaken in rural and remote areas especially in the areas of study such as Allied Health, Veterinary Science and Medicine."

**Moved:** Louise Winten Charleville (QLD)  
**Seconded:** Mijanou Reynolds Flinders Ranges (SA)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

ICPA Charleville Branch thanks the Minister for Education the Hon. Jason Clare and the Federal Government for acknowledging the need for Paid Practicum Placements in the areas of Teaching, Nursing and Social Work, as recommended in the Australian Universities Accord but implores ICPA (Aust) to continue to lobby the Federal Government to widen this list to include other areas of study to acknowledge the huge cost impost that undertaking these mandatory practicums holds.

For students to apply and to accept a practicum in a rural area will often mean paying rent at place of study as well as in the prac location, either taking leave or having to resign from part time employment, travel costs and in general living away from home expenses.

Charleville Branch, like many other branches across Australia, offer a \$300 Bursary to Education Students who choose schools in Charleville or Morven in Remote South-west Queensland to undertake their prac work. This is a small acknowledgement of the costs associated in relocating to a rural and remote area and a recognition that we truly appreciate their interest in working remotely.

Veterinary Science Students, as a mandatory part of their studies, must undertake around 54 weeks in total, depending on the University attending, of unpaid placement over the duration of their course. Occupational Therapy students must complete a minimum of 1000 unpaid hours and Speech Pathologists may be required as part of their course to complete a mandatory rural and remote placement.

To ensure that we continue to attract and retain Allied Health, Medicine and Veterinary Professionals to Rural and Remote areas into the future we must be able to provide prac placements that do not impart a significant financial burden on the student.

**M30 (A65) Charleville Branch (QLD)**

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Federal Government for the ongoing expansion of the Country University Centre's (CUC) network to enable greater access to tertiary and vocational education for geographically isolated students."

**Moved:** Louise Winten Charleville (QLD)  
**Seconded:** Mijanou Reynolds Flinders Ranges (SA)

**CARRIED**



**Explanation:**

ICPA Charleville Branch thanks the Minister for Education the Hon. Jason Clare and the Federal Government for the recent rollout of a further ten Country University Centre (CUC) Regional University Study Hubs throughout Rural, Regional and Remote Australia.

Regional University Hubs support regional, rural, and remote students to successfully pursue higher education and vocational studies or training, while remaining in their communities with family, friends, and local employment. By expanding the Australia wide network of these centres an increased number of rural students and communities will benefit into the future.

**Presentation**

Farewell to Federal Councillor Kate Thompson

**Introduction of the Federal Nominations**

Judy Newton

**Conference Arrangements**

**Close of Business Day 1**

**DAY TWO Thursday 24 July 2024**

**8:00am Conference Resumes**

**Annual General Meeting**

AGM declared open

Introduction of Delegates in attendance

Kim Hughes

**AGM Motions**

**Acceptance of the 2023 AGM Minutes**

**M31 (A71) ICPA Federal Council**

"That the Minutes of the 2023 AGM as circulated on 6 June 2024 be accepted."

**Moved:** Kim Hughes

Federal Council

**Seconded:** Kate Thompson

Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Federal Treasurer's Report**

Nikki Mahony

**Adoption of Financial Statements**

**M32 (A72) ICPA Federal Council**

"That the 2023 - 2024 Audited Report be received and accepted."

**Moved:** Nikki Mahony

Federal Council

**Seconded:** Miffy Waugh

Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Setting of the 2025 Membership Fees****M33 (A73) ICPA Federal Council**

“That the Federal membership fee be set at \$25.00 per member family for the 2025 membership year.”

**Moved:** Nikki Mahony Federal Council

**Seconded:** Miffy Waugh Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**M34 (A74) ICPA Federal Council**

“That Corporate Membership be set at \$300.00 per organisation for the 2025 membership year.”

**Moved:** Nikki Mahony Federal Council

**Seconded:** Miffy Waugh Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**M35 (A75) ICPA Federal Council**

“That School Corporate Membership be set at \$300.00 per school or educational institution for the 2025 membership year.”

**Moved:** Nikki Mahony Federal Council

**Seconded:** Miffy Waugh Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Appointment of Auditor****M36 (A76) ICPA Federal Council**

“That Queensland Audit Services, be appointed as auditor for the 2024 - 2025 financial year.”

**Moved:** Nikki Mahony Federal Council

**Seconded:** Miffy Waugh Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Constitutional, By-laws and Policy Motions****M37 (A77) ICPA Federal Council**

“That the amendments to Rule 3.6 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution, as circulated, be adopted.”

**Moved:** Kim Hughes Federal Council

**Seconded:** Shennah Joiner Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

- *Sub-rule 3.6.4 – Delete ‘Federal’ and replace with ‘ICPA’*
- *Sub-rule 3.6.5 – Add ‘ICPA’ to ‘School Corporate member’*

The renaming of ‘Federal Corporate Member’ to ‘ICPA Corporate Member’ is more reflective of the membership category. Corporate Members are members of ICPA as an organisation rather than just Federal ICPA.

Furthermore, the addition of ‘ICPA’ to ‘School Corporate Members’ brings consistency to both corporate membership categories.

**M38 (A78) ICPA Federal Council**

“That the amendment to Section 5.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution, as circulated, be adopted.”

**Moved:** Kim Hughes Federal Council  
**Seconded:** Shennah Joiner Federal Council

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

- *Make Sub-rule 5.6.4 a new Rule 5.7*

This amendment is for grammatical correctness.

**M39 (A79) ICPA Federal Council**

“That the amendments to Section 6.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution, as circulated, be adopted.”

**Moved:** Kim Hughes Federal Council  
**Seconded:** Shennah Joiner Federal Council

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

- *Rule 6.3 from this section be moved to the 18.0 Annual Subscription section as section 6.0 deals with ‘types of members’ rather than the annual subscription payment process*
- *Rule 6.5 (new 6.4) – changing ‘a’ to ‘an’ and adding ‘ICPA’ to School Corporate member to reflect name change*
- *Rule 6.6 (new 6.5) – changing ‘a’ to ‘an’ and replacing ‘Federal’ with ‘ICPA’ in front of ‘Corporate membership’ to reflect name change*
- *Rule 6.7 (new 6.6) – Changing ‘a’ to ‘an’ and adding ‘ICPA’ to ‘School Corporate membership’ to reflect name change*

It is suggested that Rule 6.3 from this section be re-located to the 18.0 Annual Subscription section as section 6.0 deals with ‘types of members’ rather than the annual subscription payment process.

The amendment to Rule 6.6 reflects the renaming of ‘Federal Corporate Membership category’ to ‘ICPA Corporate Member’ which is more reflective of this membership category. Corporate Members are members of ICPA as an organisation rather than just Federal ICPA.

Amendments to Rule 6.5 and 6.7 to add ‘ICPA’ to the Schools Corporate membership category brings consistency to both membership categories.

**M40 (A80) ICPA Federal Council**

“That the amendments to Section 7.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution, as circulated, be adopted.”

**Moved:** Kim Hughes Federal Council  
**Seconded:** Shennah Joiner Federal Council

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

- *Replace existing Rule 7.3 with ‘Payment options are set out under Rule 18.0 of this Constitution.’*
- *Rule 7.4 - Change word ‘due’ to ‘expiry’ which is consistent with new rolling membership model*

These amendments will provide clarity to payment options by referring to the section 18.0 – Annual Subscription. The changing of the word ‘due’ to ‘expiry’ is consistent with the new rolling membership model.

**M41 (A81) ICPA Federal Council**

“That the amendments to Section 10.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution, as circulated, be adopted.”

**Moved:** Kim Hughes Federal Council

**Seconded:** Shennah Joiner Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**10.0 Rights Not Transferable:

- 10.0 – Add words ‘Or Refundable’ after ‘Transferable’ in the Section name
- 10.2 – a new Rule: ‘Membership is paid in advance and not refundable if membership ceases.’

Amendments to this section will assist with online payment gateways. If a membership refund is offered, a fee equal to the total annual membership is required to ensure the gateway has funds to cover a scenario of all members resigning. These amendments do not mean ICPA would not refund a member who has overpaid for whatever reason.

**M42 (A82) ICPA Federal Council**

“That the amendments to Section 18.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution, as circulated, be adopted.”

**Moved:** Kim Hughes Federal Council

**Seconded:** Shennah Joiner Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**18.0 Annual Subscription:

- delete rule 18.1.1
- 18.1.2 becomes 18.1.1 and add new Sub-rule 18.1.1 (i). allows State Councils to act as collection agents for federal affiliation fees collected through online membership payments)
- additional wording to Sub-rule 18.1.2 to clarify the manual payment of the annual subscription process
- add the words ‘to the Branch’ to rule 18.2
- New rule 18.3 (taken from deleted rule 6.3)
- rule 18.4 (new 18.5) - delete the words, ‘across all tiers’ to simplify

It is suggested that Sub-rules 18.1.1 and 18.1.2 be swapped around so the electronic payment method is dealt with first, this is how the majority of memberships will be paid. Adding a new Sub-rule 18.1.1 (i) allows State Councils to act as collection agents for the federal affiliation fees collected through online membership payments.

Additional wording to the new Sub-rule 18.1.2 gives more clarity to the manual payment of the annual subscription process.

The suggested new Rule 18.3 is the deleted Rule 6.3 from Section 6.0 and it has been modified to

add further clarity to the manual payment of the annual subscription process.  
Amendment to Rule 18.4 is grammatical.

**M43 (A83) ICPA Federal Council**

“That the amendment to Section 19.1 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution, as circulated, be adopted.”

**Moved:** Kim Hughes Federal Council  
**Seconded:** Shennah Joiner Federal Council

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

- *remove the words ‘a Vice President’ and replace with ‘two (2) Vice Presidents’*

As part of Federal Council’s ongoing strategic planning process, it has been agreed that steps should be taken to assist in streamlining the operation and the effectiveness of the Association. It is considered that an executive model which supports the inclusion of two Vice Presidents (rather than one) can support a more robust succession planning process and promote a more effective share of workload among the Federal Council team, in particular the Executive. It is envisaged that two Vice Presidents could undertake necessary responsibilities to oversee and manage different aspects of the strategic and operational activities of the Federal Council and support the current President while continuing to hold portfolios and contribute to the Council as a whole.

This recommendation has also been endorsed by two former Presidents of the organisation.

As this change would add a new position to the Federal Council Executive, the following process applies:

If the nominations for the committee are less than capacity (9), the potential second Vice President would nominate as a committee member and then, once the Constitutional amendments have been accepted by the regulatory body, they would be co-opted into the Vice President role until the 2025 AGM.

If, however, nominations for the committee is at capacity, the following process applies:

1. There will be a call for nominations for the second Vice President role.
2. If elected, that person would be invited to council meetings as a guest in the interim period, without voting rights until the Constitutional changes are approved by the regulating body. Once approved, the second Vice President position will take effect.
3. If circumstances mean that at any time in the future, there is no nomination for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President it does not mean that the organisation is unconstitutional as per the Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA), the regulatory body which ICPA (Aust) is incorporated under.

**M44 (A84) ICPA Federal Council**

“That the amendment to Section 29.0 of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution, as circulated, be adopted.”

**Moved:** Kim Hughes Federal Council  
**Seconded:** Shennah Joiner Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

- *remove wording, 'any By-Law may be set aside by delegates' and add the words 'of the Federal Council' at the end*

As per the Constitution, the Federal Council from time to time may amend or repeal the ICPA (Aust) By- laws for the internal management of the association at a properly convened Federal Council meeting. This process is clearly outlined in the ICPA (Aust) By-laws. The extra wording in this Rule creates ambiguity of the process and is open to interpretation and possible double handling so it is suggested it be deleted.

**M45 (A85) ICPA Federal Council**

"That re-numbering and cross-referencing amendments to various Sections of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution where appropriate be adopted."

<b>Moved:</b>	Kim Hughes	Federal Council
<b>Seconded:</b>	Shennah Joiner	Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Various amendments have been made to reflect the removal of and additions to some Rules throughout the Constitution. Therefore, changes to the Rule and Sub-rule numbering and cross-referencing is required.

### Election of Federal Council 2024 - 2025

All positions declared vacant and the Returning Officer Judy Newton took the chair for the election of officers.

<b>President</b>	<b>Name</b> <b>Louise Martin</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Branch</b> <b>Tambo (QLD)</b> Stacey Ryrie Kimberley Rains Tambo (QLD) Tambo (QLD)
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Julia Broad</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Charters Towers (QLD)</b> Miffy Waugh Kate Thompson Taroom-Wandoan (QLD) Tasmania Branch (TAS)
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Sally Brindal</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Midwest (WA)</b> Tim Fletcher Ali Allison Monaro (NSW) Broken Hill (NSW)
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Kelly Ostwald</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Southern Downs (QLD)</b> Kylie Camp Kim Hughes Mt ISA BOTA (QLD) Richmond (QLD)
<b>Assistant Secretary</b>	<b>Shennah Joiner</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Monaro (NSW)</b> Tim Fletcher Anna McCorkle Monaro (NSW) Bourke (NSW)
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Melissa Kerr</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Katherine (NT)</b> Nikki Mahony Kim Hughes Dawson Valley (QLD) Richmond (QLD)
<b>Publicity Officer</b>	<b>Kym Ross</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Lakes District (WA)</b> Sally Brindal Jane Cunningham Midwest (WA) Lakes District (WA)
<b>Ex-Officio Immediate Past President</b>	-	
<b>COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Nikki Mahony</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Dawson Valley (QLD)</b> Sarah Cox Nikki Macqueen Dawson Valley (QLD) Kindon (QLD)
	<b>Jennifer Ruska</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Julia Creek (QLD)</b> Cassandra Bjurstrom Kimberley Wilson Julia Creek (QLD) Julia Creek (QLD)

<b>Tim Fletcher</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Monaro (NSW)</b> Kate Thompson Sally Brindal	Tasmania Branch (TAS) Midwest (WA)
<b>Ali Allison</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Broken Hill (NSW)</b> Tim Fletcher Sally Brindal	Monaro (NSW) Midwest (WA)
<b>Anna McCorkle</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Bourke (NSW)</b> Tanya Mitchell Kate Thompson	Bourke (NSW) Tasmania Branch (TAS)
<b>Jill Greenfield</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>North West (SA)</b> Petie Rankin Dani Chapman	North West (SA) Marla Oodnadatta (SA)
<b>Amber Driver</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Alice Springs (NT)</b> Nikki Macqueen Nikki Mahony	Kindon (QLD) Dawson Valley (QLD)
<b>Heather Whigham-Reid</b> Nominated: Seconded: <b>DULY ELECTED</b>	<b>Nyngan (NSW)</b> David Butler Bernadette Maxwell	Nyngan (NSW) Tibooburra-Milparinka (NSW)

**Vote of thanks to Judy Newton as Returning Officer**

**AGM Motions continued**

**Conference Venue Motions**

**M46 (A86) South Australia State Council**

“That SA ICPA hosts the 2025 Federal Conference in Adelaide on 30 and 31 July 2025.”

**Moved:** Hollie Williams South Australia State Council  
**Seconded:** Jodie Keogh South Australia State Council

**CARRIED by Acclamation**

**M47 (A87) Queensland State Council**

“That ICPA QLD State Council hosts the 2026 Federal Conference on the Gold Coast, Queensland.”

**Moved:** Wendy Henning Queensland State Council  
**Seconded:** Kate Bradshaw Queensland State Council

**CARRIED by Acclamation**



**Pedals Editor's Report**

Hannah Calcino

**Call for any other AGM business: nil.****9:00am Close of AGM****Conference Resumes****Welcome by Federal ICPA President**

Louise Martin

**Introduction of Guests**

Kim Hughes

**Tertiary Portfolio Motions - Other continued****M48 (A66) Queensland State Council**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Australian Council of Deans (ACDE) to tailor explicit units within Initial Teacher Education to equip graduates with current, evidence-based strategies to support neurodivergent and diverse disability learners present in an inclusive learning environment particularly when teaching in a rural and remote setting where access to specific support is not readily available."

<b>Moved:</b>	Wendy Henning	Queensland State Council
<b>Seconded:</b>	Annette Boyle	Queensland State Council

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

There are approximately 30,000 autistic students within Queensland State Schools alone. Behavioural management and meeting the needs of neurodivergent learners and diverse disabilities in an inclusive learning environment is becoming increasingly more complex for teachers.

ICPA Qld members have raised concerns that a variety of rural and remote classrooms are under resourced in terms of staffing ratios to meet the needs of the students and the capability of teachers to support neurodiverse learners and diverse disabilities. This is particularly difficult in small rural schools where there is very little support on the ground. Without adequate Initial Teacher Education, teachers are not prepared for the challenges of inclusive classroom management, which is arguably contributing to the national teacher shortage and potentially driving teachers away from a long-term career in education. Anecdotal evidence suggests that teaching principals are the most frequent seekers of advice from specific support agencies. This is to meet the complex demands in a remote multiage classroom which have a cohort of neurodivergent students. They are arguably seeking this support because their degree did not equip them with the skills and knowledge to meet the complex needs of these students.

Given this is a nation-wide issue, ICPA Qld is calling upon the ACDE to broaden and strengthen Initial Teacher Education courses to include current, evidence-based units in disability specific areas and appropriate knowledge of the Disability Discrimination Act and Disability Standards for Education.

Whilst, some universities offer Post Graduate courses, it is essential to keep abreast of current research and tailor Initial Teacher Education units accordingly. Capacity needs to be built for teaching graduates to be equipped with the necessary skills to support the diverse needs of students within an inclusive classroom. Graduates require a strong foundation and understanding

of inclusive practice and need to be supported with the appropriate practicum to gain classroom experience.

ICPA Qld commends these critical areas being identified as Priority Area 2 (Strengthening initial

teacher education) and Priority Area 3 (Keeping the teachers we have) within the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. ICPA Qld would welcome any updates on the progress in the development of national guidelines and strategies focused on inclusive practice to support students with diverse learning needs and disabilities.

**M49 (\$14) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education to include ICPA Australia as a stakeholder when developing the Program Guidelines for the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) to ensure the unique challenges of students from regional, remote and very remote Australia are considered and included as well as those students wishing to undertake placement in those parts of Australia."

**Moved:** Margaret Brock Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**Seconded:** Wendy Hick Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The CPP will be means-tested to target students who need it most. As students from regional, remote and very remote areas have been identified as an underrepresented group within higher education it would be beneficial for ICPA Australia's input into accessibility to this payment for this group of students. Also, the additional costs for students associated with travelling to regional or remote parts of the country to undertake placement needs consideration during means-testing. We don't want students choosing to not complete regional, rural and remote placements due not being eligible for CPP and experiencing placement poverty

**M50 (\$15) Tasmania Branch (TAS)**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to implement the remaining recommendations from the *National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy*, particularly the recommendations pertaining to Youth Allowance, to improve access and affordability for rural and remote tertiary students."

**Moved:** Jill Greenfield North West (SA) on behalf of Tasmania Branch (TAS)

**Seconded:** Edwina Bowie North West (SA)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy Final Report (Naphthine Review) sole focus was on rural and remote tertiary education and contained 7 key recommendations and 33 actions. To ensure the Federal Government's commitment to rural and remote tertiary education and of improving tertiary education participation and outcomes for students from regional, rural and remote areas, all the recommendations and associated actions must be implemented.

The cost of relocation and ongoing living expenses associated with living away from home and the inability to qualify for student payments including Youth Allowance are two significant barriers faced by rural and remote students accessing a tertiary education and form part of many of ICPA tertiary motions each year. While rural and remote students are appreciative of the recommendation's actions that were implemented in particular the Tertiary Access Payment, the expansion of the Regional University Centres and improving the Fares Allowance, there are other

recommendations particularly around Youth Allowance that must be implemented to improve these student's eligibility to student payments and access to a tertiary education. The recommendations pertaining to Youth Allowance that have not been implemented are:

- access to Youth Allowance as an independent for rural and remote students who successfully complete their first year of tertiary study externally and then relocate to continue study for a further minimum of one year
- the reduction of the earnings required for rural and remote students who are qualifying for independent Youth Allowance under the Concessional Workforce test and
- the review of the changes to the parental means test cut-offs for independent Youth Allowance under the Concessional Workforce test.

**M51 (S16) Tasmania Branch (TAS)**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to prioritise the implementation of the recommendations from the *Australian Universities Accord Final Report* relating to rural and remote tertiary students."

**Moved:** Jill Greenfield North West (SA) on behalf of Tasmania Branch (TAS)  
**Seconded:** Edwina Bowie North West (SA)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

While it is pleasing to see in the Australian Universities Accord Final Report recommendations that the specific needs and challenges that rural and remote tertiary students face when accessing a higher education are highlighted and that some of the issues that ICPA members have highlighted are addressed in the recommendations. Now it is imperative that all the recommendations are implemented, with the rural and remote recommendations being prioritised.

Included in the recommendations that need prioritising are:

- Expansion of Regional Study hubs for both Vocational Education and Training and Higher education
- Tertiary Access Payment measures – the removal of the requirement to commence study within 12 months of leaving year 12 and to change the timing of TAP payments to provide payment prior to relocation
- Improve the student income support by increasing the Parental Income Free Area for dependent Youth Allowance and further review and monitoring of the student payment system eligibility criteria and payments with focus on students with the most need including for rural and remote students being identified as effectively independent once they leave home therefore should be considered as eligible for independent Youth Allowance
- HELP debt indexation timing - change the timing so that amounts withheld are accounted for before indexation is applied to HELP loans.

The implementation of all the recommendations of this Accord review and the previously mentioned Naphthine Review will go a long way to making the choice to go onto tertiary study post-school an affordable and achievable option for our rural and remote students.

**Distance Education Portfolio Presentation**

Louise Martin

**Distance Education Portfolio Motions****M52 (A18) Julia Creek Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government for a **Geographically Isolated Education Supervisors Subsidy (GIESS)** for all families that have to school their children in distance education settings due to residing in remote and geographically isolated locations.”

**Moved:** Rachel Anderson Julia Creek (QLD)

**Seconded:** Megan Burke Julia Creek (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

For Years ICPA has lobbied the State and Federal Government for **Distance Education Teaching Allowance** however it is obvious that the government does not see home tutors as teachers. However, as part of our obligation with School of the Air (SOTA) and distance education centres, at least one adult must be present in the classroom with our children while they are learning online and deliver half of the student’s curriculum and in some cases all the curriculum issued to our students.

The home tutor must be present to commit six to eight hours a day in addition to the necessary preparation time. This role requires dedication and commitment and can be seven years per student.

The home tutor must be capable and confident in delivering the distance education program so that their students can achieve educational parity with their peers in face-to-face schools who have daily access to professionally trained teachers and support staff.

Distance education delivery is impossible without home tutors responsible for the face-to-face delivery of educational support, supervision, and evaluation of their students.

While distance education tutors spend about the same time as teachers in a face-to-face school preparing daily lessons, teaching, and supervising their students, they receive no remuneration for their work.

For geographically isolated families, the role of home tutor usually falls on the mother. This means they are unable to fully participate, or must juggle, other day-to-day work, either in the family business, on the property on which the family lives or elsewhere, often foregoing their own careers and earning capability to teach their child/ren enrolled in distance education.

Families that choose to employ a tutor or governess do so at a considerable cost and finding a suitable governess/tutor is often difficult in isolated areas.

In recent years the roles women assume in the operation of family businesses in rural and remote areas have changed, so performing the position of home tutor multiplies their workload. This adds pressure on other family members and may require the employment of additional staff.

The vital and compulsory role of the home tutor should be remunerated through an allowance, one which recognises the essential work are required to perform.

While the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education (DE) Allowance helps geographically isolated distance education families with some of the incidental expenses of educating their children, this does not include covering the cost of someone to teach the children in the home classroom.

Under the AIC Guidelines, the AIC DE Allowance was not established to cover costs for providing a tutor in the distance education home classroom. The table below shows the average financial loss and implications of a mother or other family member undertaking the distance education home tutor role.

<b>Family member as geographically isolated distance education tutor</b>	
Average hours per day	6-8 hours per day, approx. 40 weeks per year
Average years spent as DE tutor for one child	8 years (Kindy/preschool plus primary school)
Average total hours spent tutoring one child	9600 –12,800 hours
Minimum Wage	\$23.23 per hour
Unpaid Work/Wages forgone (number of hours x Minimum wage)	\$223,008 - \$297,344
Superannuation @ 11% foregone	\$24,530 - \$32,707

Source: *The Isolated Children's Parents' Association Inc (Australia) Distance Education Portfolio 2023 - 24 Briefing Paper.*

**M53 (A19) Katherine Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Federal Government to establish an allowance / subsidy for families in recognition of the cost families bear in providing the compulsory home tutor when educating students via distance education.”

**Moved:** Melissa Kerr Federal Council on behalf of Katherine Branch (NT)

**Seconded:** Constance Wood Katherine (NT)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Katherine Branch thanks ICPA (Aust) for your continuing pursuit of this motion. We acknowledge the move away from calling this a DETA. It is the intent of recognition and recompense that is important to our branch, not the name.

For many students living in remote regions, their only access to schooling is to study by distance education. It is compulsory that distance education children be supervised by an adult - the distance education tutor, who must be available and able to provide the practical, day-to-day supervision and support required for the effective delivery of a distance education program. The cost of providing this supervision is a major burden to the family, whether they are paying someone or by the loss of income incurred when a parent (usually the mother) gives up paid employment to provide this supervision.

There is no specific award which applies to this position thus a home tutor falls under the miscellaneous award which starts at a minimum \$48,118 per year (excluding time required for preparation outside of school hours) plus the cost of providing full board and accommodation.

**M54 (S7) New South Wales State Council**

“That ICPA (Aust) asks the Minister for Social Services to provide funding for a Distance Education Supervisors Subsidy (DESS) to be paid per term to eligible families for safely and actively supervising students in a home classroom.”

**Moved:** Tanya Mitchell New South Wales State Council

**Seconded:** Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Currently, children in a distance education home classroom are supervised by a governess (supervisor), parent, or grandparent and there is currently no financial assistance in this supervision. This has many social, emotional and financial impacts on rural and remote families.

Some of these factors include:

- Partners working solo in roles that for safely require two people
- Takes a secondary income from a family home which is much needed, as remote families face higher cost of living due to location
- Mothers who have no other option but teach their own children are feeling the emotional and family strain. Teaching your children requires fulltime supervision from 8am-4pm, 5 days a week, often they are required to work for the farm before and after school hours creating 12-14hr days
- Without financial help, retaining and enticing workforce in remote areas is hard as often families will move jobs and areas once the children are school aged as it is cheaper for their children to attend school in a town.

When children are attending online lessons with a teacher, it is unsatisfactory to think that the teacher on the other end of the computer hundreds of kilometres away is able to supervise children safely and effectively, they still require supervision. How is a teacher on the other end able to deal with the following situations:

- Medical emergencies
- Behavioural issues
- Poor concentration

In Australia all children are said to be able to access a free public education, but for remote students/families studying via public distance education is not true. Having a governess (supervisor) is an expense and to take a family member out of the work force is not free of financial impacts. We implore the federal and state governments to work towards an outcome suitable for each state.

**M55 (A20) South Australia State Council**

“That ICPA (Aust) supports all State Councils in their efforts towards the creation and implementation of a state government funded allowance for distance education supervisors.”

<b>Moved:</b>	Hollie Williams	South Australia State Council
<b>Seconded:</b>	Jodie Keogh	South Australia State Council

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

For many years Federal Council have been working tirelessly in their efforts to see a federally funded allowance for distance education tutors/supervisors be created. Despite their efforts, there has been little headway made, with the feedback from the Federal Government often indicating because education is the responsibility of states, then the funding of such an allowance should also be the responsibility of the state.

With thoughtful consideration and discussions between Federal Council and all State Councils it was decided that perhaps it was time to shift the focus away from a federally funded allowance and have State Councils begin their campaign for the creation of an allowance that would support families who are employing a supervisor for their distance education classroom and their students.

With the guidance and support of Federal Council and a strong advocacy campaign from the states,

there is a very real possibility that an allowance of this nature can be implemented by state education departments across country.

**M56 (A21) Western Australia State Council**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Minister for Education when meeting with state education ministers to come up with a uniform solution that adequately remunerates or recognises supervisors in the distance education classroom.”

**Moved:** Jane Cunningham Western Australia State Council  
**Seconded:** Kym Ross Western Australia State Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

It is a requirement of state Distance Education (DE) and Schools of the Air (SOTAs) that a supervisor be present to support the delivery of the DE curriculum. No supervisor means no access to education, so this allowance is helping to address barriers of access to education for rural and remote families.

This is a long overdue allowance that is so important to rural and remote families. This issue goes to the heart of equitable access to education, which is every child’s right and speaks to the value and support for women’s equality in the remotest parts of Western Australia along with the sustainability of rural and remote communities and the vital industries they facilitate and support.

In 85% of instances, the mother is the supervisor in the geographically isolated distance education classroom. She is therefore taken out of the workforce, forgoes an income and relevant financial benefits and performs a role out of necessity for many years of her life so her children can access a compulsory education.

In some circumstances it is not possible for a mother to take on the supervisor role therefore geographically isolated families endure the excessive costs and challenges of providing a governess to fulfil the position.

Other families make the difficult decision to send their very young children to boarding school for their primary school education or relocate to a second home for their children to access mainstream schooling, when it is unmanageable for the mother to sacrifice her position in the workforce or the prospect of employing a distance education classroom supervisor is not possible. The latter option removes the family from their primary home, property and local community for the majority of the year.

We are calling for all education ministers, federal, state and territory, to come together and provide a distance education supervisors allowance that adequately covers the cost of the full-time position.

**M57 (A22) Alice Springs Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA), in recognition of the essential role that the home tutor plays in educating students via distance education.”

**Word Change:** Amber Driver, Alice Springs Branch (NT) requested conference’s permission for a word change to remove ‘Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA)’ and replace with ‘uniform solution’.

**Conference permission granted**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education to establish a uniform solution in recognition of the essential role that the home tutor plays in educating students via distance education.”

**Moved:** Amber Driver Alice Springs (NT)  
**Seconded:** Danyelle Haigh Alice Springs (NT)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

An introduction of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA), as financial recognition of the essential work a supervisor/home tutor performs in Distance Education classrooms, would help alleviate the pressure placed on remote families, whose only option is to home-school their children via Distance Education. It is a government requirement under the Distance Education Schools Guidelines that students enrolled in Distance Education schools have appropriate supervision, and these guidelines state that this may be an employee or parent. In many cases, a parent, usually the mother, is forced to forgo paid work on the property, community or outstation where they live, due to the need for them to stay home and teach their children. This in turn strips the family of a second income, and places further financial pressure on families who educate their children via Distance Education. This can amount to a family paying a home tutor between \$25,000-\$50,000 per year, depending on salary/wage agreements.

On top of the wage a home tutor is paid, in many cases, home tutors are also living with the family, and have all food, board and other sundry expenses such as internet, paid by the family as part of their wage package. If the family employs a home tutor to deliver Distance Education lessons and provide support and supervision, the family is effectively paying award wages for a child to receive a public education.

We would like to suggest that DETA be incorporated into the existing AIC framework. If a family is eligible for AIC, it is extremely likely that they would also be eligible for DETA, and combining DETA into the AIC would streamline the application process.

**M58 (A23) Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to create a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) to acknowledge the role the home tutor performs when educating students through distance education.”

Tallaya Wood, Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA) requested conference’s permission that A23 (M58) be deemed covered by A19 (M53) and A22(M57).

**Conference permission granted.**

**DEEMED COVERED by M53 (A19) and M57 (A22)**

**Explanation:**

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

**M59 (A24) Western Australia State Council**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to provide a clause to the In-Home Care Program in order to employ an individual/s to assist with supervising school-aged students in geographically isolated classrooms.”

**Moved:** Jane Cunningham Western Australia State Council  
**Seconded:** Kym Ross Western Australia State Council



**CARRIED****Explanation:**

As the current parameters of the In-Home Care Program revolve around early childhood and preschool aged care, families of geographically isolated students are unable to access the program to fund a distance education classroom supervisor despite the program being a natural fit for this type of childcare.

As it is a requirement of state Distance Education (DE) and Schools of the Air (SOTAs) that a supervisor be present to support the delivery of the DE curriculum, it is our belief that better support should be offered to students in the form of a paid distance education classroom supervisor.

If families of geographically isolated students had access to the financial assistance offered by the In-Home Care Program distance education classroom supervisors could be properly remunerated and as such we believe we would see an improvement in students' educational outcomes.

**M60 (A25) Far North Queensland Branch (QLD)**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Department of Education to ensure Schools of Distance Education are meeting their legal obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* and international treaties so that the learning and well-being needs of every rural and remote student are properly met at their level wherever they live."

**Moved:** Kerri Archer Far North Queensland Branch (QLD)

**Seconded:** Judith Eriksen Far North Queensland Branch (QLD)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

Schools have legal obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (the Standards). The DDA and the Standards are federal laws that protect the rights of students with disability. The DDA supersedes all state and territory legislation. Further, Australia is a signatory to international treaties including the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* that protect human rights and have agreed that all children including those with a disability can access education and training to reach their full potential.

Since 2008, Schools of Distance Education (SoDE) in Queensland have experienced huge increases in enrolment. For example, from 2008 to 2018 one SoDE had a 415% increase in enrolment and another SoDE a 505% increase. A large proportion of these increases are due to medical enrolments moving to distance education for help as students are not able to access suitable education to meet their needs in mainstream face-to-face school settings. For one particular SoDE in Queensland, in 2021 medical enrolments were 24% of total full-time enrolments and in 2024 are 32.5% of total full-time enrolments. SoDE are not adequately equipped and resourced for this changing demographic in terms of the mindset of school leadership, school policies, level of understanding of medical conditions and their complexities, as well as suitably qualified staff and access to disability workers and professionals to appropriately support the needs of these students. This is despite them making up a third of full-time home-based enrolments. What is happening in practice does not always meet the standard Education Queensland has set, let alone legal obligations under the DDA, the Standards and international instruments. Geographically isolated students with disability and specific learning needs are "doubly disadvantaged" in this system.

The DDA states that:

**Indirect disability discrimination** occurs when a person with disability

- is required to comply with a requirement or condition but they cannot comply because of their disability, and

- that requirement or condition is not reasonable in the circumstances.
- ... a failure to make reasonable adjustments to assist the person with disability to meet requirements or conditions is indirect disability discrimination.

#### Case Study 1

A geographically isolated distance education student was assessed by teachers and the parent was advised that their child was intellectually impaired. The school never followed up on the assessment, with the odd teacher making adjustments to the student's learning program. Later, when the student was diagnosed with visual processing disorders the parent sent reports to the school but no adjustments were made to the student's learning program, the only additional support provided being reading lessons with a teacher aide. Despite the parent/home tutor contacting the guidance officer and support staff, no direct learning support was provided and no one really took responsibility to provide support, despite the huge pressure put on the student and home tutor that the student meet expectations for each year level.

#### Case Study 2

A rural and remote student with multiple medical diagnosis has been subjected to indirect disability discrimination from the school where they are enrolled. An early PLR stated only how the parent/home tutor should support the disabilities and did not include any specific requirements of teachers. Some individual teachers made necessary adjustments but none seemed to know about or follow through with recording those adjustments via the NCCD\*. No teachers seemed to be aware that there was a PLR in place. The home tutor approached the school's Special Education Services for additional supports for their child, explaining that they had to do school seven days a week to get through the work and it was placing enormous strain on their family. They were told they needed to just submit work returns and assessments by the due date and let their child fail in order to get supports. For a student that is intellectually capable of succeeding, this is very damaging to mental health. In another example, a drama assessment required students to watch a video with sound turned off and analyse non-verbal communication. The home tutor contacted the teacher to explain their child is autistic and is specifically disabled in reading non-verbal cues and this task was not a suitable assessment. The teacher explicitly said there would be no adjustment.

#### Case Study 3

A rural and remote student suffering from trauma and anxiety, and later diagnosed with ADHD, had a teacher in year 6 refuse to mark an assessment that was submitted late. The parent/home tutor was in regular contact with the teacher so was aware of the student's condition. The parent/home tutor had not applied for an extension 'as a precaution' as to do so for every formative and summative assessment for every subject is an unreasonable expectation on home tutors/parents. When the home tutor requested the teacher provide additional support to the student in a short one-on-one tutorial session they were told "that's the home tutor's job" and they didn't have the time. This was a reasonable adjustment to support the needs of the student but it was refused. In another instance, when the student questioned the new format for on-line lessons (increased 45 mins to 1hr), the teacher proceeded to tell the student that they had to attend the lesson for the full hour or they would get a D. Later, when one-on-one tutorial support was requested of the teacher to help understanding of live lessons, the student's concerns were dismissed and they were told to watch the lesson recording. This heightened the student's anxiety and they have since disengaged from the subject.

#### Case Study 4

A geographically isolated distance education family with two children who previously had been provided learning support were advised by the school that the system for supporting students with learning support needs had changed and it was now up to the subject teacher to decide whether the

child needed learning support. Despite reports and evidence from previous years, it got that difficult to get support that the parents/home tutor gave up in the end.

#### Case Study 5

A rural and remote parent of a student with multiple medical diagnosis has had to fight the school year after year for access to case management and support for their child despite an established history and multiple specialist reports. Without these supports and reasonable adjustments for their child's disabilities, the learning environment is not equitable. There is a lack of knowledge amongst teaching staff on how to support students with ADHD and autism, yet they decide who gets support and what reasonable adjustments, if any, are provided.

\*The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability

References:

<https://www.nccd.edu.au/wider-support-materials/australian-law-0?parent=%2Fdisability-standards-education&activity=%2Fwider-support-materials%2Four-rights-0&step=0>

#### **Presentation**

Farewell to Federal Membership Officer Judy Newton

#### **Presentation**

Artificial Intelligence

Julian Moore, Strategic Membership Solutions

#### **Presentation**

Boarding School Certification Update

Richard Stokes, Australian Boarding Schools Association

#### **Boarding Schools/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio Presentation**

Jennifer Ruska

#### **Boarding Schools/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio Motions**

##### **M61 (A1) Richmond Branch (QLD)**

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Federal Government and the Minister for Social Services for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance of at least \$4000 and the alignment of the allowance to the Consumer Price Index: Education sub index to assist geographically isolated students' access to boarding school."

**Moved:** Megan Burke Julia Creek (QLD) on behalf of Richmond Branch (QLD)

**Seconded:** Rachel Anderson Julia Creek (QLD)

**CARRIED**

#### **Explanation:**

We sincerely thank ICPA (Aust) for its strong advocacy to see this measure included in the 2024-25 Federal Budget, which disappointingly did not occur.

At its inception in 1973, the intention of the AIC Boarding Allowance was to cover at least 55% of average boarding fees across Australia. At present, the allowance is barely covering 40% in some states.

An increase of \$4000 per student would restore the allowance to its original intent. The alignment

of the allowance to the Education sub index would ensure the allowance did not erode over time and was reflective of the true costs of educational expenses.

Affordable education goes to the heart of rural and remote communities and their sustainability. If geographically isolated families cannot afford to send their children away to boarding school to access a secondary education, we will continue to experience the mass exodus of families from these communities, the impact of which most probably will not be noticed by mainstream Australia until local butcher, grocery stores and supermarket shelves are void of Australian made produce. Access to affordable education does not only affect rural and remote families. It affects the entire country which relies on these families to feed it, and it affects the national economy which is reliant on agricultural exports. The AIC Basic Boarding Allowance is not a welfare payment. It is an education ACCESS payment and should be treated as such by the Federal Government.

**M62 (A2) Nyngan Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) implores the Federal Government to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance to more closely reflect the actual cost of educating geographically isolated students.”

David Butler, Nyngan Branch (NSW) requested conference’s permission for A2 (M62) to be deemed covered by A1 (M61).

**Conference permission granted.**

**DEEMED COVERED by M61 (A1)**

**Explanation:**

Boarding school fees continue to rise at a greater rate than CPI. The AIC Boarding Allowance, an equity allowance, requires constant updating to reflect this increasing burden placed on isolated families educating their children. Boarding school fees increase at a greater rate than the AIC Allowance. Should our government be serious about providing the world’s best education opportunities to equip our children with the skills they require, this equity allowance needs to remain equitable, allowing isolated parents’ choice in education, equivalent to their city counterparts. We should not be disadvantaged by distance.

**M63 (A3) Tambo Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate for an increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance to cover 55% of the average cost of boarding.”

**Word Change:** Wendy Hick, Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD) on behalf of Tambo Branch (QLD) requested conference’s permission for a word change to add ‘at least’.

**Conference permission granted.**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate for an increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance to cover at least 55% of the average cost of boarding.”

**Moved:** Wendy Hick Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD) on behalf of Tambo (QLD)

**Seconded:** Margaret Brock Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

It was extremely disappointing that, after a solid campaign by ICPA Australia, there was no increase in the AIC in the recently tabled federal budget. It is acknowledged across the board that cost-of-living pressures are real, and that those pressures extend to rural and remote locations. That coupled

with below average market prices for primary produce has exacerbated the fiscal challenges remote families face to access secondary education where there is no choice.

**M64 (A4) Central West Plains Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government review and amend Rule 3 in the application for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) form SY040 to remove the continuing requirement once the initial requirement has been met.”

**Moved:** Fiona Aveyard Central West Plains (NSW)

**Seconded:** Vanessa Gibson Central West Plains (NSW)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The proposed amendment should state that the student 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 and once approved, the application should remain valid for the child's remaining schooling years (unless the child changes residential address).

In its current form, the existing criteria for eligibility for funding under this rule does not make any allowance for the fluctuating state of rural conditions or rural access routes. The requirement to reapply during each climatic event causes undue hardship on applicants who need the predictability of funding to make decisions as to schooling.

Dry and wet conditions provide a level of uncertainty and impracticability for families in seeking educational equality for their children. Once a family becomes eligible for the allowance at any stage during the child's schooling, the eligibility should remain to allow such families to make long term arrangements for educating their children. Access to education should not be restricted by a family's ability to traverse a particular road on such an ad hoc basis.

A student is regarded as geographically isolated from appropriate schooling if one of the following rules is met:

**Rule 1:** The distance between the principal family home and the nearest appropriate state school is at least 56 kilometres by the shortest practicable route

**Rule 2:** The distance between the principal family home and the nearest appropriate state school by the shortest practicable route is at least 16 kilometres and the distance between the principal family home and the nearest available transport service to that school is at least 4.5 kilometres by the shortest practicable route

**Rule 3:** The student does not have reasonable access to an appropriate state school for at least 20 school days in a year because of adverse travel conditions (e.g. impassable roads) or other circumstances beyond the family's control.

**M65 (A5) Central West Plains Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government review Rule 2 in the application for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) form SY040 such that it be amended to exclude the 4.5km distance from home to bus stop criteria.”

**Moved:** Vanessa Gibson Central West Plains (NSW)

**Seconded:** Fiona Aveyard Central West Plains (NSW)

**LOST**

**Explanation:**

The existing selection criteria was adopted during a period of time that is no longer reflective of today's living arrangements. It is arbitrary to require a child who lives more than 16kms, but less

than 56kms, to attend their nearest local educational facility purely because their home happens to be located closer than 4.5km from a point of collection, whilst at the same time, children on the exact same bus route will achieve funding. The outcome is such that a child who actually lives closer to town than other children will receive the allowance, whilst those at a greater distance may not.

This rule is seeking to exclude from funding any child who happens to reside in a dwelling close to a main road. This location does not, however, necessarily mean the student has access to an equitable educational experience. The rule does not contemplate that an eligible family may have access to a larger school which provides extensive opportunities, choice of subjects and extra-curricular activities whilst a family living closer to a smaller less resourced school in a lesser populated area may not be eligible. It is an inconsistent and unfair approach to eligibility.

Further, the rule fails to take into consideration other impediments that exist with regard to public bus travel, for example alternating routes that are not currently properly considered. The rule needs to be amended to more accurately reflect the unique challenges faced by rural students which should not be determined purely by distance from the bus stop.

This particular rule is one of the single most inequitable forms of determining funding in all of the allowances currently available and creates huge unjust division amongst rural families seeking an education that is dependent on a school bus route over which an individual family has no control.

**M66 (A6) Central West Plains Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) request the Federal Government review the acceptable reasons for seeking eligibility for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) on the basis of serious educational disadvantage at a local school.”

Vanessa Gibson, Central West Plains Branch (NSW) requested conference’s permission to withdraw A6 (M66).

**Conference permission granted.**

**WITHDRAWN**

**Explanation:**

Location alone should no longer be the sole determinant of eligibility for the AIC.

Currently, the following factors are not considered relevant in seeking assistance:

- A desire for the student to attend a school of choice, including a school that is classified as ‘specialist’ or ‘selective’ or a school that will ‘enhance the student’s academic prospects’
- The standard of teaching facilities
- The socioeconomic, racial or ethnic mix of a school
- Non-core subjects (e.g., subjects other than maths, science and English) being studied by distance education methods
- Inability to continue study in the same subjects or the same system after the student’s parents have moved from one non geographically isolated area to another
- Family connections with another school
- Difficulties with out of school care arrangements
- A desire for a family to send a child to a boarding school.

A review of the reasons acceptable in determining disadvantage should absolutely be reviewed to include:

- i. A student's ability to access all range of subjects, being taught by a suitably qualified teacher from year 7. Distance education mediums are an unacceptable and inequitable alternative requiring an ability to work unsupervised and to be incredibly self-driven. These are unfair expectation to place on high school students which often result in students choosing alternative or lower level subjects to avoid distance education.
- ii. In circumstances where the local alternative cannot provide consistent and capable access to core subjects being taught by suitably qualified teaching staff for the entirety of the child's high schooling (not just at the HSC level).
- iii. The standard of teaching facilities can have a hugely detrimental effect on a student's educational outcomes and should be considered. All students should have access to equitable learning environments.
- iv. Presence or absence of appropriate cohort. Many families are seeking a boarding school education for their children to ensure their children are exposed to children of similar ages (particularly where primary school has been available only in a multi-age context). Absence of adequate cohort can result in significant disadvantage, educationally and socially including:
  - a. Lack of choice of subject due to lack of numbers
  - b. Inability to attract suitably qualified educators due to small size of schools
  - c. Little to no choice in sporting or extracurricular activities for children due to inadequate numbers of children to form teams or justify the provision of activities. This often results in one parent having to travel huge distances to provide basic opportunities to children at a huge financial cost to families. The alternative is that the child misses out.
- v. The desire to send a child to a boarding school. The desire to send a child to boarding school is not something that any parent would choose to do if children had access to the equivalent educational, sporting or extra-curricular experiences of families living in more densely populated areas. Parents are seeking equality in access to education for their children – parents in rural areas want the same for their children that we could expect if we lived in a larger town or city. All our children deserve the same access to a minimum standard of education.

**M67 (A7)      Queensland State Council**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Services Australia to have Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) payments available, as an option, of three payments instead of four, for families with Year 12 students."

**Moved:** Kate Bradshaw      Queensland State Council

**Seconded:** Wendy Henning      Queensland State Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Adding the option of receiving three AIC payments for families with students in the final year of formal schooling would allow families the opportunity to use the allowance to cover fees that come in three term invoices instead of four. When the final AIC payment comes to the school in Term Four and there are no outstanding fees, families have to ask for refunds from schools which takes time and can be confusing. Having the option of three payments also allows for AIC to meet the costs of school fees when they are occurring, which helps reduce financial pressure on families.

**M68 (S1)      Northern Territory (NT)**

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that Services Australia reviews the "No reasonable access to school conditions" to better cater for travelling contractor families whose core business is located in geographically isolated areas.

**Moved:** Jacinta McInerney Northern Territory State Council  
**Seconded:** Moira Lanzarin Northern Territory State Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The Northern Territory has a number of families who travel vast distances in isolated areas to conduct their business such as contract mustering and fencing/yard building. For these families it means living in remote locations for up to 11 months of the year. At present, to receive the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance, these families must provide evidence of a minimum of five different working locations in remote areas to be considered transient and receive AIC. ICPS NT requests that these rules be made more streamlined to enable these families easier access to the AIC payments that they are entitled to.

These families are not meeting the geographically isolated test because what is listed as their 'home' with Centrelink is often in a semi-urban area - a house or shed block in a regional centre like Katherine, Alice Springs or Tennant Creek. In reality this is simply their postal address, their sense of security, storage and/or investment. Their HOME is often a travelling convoy - caravans or trucks - set up with all business, home and school. The location of this travelling home is in very geographically isolated locations across rural Australia.

At present they can only access AIC by the "*No reasonable access to school*" clause and its five essential criteria.

*"You may also get it if your work requires frequent moves and if all of the following apply:*

- You need to relocate the family for work.*
- You need to work onsite and do not operate out of a base.*
- You relocate at least 5 times a year for work.*
- Your livelihood has an itinerant lifestyle, for example a shearer or fruit picker.*
- If your child travelled with you, they would miss at least 100 school days at a local government school a year."*

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/no-reasonable-access-to-school-conditions-for-assistance-for-isolated-children?context=22121>

The clause that is causing an increasing number of geographically isolated families to miss out is point 3 - "*You relocate at least 5 times a year for work.*"

Families have been asked to provide a minimum of 5 invoices to different properties/businesses to prove this clause. In the NT, especially in the Barkly Tablelands, the size of the properties are so huge and often owned by the same giant corporations, that it is feasible for contracting families to be out working for the majority of the year but not meet the 5 different properties/business rule. These families are not living at the station homesteads or out-stations - they are self-contained on a job site out in the wilderness. In reality, they are often "relocating" their home camp multiple times. Even though these may be 50km apart because they are on the same pastoral property, the applications are being rejected by Services Australia.

We are asking that greater flexibility to be made in assessing this criteria and increased understanding by Services Australia in the unique situations faced by these families.

This is an ever-growing need as the rural workforce is increasingly moving towards a contract base and whole families are increasingly working together in remote and very remote locations. Being able to access AIC is a requirement to receive the NT Isolated Student Assistance Scheme grants. These families are already going to amazing lengths to educate their children under difficult conditions and need to be supported.



**M69 (S5) Richmond Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to transfer the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme from the portfolio of the Minister for Social Services to the Minister for Education.”

**Moved:** Megan Burke Julia Creek (QLD) on behalf of Richmond (QLD)

**Seconded:** Rachel Anderson Julia Creek (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The AIC was introduced in 1973 by the then Minister for Education Kim Beazley Senior. It was an allowance to support geographically isolated children to access education. This announcement was, in fact, the first significant win for the newly established Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association.

In recent times, the AIC Scheme has moved from the Department of Education portfolio to the Department of Social Services portfolio, presumably because the assessment and processing of AIC claims sits with Services Australia.

This shift has meant that the allowance is now treated like a welfare payment and therefore the need to increase it is not a priority because for the most part, access to the allowance is not means tested. It is available to all families who fulfill the criteria.

However, the AIC is not a welfare payment. It is an education access payment for geographically students who do not have daily access to a school due to where they live. Even though the allowance is administered under the Department of Social Services, the scheme itself should sit under the Minister for Education to ensure geographically isolated students have access to an appropriate education regardless of where they reside. This is a right for all Australian children.

**M70 (A8) Louth Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies relevant ministers to support the removal of the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) for businesses who would like to provide financial assistance to employees residing in geographically isolated areas, to enable their children to attend boarding school.”

**Moved:** Annabel Strachan Louth (NSW)

**Seconded:** Tegan Barton Louth (NSW)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

In many rural and remote locations there is limited or no access to suitable compulsory education facilities and therefore boarding school is the only option. This can often become unaffordable to families, especially when there is more than one child, so families are forced to relocate to employment with closer access to school facilities, resulting in further loss to the already diminished workforce of remote regions. In recognition of conditions, the Australian Tax Office already offers FBT concessions for employer provision of housing where there is a lack of sufficient residential accommodation in remote locations.

Similar concessions should also apply when employers financially assist with the schooling costs of employees’ children where there is a lack of appropriate schooling facilities available in those same remote locations. Currently when employers offer financial assistance towards the cost of schooling, the payment is deemed a Fringe Benefit and taxed at the applicable rate of 47% so any contribution made by the employer is compounded with almost half the amount again in tax.

The cost of accessing compulsory education for geographically isolated children should not be taxed, irrespective of who is bearing the cost. Affordable access to boarding schools for employees who

work in remote areas provides their children with equitable access to school facilities as those in non-remote regions. It also serves to keep valuable families in remote Australia, supporting an already challenged workforce.

**Presentation**

NBN

Gavin Williams, Chief Development Officer, Regional and Remote

**Communications Portfolio Presentation**

Sally Brindal

**Presentation**

Regional Tech Hub

Jen Medway, General Manager

**Communications Portfolio Motions – Internet Access****M71 (A13) Alice Springs Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies NBN Co to continue to work with global Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite providers to establish LEO internet services under nbn obligations for remote Australian students, including price certainty, network and data sovereignty and options for local support.”

**Moved:** Amber Driver Alice Springs (NT)

**Seconded:** Katy Hayes Alice Springs (NT)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Low Earth Orbit internet offers many advantages over geostationary satellite internet. These advantages are becoming more and more important to the education of children in the remote areas of Australia. For example, the ability to use low-latency videoconferencing.

Some global providers are starting to offer internet plans in Australia, but often they do not provide local support. Key players in the Australian telecommunications industry are starting to partner with these global providers to offer products that include local support. NBN Co is also looking at opportunities to bring offerings to Australia under the nbn banner.

We think it is important that NBN Co takes these partnerships seriously, and not just allow private companies to dictate what is offered here in Australia. The Sky Muster satellites are only meant to be in service until the early 2030's and they are already showing their age. NBN Co must be looking now at what comes next to best serve the remote Australia population and reduce the digital divide.

As the NBN Co Ltd Statement of Expectations 2022 states, "NBN Co will enhance Australia's digital capability by delivering services to meet the current and future needs of households, communities and businesses, and promote digital inclusion and equitable access to affordable and reliable broadband services." We believe low-latency internet is a current need for remote education. It also states, that NBN Co is expected to be "Undertaking proactive network planning, including for the transition of satellite services, and positioning itself to utilise emerging and future technologies to meet future demand, promote innovation, improve services and generate efficiencies in service delivery."

Furthermore, it states "NBN Co should ensure security and resilience issues are integral parts of its decision making and demonstrate best practice in managing these issues. NBN Co should take an active role in supporting telecommunications sector security." Data security and resilience are at risk

where wholesale internet services are provided by international private or government-owned companies. NBN Co would do well to set the standard for what Australians can expect from LEO internet in Australia.

**M72 (A12) Katherine Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to request the Minister for Communications to ensure all rural and remote students have adequate internet access regarding reliability, speed, quality, capabilities and cost of the service.”

**Moved:** Lisa Leonhardt Kimberley Air (WA) on behalf of Katherine (NT)  
**Seconded:** Melissa Kerr Federal Council

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

Geographically isolated families rely on the internet for their educational needs. While expected data speeds, plan sizes and cost are continually improving, service reliability remains an issue. Currently some families are maintaining two different providers of internet, to ensure reliability. For example, nbn and Starlink, so if one drops out the other may still work. This is reflective of the historical unreliability of internet services, poor product and provider choices as well as large wait times for installation of hardware for new services, or repair of equipment. Families should not be having to pay for two internet connections due to the unreliable nature of internet connectivity in the bush. Or suffer long periods of not internet which affects their attendance and engagement at school.

Case Study

A family uses nbn and Starlink and relies on generated power (no access to mains power). The generator has tripped or surged, causing the modem to stop working on Starlink. Even when the modem is connected to a surge protector board. This has caused the internet service to not work until a replacement arrived, which has taken 3 weeks. In the interim the family were able to use their back up nbn service. If they hadn't had that back up, the students would have had no access to the internet. Similarly, during a previous wet season, the NBN dish was struck by lightning and couldn't be fixed by the service provider for two months. It was this situation that led them to getting the Starlink service as backup.

**Specific Education Needs Portfolio Presentation**

Miffy Waugh

**Specific Education Needs Portfolio Motions****M73 (A43) Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government and relevant bodies for increased federal funding to improve rural and remote school's access to specialists who can diagnose students with learning disabilities and offer ongoing education and support to students and their teachers.”

**Moved:** Katie Hall Goldfields Eyre (WA)  
**Seconded:** Tallaya Wood Goldfields Eyre (WA)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

Despite the funding that is currently available many small rural schools find it difficult to access professional support for students with intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties. We are asking that the Minister for Education and the Ministers for Health and Aged Care and for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories work together to actively support professionals such as speech therapists, education support and mental health specialists to work in regional, rural

and remote schools by providing them with appropriate placements that include accommodation and transport.

In Western Australia it has become a requirement for families to travel to Perth or utilise telehealth to access specialists, when previously the specialists have travelled to the regions. We believe this “footprint reduction” strategy deployed by the Health Department is affecting remote children whose families do not have the capacity to travel to seek diagnosis and treatment, as a result children are slipping through the cracks without appropriate diagnosis and intervention to assist them with their learning. Funding is required to incentivise specialists wanting to take on permanent positions in rural centres ensuring continuity for teachers, students and their parents. If the specialists were readily available in regional centres, it would be easier for families to travel to them and more likely that the same specialist would remain in the position giving children continuity of treatment.

**M74 (A44) Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Federal Government commits to a set intervention period of no more than six months from diagnosis of students with learning disabilities to commencing treatment.”

**Moved:** Katie Hall Goldfields Eyre (WA)

**Seconded:** Tallaya Wood Goldfields Eyre (WA)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Often when geographically isolated and rural students are diagnosed with learning difficulties the wait time to see a specialist is significantly longer than their metropolitan equivalents and can be months or even a year. This extended wait time can have negative long-term effects academically especially when dealing with children under five. It is also affecting rural and remote teachers and other students who are often dealing with these issues in the classroom without assistance.

**M75 (A45) Julia Creek Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to remove NDIS Providers ability to charge cancellation fees to remote and geographically isolated NDIS recipients for telehealth services when they do not cancel their appointment within seven days of delivery.”

**Word Change:** Rachael Anderson, Julia Creek Branch requested conference’s permission for a word change to add ‘relevant to educational needs.’

**Conference permission granted**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to remove NDIS Providers ability to charge cancellation fees to remote and geographically isolated NDIS recipients for telehealth services relevant to educational needs when they do not cancel their appointment within seven days of delivery.”

**Moved:** Rachael Anderson Julia Creek (QLD)

**Seconded:** Megan Burke Julia Creek (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Remote and geographically isolated NDIS recipients who have no option but to use their funding to receive telehealth appointments at access therapy are currently being charged full appointment fees when they are unable to attend appointments due to loss of power or unstable internet services.

**Case Study**

A Family whose son uses telehealth appointments to access speech and occupational therapy has had to use over \$1000 of the child's NDIS Capacity building funding on fees for the 2022-2023 year due to loss of power or unstable internet services on scheduled appointments. Being unable to contact their NDIS provider due to these conditions to cancel these appointments they are automatically billed for the missed appointment. The family does not know when they will be without power, or the Internet let alone having seven days' notice to contact their provider. These billed missed appointments must be declared to the NDIS as a missed or unattended appointment, possibly affecting the child's next review.

**M76 (A46) Bourke Branch (NSW)**

That ICPA (Aust) advocates for improved rural and remote access and utilisation of Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) funding, currently managed through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)."

**Moved:** Amanda Bell Bourke Branch (NSW)  
**Seconded:** Prue Ritchie Bourke Branch (NSW)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

Many remote and geographically isolated children are missing out on essential allied health support due to the ability to access or utilise funding administered through NDIS for Early Childhood Early Intervention. In Bourke the NDIS Early Childhood Partner was McKillop, and they had around seven staff supporting Western NSW. McKillop Family Services has withdrawn, and the workload has been transferred to National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) staff. Remote areas also have a significant underutilisation of ECEI funding, as when children's needs are identified, there are often no allied health services available to support them. Evidence shows that accessing Early Intervention supports improved educational outcomes.

**Presentation**

Farewell to Federal Councillor Miffy Waugh

**Western Australia ICPA President's Report**

Jane Cunningham

**Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Report**

Julia Broad

**Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Motions – Early Learning****M77 (A26) Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)**

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government for geographically isolated pre-compulsory students, who are enrolled in a distance education program, to be granted the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance."

**Moved:** Tallaya Wood Goldfields Eyre (WA)  
**Seconded:** Katie Hall Goldfields Eyre (WA)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

Under the current guidelines, part time distance education students are ineligible for the Distance Education (DE) component of the AIC Allowance, which means families enrolled in the 4-year-old program must bear the costs of maintaining and setting up the classroom in that first year of schooling. This first year is often extremely costly for families.

The AIC DE Allowance is designed to assist families to set up and maintain the schoolroom. The schoolroom must be set up and maintained the day the child begins their education. Full-time or part-time, the child needs a schoolroom.

**M78 (A27) Katherine Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate the Federal Government for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance to be extended to include geographically isolated pre-school students enrolled in a distance education programme.”

Constance Wood, Katherine Branch (NT) requested conference’s permission for A27 (M78) to be deemed covered by A26 (M77).

**Conference permission granted.**

**DEEMED COVERED by M77 (A26)**

**Explanation:**

The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that every child has universal access to a quality early childhood education program. The desired outcome is to increase enrolment and improved attendance.

From website [https://budget.gov.au/content/bp3/download/bp3\\_05\\_part\\_2\\_education.pdf](https://budget.gov.au/content/bp3/download/bp3_05_part_2_education.pdf)

“The Australian Government is providing funding to support continued universal access to 600 hours per year of preschool for children in the year before they start school. The Preschool Reform Agreement (2022–2025) aims to improve preschool participation and outcomes, including improved enrolment and attendance. Preschool funding is an ongoing commitment, with funding amounts from 2026 to be published once future funding arrangements are agreed.”

The Services Australia website regarding the AIC Allowance states that the minimum age is 3 years and 6 months old.

“Your child needs to be at least the minimum primary school entry age for your state or territory. They must also be under 19 on 1 January of the year of study.

Or they need to be any of the following:

- at least 3 years and 6 months old and living away from home due to a health condition or disability
- under 20 on 1 January in the study year, with a disruption to their education, such as illness
- under 21 and studying at primary or ungraded level and getting [Disability Support Pension](#), or [Parenting Payment](#) single
- doing tertiary study and under their state or territory minimum education or training requirements age.”

When claiming the AIC Allowance, the applicant is notified that a Northern Territory resident must be turning 6 years old between 1<sup>st</sup> of January to the 30<sup>th</sup> of June to be eligible for the AIC Allowance. Some students are already in Year 1 by this age and have been attending a school-based learning program, for two full years.

Setting up the classroom for distance education delivery for Pre-schoolers costs the same, if not more, as for the first year of compulsory schooling. The number of children accessing this pre-compulsory year by distance education is not huge. For example: Katherine School of the Air (KSA) has had a structured Pre-School Program in place for over 20 years and currently (Sem 1 2024) has 18 enrolments. On average KSA enrolments have been around 20-25 each year. The Northern Territory Government already recognises this cohort of students by making available half of the “NT Correspondence Site Allowance – Preschool” to assist all four-year-old children that are enrolled in pre-school with the Alice Springs and Katherine Schools of the Air.

Extending the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance to include these students will ensure greater and more equitable participation in Early Childhood Education by rural and remote students. Distance education students could benefit enormously from a minute portion of the billions of dollars allocated to early childhood education and care, including the funding intended to ensure the system is more accessible, affordable, and fairer for families.

**M79 (A28) Western Australia State Council**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Federal Government for geographically isolated pre-compulsory students, who are enrolled in a distance education program, be granted the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance.”

Jane Cunningham, Western Australia State Council requested conference’s permission for A28 (M79) to be deemed covered by A26 (M77).

**Conference permission granted.**

**DEEMED COVERED by M77 (A26)**

**Explanation:**

Under the current guidelines, part-time distance education students are ineligible for the distance education (DE) component of the AIC Allowance, which means families enrolled in the 4-year-old program must bear the costs of maintaining and setting up the classroom in that first year of schooling.

Early childhood education is a materials/resource heavy time which translates to expensive. This coupled with the costs associated with setting up a classroom for the first time means that many families are under undue financial pressure at an already stressful time in the isolated education journey.

**M80 (A29) South Australia State Council**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Federal Government for geographically isolated pre-compulsory school students enrolled in a registered preschool education program to be eligible for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance.”

Jodie Keogh, South Australia State Council requested conference’s permission for A29 (M80) to be deemed covered by A26 (M77).

**Conference permission granted.**

**DEEMED COVERED by M77 (A26)**

**Explanation:**

The AIC Distance Education Allowance is designed to aid families with additional costs to ensure their children can access education despite geographical isolation. This support should extend to children enrolled in pre-school programs.

Pre-school education is crucial for a child's academic and social development, including those in remote areas. Families in these regions face significant costs setting up home-based classrooms and traveling long distances for face-to-face pre-school experiences. These experiences are essential for enhancing learning and socialization in preparation for primary school.

Research consistently highlights the long-term educational benefits of pre-school programs. Supporting geographically isolated families in providing these early learning opportunities fosters educational equity. Including preschoolers in the AIC scheme will help bridge the gap in educational access and outcomes for isolated children, promoting fairness and inclusivity in our education system.

While it is encouraging to see increased access to pre-school at the state level, children in remote areas still face significant accessibility challenges compared to their regional and city-based peers. Full-time or part-time, regardless of age discrepancies, every child needs a schoolroom.

**M81 (A30) Bourke Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for universal access to early childhood education and care to include all children living in rural and remote Australia.”

**Moved:** Prue Ritchie Bourke (NSW)  
**Seconded:** Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

Evidence shows that the first 5 years in a child’s life are the most important for creating opportunities to thrive and be successful in later life. It is the most important educational opportunity we can give our children. All children, regardless of where they live, should be able to access high quality early childhood education and care.

**Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Motions – Childcare****M82 (A31) Katherine Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education amend the In-Home Care rules for families in remote areas to allow:

1. An educator to care for children from more than one family at the same time
2. An educator to care for their own child whilst caring for children from other family(ies) under In Home Care.”

**Moved:** Melissa Kerr Federal Council on behalf of Katherine Branch (NT)  
**Seconded:** Constance Wood Katherine (NT)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

The reason for this is that there are often multiple families employed by and living in the same location in remote areas (for example pastoral stations, tourism and conservation operations). Due to the remote location all staff and the educator live at the same location. Allowing an educator to care for children from more than one family in these circumstances solves the practical problem of limited accommodation - accommodating more than one educator is likely to be difficult.

It also provides the opportunity for a greater range of people to be employed in these areas (including single parents) who would otherwise be unable to take these jobs as they would not have access to childcare. By potentially increasing the number of children living at a location, all children will benefit from social interaction.

Allowing an educator to care for their own children would also increase the range of people available as In-Home Carers in remote areas. It is extremely difficult to find appropriately skilled people willing to live in remote areas. Allowing someone with their own child to care for other children at the same remote location would be of great benefit.

**Example 1**

A single mother applies for a station hand position. She is highly qualified and prior to becoming a mother had extensive experience working on remote cattle stations. The owner of the station she has applied to also has a small child and already employs an educator through IHC. There is suitable



accommodation for the mother and child but not enough for another educator. By allowing that educator to also care for the station hand's child, the station hand gets a job for which she is qualified for (it is also difficult to find good station hands so expanding the pool of people who could take these jobs is important) and both children have access to good quality childcare and a playmate bringing valuable social interaction.

#### Example 2

A man applies for a station hand position on a remote cattle station. He and his partner have a toddler. There are no childcare facilities within 200km. The managers of the station also have a toddler. By allowing the employees partner to become the In-Home Carer (dependent on obtaining the relevant qualifications etc.) the manager's child has access to high quality care, the manager(s) can concentrate on their jobs, the station hand is not separated from his partner and his partner has a fulfilling job.

The rules around Family Day Care provide a starting point for a structure to determine the appropriate number/age of children and how the CCS would work in this situation. Further consultation with families living in remote areas with young children would be required to refine these structures to ensure they are practical and suitable for their situation.

#### **M83 (A32) Walgett Branch (NSW)**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to remove the Child Care Subsidy Activity Test to include all children living in rural and remote Australia."

<b>Moved:</b>	Káren Ricardo	Walgett (NSW)
<b>Seconded:</b>	Cath Deshon	Walgett (NSW)

**CARRIED**

#### **Explanation:**

We would like to support Thrive by Five in their effort to have the government remove the Child Care Subsidy Activity Test. Currently the hours of subsidised care you can get per fortnight depends on the hours of recognised activities you do such as work, study or volunteer work.

As a result of this activity test some children are excluded from Early Learning which is not only detrimental for the child but also stops parents from being in a position to seek or take on work. As highlighted by Thrive by Five, it is difficult for parents to get a job without childcare, and if you do not have a job, it is difficult to afford childcare.

The issue of access to childcare is already a huge issue in remote areas, that often have limited childcare options, but the activity test complicates the access issue further.

We acknowledge that working parents need to be able to access childcare to support workforce participation, but regardless of whether your parent/s work, study or volunteer the fact remains that every child has a right to an education regardless of their background or parent/caregivers' employment status or volunteer hours.

It is particularly important for the children in low income, single parent families and socio economically disadvantaged backgrounds that their disadvantage is not compounded due to lack of access to child care.

Education and Care in the Early Years is extremely important, laying the foundations for social and emotional development, early learning and working towards being truly ready to start school. 0-5 years of age is an ideal time for learning and identifying areas that the children may need further

assistance with and subsequent referrals to specialists such as speech pathologist, occupational therapist etc.

The activity test needs to be removed to ensure every child has equal access to Early Childhood Education and Care.

**M84 (A33) Wentworth Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education to include the following wording *‘except where care is being provided in a remote or very remote location’* in A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999 – 85BA Eligibility for CCS and Child Care Subsidy Minister’s Rule 2017 – Section 8.”

**Moved:** Nerida Healy Wentworth (NSW)

**Seconded:** Tegan Douglas Wentworth (NSW)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The following are the requirements:

A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999

85BA Eligibility for CCS

(1) An individual is eligible for CCS for a session of care provided by an approved child care service to a child if:

(c) (ii) is not provided as part of the compulsory education program in the state or territory where the care is provided ***(Proposed motion wording to be inserted here)***

Child Care Subsidy Minister’s Rule 2017

Section 8 - 1 (f) where during any part of the session, the child is attending school, or engages in a formal schooling program (including a home schooling or distance education program) ***(Proposed motion wording to be inserted here)***

The New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999 in its introduction states that IHC supports families’ workforce participation and early childhood education and care requirements where other approved child care services are not available or appropriate.

That is, the government supports families’ participation in the workforce unless you live in a remote or very remote location and your child’s only access to schooling is via government approved Distance Education. Then, the government expects you to forgo any participation in the workforce and to supervise your child’s schooling for the entirety of their primary schooling years.

This is a government enforced roadblock to productivity across remote Australia and is yet another example of the failure of policy to assist families, community and productivity thrive in remote locations and it needs to be changed. Rural and remote agricultural communities that feed our nation will not flourish or grow without equitable assistance in educating these isolated children.

**M85 (A34) Bourke Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for sufficient funding from streams such as the Community Childcare Fund (CCCF) Sustainability stream (or any other funding streams that may be similar), be made available for services in remote and very remote locations to meet their operational costs which are unable to be met through the Childcare Subsidy (CCS)/Parent Fee model.”

**Moved:** Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)  
**Seconded:** Prue Ritchie Bourke (NSW)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Services providing Childcare Subsidy Model childcare are currently capped at the maximum amount of CCCF Sustainability funding they can apply for (\$200,000 pa) despite the operational gap they are able to demonstrate, which is often significantly larger. The same cap applies to services in regional areas as in remote and very remote locations, and the only longer-term funding is in the CCCF-Restricted pool, which services may not be eligible for. Remote and very remote services have to meet significantly higher staffing and operational costs – such as providing housing for teachers and meeting the pay parity gap for teachers to attract and retain adequately qualified teachers. Early Childhood Services in remote and very remote locations should be able to provide a service with teachers and staff at the same level as their city cousins - our children are worth no less and often have significantly more vulnerabilities according to the AECD (Australian Early Childhood Development) Census Data.

**Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Motions – Mobile Early Childhood Services**

**M86 (A35) Alice Springs Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant minister to establish funding to deliver Mobile Early Childhood Services to geographically isolated children, aged 0-5 years, who are currently without access to any such service because of where they live.”

**Moved:** Danyelle Haigh Alice Springs (NT)  
**Seconded:** Amber Driver Alice Springs (NT)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Geographically isolated families that reside outside of the "remote community footprint" have been without access to any early learning childhood services prior to preschool for more than a decade as has many remote communities in our region. Early education is a vital tool in all children's development, along with being a foundation for learning, it is how they build confidence, interact with others, and learn important social and emotional skills. It is also an opportunity for parents to come together, share stories and support one another.

Case study: As a mum of two geographically isolated children Kiya knows firsthand the importance of having these services available to all families, no matter where they choose to live. In Kiya's circumstance her sense of what was 'normal' became misguided as they weren't exposed to other children regularly. It wasn't until their daughter was 6 months old that they noticed she had some challenges with her feet. Had they been able to interact with other children of a similar age they may have become aware she was behind in her development sooner and accessed early intervention treatment earlier.

**Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Motions – Other**

**M87 (A36) Bourke Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for funding to support the infrastructure needs of community based early childhood education providers to deliver childcare and preschool services in remote towns.”

**Moved:** Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)  
**Seconded:** Prue Ritchie Bourke (NSW)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

There are currently limited opportunities for community based early childhood services to gain the required capital funding for significant infrastructure needs to meet demand in remote communities. This affects rural, remote and geographically isolated children, because they end up in “childcare deserts” where early childhood services are not provided.

The cost of infrastructure in remote locations is significantly higher than regional and metro settings yet there is no appropriate funding mechanism.

**M88 (A37) Bourke Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the relevant federal ministers for funding to be sought to address Early Childhood Teacher pay parity to assist with access to early childhood education in rural and remote communities.”

**Moved:** Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)

**Seconded:** Prue Ritchie Bourke (NSW)

**CARRIED****Explanation:**

Pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers is a significant issue. An Early Childhood Teacher completes a four year degree course. In a remote early childhood service, an experienced Early Childhood Teacher can expect a salary of around \$106,500. If they maintain National Schools Education Authority (NSEA) proficient accreditation and elect to work in the Public School System, at a Connected Communities School, such as Bourke, in a rural and remote location, the additional benefits they would get compared to working as an Early Childhood Teacher would tally to \$148,671 per annum and includes:

	Childcare	School
Base Salary	94,478.80	157,842
Directors Allowance	7,745.92	
Educational Leader Allowance	4,253.32	
Recruitment bonus		20,000
Rural & remote relocation support		8,000
Rural Teacher Incentive (Includes value of rental subsidy)		25,000
Stamp Duty relief (not paid if rental subsidy paid)		
Retention benefit		5000
Experienced Teacher Benefit		10,000
Climatic Allowance		3000 (approx.)
Additional Personal leave days		
Additional Annual leave value in \$ terms		26,307
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>106,477.24</b>	<b>255,149</b>

- Significantly shorter contact hours per week
- Professional mentoring by other Teachers
- Structured Professional development programs (\$10,000 pa)
- In addition to the above, there is also the impact on superannuation to be considered.

Early Childhood services are significantly limited in their budgets. It is important to find long term solutions to address pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers in rural and remote locations.

**M89 (A38) Louth Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant federal ministers to amend the lack of salary parity between four year trained early childhood teachers and four year trained primary and high school teachers working in rural and remote Australia.”

Tegan Barton, Louth Branch (NSW) requested conference’s permission for A38 (M89) to be deemed covered by A37(M88).

**Conference permission granted.**

**DEEMED COVERED by M88 (A37)**

**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 stepping stone into the primary school sector.

**M90 (A39) Far North Queensland Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to change the Working Holiday Maker Program to include governess/ home tutor/ nanny and au pairs as possible employment opportunities for people in rural and remote Australia.”

**Moved:** Judith Eriksen Far North Queensland (QLD)

**Seconded:** Kerrie Archer Far North Queensland (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

People in rural and remote Australia are significantly disadvantaged when it comes to employment. The Working Holiday Visa currently allows rural employers to offer 88 workdays for visa extensions to those wanting to apply for second or third year visas. However, the current system does not include employment roles for governesses/home tutors/ nannies or au pairs. By revising the Working Holiday visa regulations, we could include further employment opportunities for rural and remote families and businesses, helping them to fill these roles which would then allow parents of these rural and remote families to return back to the workforce on their own properties. *In support of the Meekatharra Air Branch (WA) motion A29, brought forward at the 2023 Federal Conference in Darwin.*

**Presentation**

Country University Centre

Duncan Taylor, Non-Executive Director

**Tertiary Portfolio Motions – Youth Allowance****M91 (A49) Kindon Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies relevant ministers to urgently review the Youth Allowance payment rate and seek an immediate increase to reflect the rising costs of living for geographically isolated students who have to reside away from home to access a tertiary education.”

**Moved:** Andrew Waugh Kindon (QLD)

**Seconded:** Lisa Waugh Kindon (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The cost of living for university students has surged dramatically due to a confluence of housing shortages, escalating rent prices, and rising commodity costs. Many students struggle to secure affordable housing, often facing stiff competition for limited rental options, which drives prices even higher. Additionally, everyday expenses such as groceries, transportation, and utilities have also seen significant increases, further straining students' financial resources.

With strict criteria to access both dependent and independent Youth Allowance, families of these students are struggling to assist their children make ends meet while they study full time. Often a part time job is unobtainable due to heavy study workloads.

This economic pressure not only affects their academic performance but also their overall well-being.

**M92 (A50) Western Australia State Council**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Minister for Social Services for greater flexibility for regional, rural and remote students to qualify for independent Youth Allowance to support greater fairness and more equal opportunity to complete a tertiary qualification."

**Moved:** Jane Cunningham Western Australia State Council

**Seconded:** Kym Ross Western Australia State Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

In response to the Australian Universities Accord Report (Review), as part of the May 2024 budget, the Albanese Labor Government has set an overall tertiary education attainment target of 80 per cent of working aged people by 2050.

The Review summary recognised that: "Raising tertiary education attainment to these levels will not be easy. It can only be achieved by making the higher education system far more equitable. The current under representation of people from disadvantaged groups must end."

Regional, rural and remote people were considered a disadvantaged under-represented group in the Review.

It is well-known that the lack of financial support is a barrier to RRR students completing tertiary education. One of the five key messages from the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy 2019 (Naphthine Review) was: "there is insufficient support for RRR individuals who want to participate in tertiary education. Improving financial support is a necessary part of increasing access to, and completion of, tertiary education."

The Australian Universities Accord Report (Review) acknowledged that: "Income support payments for students have not kept pace with wages or the needs of students and need to be adjusted to prevent cost-of-living pressures deterring people from studying. This is exactly the sort of thing Australia must avoid. The changes proposed by the Review are not only large, but they are also urgent. They must get underway as soon as possible."

The Review findings include: "Every Australian should have the opportunity to experience the life transforming benefits of tertiary education. This is vital for Australia's future. Only by expanding access to tertiary education to currently under-represented groups – including people from ... regional, rural and remote students – can the nation meet its projected skills needs."

Recommendation 15 from the Review:

15. That to reduce the cost-of-living pressures on current students and remove the financial barriers to commencing study, the Australian Government improve access to income support for those who need it most and consider how to ensure the level of support is adequate to meet basic living standards while studying by:

- a. increasing the Parental Income Free Area for Youth Allowance from \$58,108 to \$68,857 per family and indexing it to the higher of the Consumer Price Index and Male Total Average Weekly Earnings, recognising that the current income-free area has not kept pace with growth in wages
- b. expanding income support eligibility and providing pro rata student payments to students who study part-time (between 50% and 74% of a full study load)

and that, due to the complexity of social security payments, the Minister for Social Services works with the Minister for Education to address the problems the Review has identified by commissioning further technical analysis, with a report back to the ministers by early 2025. Such work should follow the principles below:

- i. student income support payments should continue to be focused on those most in need of support, and eligibility criteria should be regularly monitored to ensure the level of support is adequate to meet basic living standards while studying
- ii. student income support payments should continue to allow students to undertake reasonable amounts of work while studying, including through arrangements such as the income bank
- iii. student income support payments should follow an education-first principle where the policy intent is to reduce roadblocks to tertiary education participation and enable retention, success and completion
- iv. student income support payments should reduce the barriers facing students deciding whether to commence their study, focusing on the largest barriers of financial security and other responsibilities (such as working, caring and family)
- v. eligibility criteria for youth payments should take into account the specific needs of regional students, including the extra costs of relocation and that, once they leave home to study, many are effectively independent.

The Review is also concerned that independence testing arrangements are disadvantaging school leavers who need to move away from home to study. It referenced the Napthine Review which also found insufficient income support to participate in tertiary education is a key driver of lower participation and attainment outcomes for people from regional, rural and remote areas, and recommended more flexible pathways to demonstrate independence for Youth Allowance purposes for these students.

The Napthine Review indicated its preferred approach, would be: “to see all students who relocate from a regional, rural or remote area automatically considered independent. The specific challenges regional, rural and remote students face in accessing higher education, and the extent to which the student income support system is doing enough to reduce these barriers, warrants further consideration.”

It also stated: “Providing this support is not about providing welfare assistance, but rather removing a barrier that constrains the aspirations of students and prevents them from having the opportunity to successfully undertake higher-level tertiary education. In an ideal world, all RRR students and families would have access to support through Youth Allowance or some other mechanism to meet the additional costs associated with relocation. This would provide greater fairness and equity and ensure students are not deterred from undertaking study by the additional costs they may incur because of where they live. The Advisory Group’s preferred approach, if it were possible, would be

to allow all students who relocate from an RRR area to automatically qualify as independent for Youth Allowance purposes. This would incorporate all tertiary qualifications that span at least one year. Students could also be provided with a one-off “relocation allowance” at the beginning of their course....”

The introduction of the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) has been a welcomed support as a relocation allowance. However, it is evident that more needs to be done. Improved financial support will encourage greater participation and help increase the number of students from RRR areas successfully completing their studies.

While there have been some significant improvements to financial support for RRR students over recent years, the costs associated with tertiary education still deter some students from studying and create additional pressures for them and their families.

**M93 (A51) Katherine Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for the removal of the parental threshold from the independent Youth Allowance for students applying under rural and remote work criteria.”

**Moved:** Constance Wood Katherine (NT)  
**Seconded:** Melissa Kerr Federal Council

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Rural and remote students can be eligible for independent Youth Allowance before they turn 22 if (i) their parental home is in an inner regional, outer regional, remote or very remote area (ii) they need to move away from your parental home to study and (iii) they have worked since leaving secondary school. Students also need to have either: earned 75% or more of the National Training Wage Schedule rate in any 14-month period or worked at least 15 hours a week for at least 2 years. The current parental threshold is \$160,000 reducing by \$10,000 for other dependent siblings.

Parental income should not enter independent Youth Allowance criteria at all. Rural incomes are so fickle, even being given three financial years of parental income to choose from cannot always give these students a fair assessment of the ability of this family to support a tertiary or training student. These students clearly demonstrate independence through working for at least a year and leaving home to study. They take a gap year because they need to be financially independent but that can also place them at risk of being one of the statistics: students who take gap years are less likely to continue to further education. Any hurdles to these rural and remote students qualifying for independent Youth Allowance, such as Parental income thresholds, threaten their tertiary education.

**M94 (A52) Bourke Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government to change the eligibility criteria for independent Youth Allowance, so that those rural and remote students who choose to save or invest their earnings during the working period prior to attending University are not disadvantaged by the Liquid Assets criteria.”

**Moved:** Prue Ritchie Bourke (NSW)  
**Seconded:** Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Students who choose to save their earnings during their gap year should not be disadvantaged due to the Liquid Asset Waiting Period. Many students work hard to save their earnings but instead must



use their savings to support themselves and pay rent while attending university until the Liquid Asset Waiting period is fulfilled.

The Liquid Asset Waiting Period applies if the applicant has more than \$5500 in liquid assets prior to application for Youth Allowance and means waiting a number of weeks based on the amount of liquid assets. It tapers from \$5500 to \$11,500 meaning there may be a maximum 13 week waiting period before Youth Allowance payments begin.

Fellow students who earn the amount required to be considered eligible for independent Youth Allowance but spend everything they earn, are eligible for the allowance straight away but those who have saved and have money in the bank are not eligible for the allowance until after the required waiting period, and therefore not eligible for Rent Assistance either until payments begin.

**M95 (A53) Louth Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Social Services to increase Centrelink Rent Assistance payments, to reflect the rising costs of rent for geographically isolated students who have to live away from home to access a tertiary education.”

**Moved:** Tegan Barton Louth (NSW)  
**Seconded:** Annabel Strachan Louth (NSW)

**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.

**M96 (A54) North West Branch (SA)**

“That ICPA (Aust) liaises with the Department of Social Services to find a solution to wait times and difficulty contacting Services Australia regarding Youth Allowance applications for rural and remote students.”

**Moved:** Edwina Bowie North West (SA)  
**Seconded:** Jill Greenfield North West (SA)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Students and families are struggling to contact a real person when they try and liaise with Services Australia regarding Youth Allowance. Is there a possibility of having a dedicated rural and remote telephone line, similar to the one that we access when contacting Services Australia regarding the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance.

Case Study

One of the children in our branch has returned to university to study nursing, online via Charles Darwin University. She has applied for Youth Allowance and submitted the information required in late February, but she needed to go back in and change something on the form. For weeks she rang and tried lots of different responses, but the end result was always - "Thank you for calling" and the call was disconnected.

We contacted Kate Thompson, Tertiary Portfolio leader, and the response she received from Services Australia was to complete another form, highlighting the corrected areas and resubmit it.

We were unable to complete another form or amend the current one as suggested, as Services Australia says there is an application in progress. So, we have progressed no further in our application for Youth Allowance. Also, when we tried calling it still hung up on you when all of the options were selected.

Update: In June the old application was deleted, and she was able to successfully complete a new application for Youth Allowance. She is now able to apply for rent assistance and has received a health care card.

**M97 (A55) Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Federal Government through Services Australia recognises the adversity geographically isolated students face when living away from the family home to access a tertiary education.”

**Word Change:** Tallaya Wood, Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA) requested conference’s permission for a word change to add ‘and recognises them as independents for Youth Allowance purposes.’

**Conference permission granted**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Federal Government through Services Australia recognises the adversity geographically isolated students face when living away from the family home to access a tertiary education and recognises them as independents for Youth Allowance purposes.”

**Moved:** Tallaya Wood Goldfields Eyre (WA)

**Seconded:** Katie Hall Goldfields Eyre (WA)

**Amendment to the motion** – Proposed by Wendy Hick, Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD) to add ‘when they do not qualify for dependent Youth Allowance’

Tallaya Wood, Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA) accepted the amendment.

**Conference Permission granted for the amendment** and the amendment becomes the motion and voted upon.

**AMENDED**

**M97 (A55) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Federal Government through Services Australia recognises the adversity geographically isolated students face when living away from the family home to access a tertiary education and recognises them as independents for Youth Allowance purposes when they do not qualify for dependent Youth Allowance.”

**Moved:** Wendy Hick Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**Seconded:** Margaret Brock Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

We suggest that the Federal Government could do this by:

- Allowing geographically isolated students to automatically access Youth Allowance and Rent Assistance as independents so that students can focus on the task at hand and complete their studies without having to work several part-time jobs to earn enough to establish themselves as independent
- Increasing the amount that they can save for going to university as the current limits are discouraging students from saving

- Allowing eligibility for Assistance for Isolated Children and Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) to carry over into Tertiary Studies if commenced immediately following school - or eligibility for these payments automatically qualifies students for Youth Allowance and Rent Assistance. Our students have already endured six years boarding away from home. They are expected to live independently to attend these educational institutions – and this should be recognised.

## **Northern Territory ICPA President's Report**

Moira Lanzarin

### **Presentation**

Farewell to Federal Councillor Kim Hughes

### **Boarding School/Hostel/Second Home Portfolio Motions – continued**

#### **M98 (S2) Tambo Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education and other relevant stakeholders to implement an exemption for schools/boarding facilities providing on site living facilities for essential supervisory staff from Fringe Benefits Tax on that accommodation.”

**Moved:** Wendy Hick Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD) on behalf of Tambo (QLD)

**Seconded:** Margaret Brock Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

**CARRIED**

#### **Explanation:**

It is critical that the Federal Government change the policy on Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) as it currently applies to essential boarding school staff required to “live in” to perform their duty of care of residential students in metropolitan boarding institutions. This tax negatively impacts on the cost of an equitable education for isolated students.

It is obvious that boarding schools must charge fees that cover costs incurred to them. Staff wages are a clear example of expenses that must be factored into boarding school fees. However, if some of the taxes that are currently applied to boarding schools were removed, the fees charged to families could also be lessened. The removal of the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) on residential accommodation for essential supervisory staff could significantly reduce the costs incurred by some boarding schools. The Australian Boarding Schools' Association (ABSA) estimates that the FBT on the residential accommodation for the boarding schools in large cities adds an average of approximately \$2000 per child. Staff accommodation is a fundamental necessity of a boarding school. Boarding school staff must live on site to supervise the boarders in their care.

Educational expenses are considerably high for families who must send their children to boarding school due to geographical location. Unfair taxes are adding to the high costs of educating students from rural and remote areas. The Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) that is applied to essential boarding staff in large cities is one example of the taxes that are impacting affordability and accessibility to an equitable education.

In addition, the taxes appear to be levied across sectors in a most inequitable and inconsistent manner. For example, FBT is applied to boarding supervisors' accommodation, yet it is not levied on aged care facilities or military establishments. As another example, GST is levied on boarding school food, yet not on the food provided in aged care facilities.

Boarding associations and boarding schools have been lobbying for the Fringe Benefits Tax on

essential boarding school staff to be removed. ICPA (Aust) supporting this advocacy and assisting in raising awareness of this concern where possible would lend a greater voice to this issue on behalf of rural and remote students.

**M99 (A9) Walgett Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) encourages the relevant government departments to continue and expand the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program pilot.”

**Moved:** Francesca Collins Walgett (NSW)  
**Seconded:** Káren Ricardo Walgett (NSW)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

We would like to express our gratitude and thanks for the implementation of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program which is a pilot program that commenced this year.

This scholarship has been greatly received by our members and will be an incredible help to assist the recipient families with boarding fees and all the associated costs.

We would like to advocate for this program to continue and be expanded by increasing the number of scholarships on offer, this will allow many more families the opportunity to stay in their rural or remote communities where suitable local alternatives don't exist and send their children to a school that offers boarding.

We acknowledge that the number of scholarships was small being a pilot program, but there is a real need for such a scholarship, as demonstrated by the number of applicants deemed eligible but were unsuccessful. This need is even more prevalent in the more marginalised and disadvantaged rural and remote areas that have inequitable access to quality education.

**M100 (A10) Wentworth Branch (NSW)**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education to continue the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program beyond the one-off 2024 pilot.”

Nerida Healy, Wentworth Branch (NSW) requested conference's permission for A10 (M100) to be deemed covered by A9 (M99).

**Conference permission granted.**

**DEEMED COVERED by M99 (A9)**

**Explanation:**

The Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program announcement came as welcome relief to struggling families across remote and very remote Australia whose only access to secondary education is boarding school. However, the relief was very short lived when families realised that it was a one-off program that provided a maximum of 70 scholarships only, once.

Our branch fails to see how you can effectively evaluate a program based on a one-off, very small number of participants. It appears more like a tokenistic gesture to silence a group of people and hose down media attention rather than actually providing effective assistance to bridge the ever-growing education gap.

If the government want families in remote and very remote Australia and they want the children to grow to become productive members of society then they must provide long term meaningful access and assistance to education for those families.

**M101 (A11) South Australia State Council**

“That ICPA (Aust) works with the Department of Education to explore the possibility of extending the Commonwealth Regional Scholarships Program into the future.”

Jodie Keogh, South Australia State Council requested conference’s permission for A11 (M101) to be deemed covered by A9 (M99)

**Conference permission granted.**

**DEEMED COVERED by M99 (A9)**

**Explanation:**

The creation of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarships program was warmly welcomed by ICPA members across regional and remote Australia. The opportunity for families whose only choice for a compulsory secondary education for their children is to send them away to boarding school, to be able to apply for and possibly receive a scholarship and significant financial support was an exciting prospect and one that hundreds applied for. And whilst the scope of the program was in no way large enough to be inclusive of the hundreds of families who applied, it was seen as the Federal Government recognising that many regional and remote students and their families are in dire need of financial support to educate their children. We hope that through considered advocacy Federal Council will be able to demonstrate that continuing this program is of great importance and will have a positive impact on families for years to come.

**M102 (S3) Midwest Branch (WA)**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Ministers for Education and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and other relevant ministers, for additional financial support to schools for students with a disability from rural and remote areas, who have no choice for their education but to go to boarding school.”

**Moved:** Jasmyrn Allen Midwest (WA)

**Seconded:** Jen Critch Midwest (WA)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

Currently students who attend boarding schools who have no other educational option and who require additional support in the boarding house due to a disability diagnosis do not have access to funding for support.

There should be an additional payment made to schools as a supplement to ‘Individual Disability Education’ funding to support the specific needs of a student living with disability in the residential boarding house system.

These vulnerable and rural and remote students are supported in the school, but in many schools are left to navigate the complexities of a boarding house alone, and without appropriate support. Brave are the families who try to educate the geographically isolated kids with a disability, this journey is full of hope and dreams for an inclusive education for our kids who will need it the most to navigate the complexities of life. Braver are the kids who give it a go.

We want all our geographically isolated kids to have an equal opportunity for education.

We urge you to pass this motion to support students with disability and to ensure their needs are being met in boarding houses across Australia through the provision of funding that offers an equal and inclusive opportunity to education.

**M103 (S4) Midwest Branch (WA)**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Ministers for Education and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the Commissioner for Regional Education and other relevant ministers and commissioners to include an amendment into the 2025 review of the “Disability Standards for Education 2005” that encompasses the needs of students with a disability who reside in a boarding facility for secondary education due to not being able access a local school due to isolation.”

**Moved:** Jasmyn Allen Midwest (WA)

**Seconded:** Jen Critch Midwest (WA)

**CARRIED**

**Explanation:**

The needs of students with a disability in boarding house facilities across Australia should be recognised so that they have the opportunity for appropriate and inclusive education on the same basis as all other students. The “Disability Standards for Education 2005” must reflect the needs of students who reside in an educational facility residential accommodation setting for students from rural and remote areas, who have no choice but to go to boarding school. The standards need to reflect the needs of students outside of regular school hours.

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 are Commonwealth Government legislation, they are administered by the Attorney-General’s Department and sit alongside the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

The Act seeks to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against people with disabilities. Under section 22 of the Act, it is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the grounds of the person’s disability or the disability of any associates of that person. Section 31 of the Act enables the Attorney-General to formulate disability standards in relation to a range of areas, including the education of persons with a disability. The supportive environment of a boarding house needs to work in conjunction of the day school for a successful education journey, and supportive measure put in place within the day school must carry over to the boarding house for a comprehensive education.

The standards are reviewed every 5 years.

The standards reflect enrolment, participation, curriculum development, accreditation and delivery, student support services and elimination of harassment and victimisation. Each area includes statements and guidance notes to assist in delivery for educational institutions.

Our boarding students do not have access to a local school for education, they are enrolled in schools that offer boarding due to the need for education. As families we need the standards that represent educational inclusion across Australia to also be inclusive of the residential boarding setting and specify the needs of students with a disability to be included for the 24 hours a day that they are educated and cared for.

For geographically isolated families, residential boarding is an important continuation of our children’s education. Students with a disability require extra support in their daily lives to reach their full potential. Boarding houses have a duty of care, responsibility and accountability for the increased needs of a student with a disability. This is inclusive wellbeing, medical, social, homework time, nutrition and extracurricular school activities. Appropriate legislation needs to be implemented to encompass our boarders living with a disability so that they too can have equal rights to an

appropriate and inclusive education. Disability does not turn its self-off, at the end of the school day when the bell rings.

Additional Information to support motion can be found here:

## **Part 11 Review**

### **11.1 Timetable for review**

The Minister for Education, Science and Training, in consultation with the Attorney-General, must:

- a) within 5 years after the commencement of these Standards, conduct a review of the effectiveness of these Standards in achieving their objects, including a consideration of whether any amendments are desirable; and
- b) conduct further reviews to be completed at intervals of not more than 5 years.

<https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/2020-review-disability-standards-education-2005> this has a 5 year review process, due 2025

## **Curriculum Portfolio Presentation**

Anna McCorkle and Naomi Obst

## **Floor Motions**

### **M104 (F1) Northern Territory State Council**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Regional Education Commissioner to convene a Round Table to determine equitable solutions for recognition and recompense for the compulsory Distance Education home supervisors for geographically isolated families.”

**Moved:** Moira Lanzarin Northern Territory State Council  
**Seconded:** Judith Eriksen Far North Queensland (QLD)

**CARRIED**

### **Explanation:**

Suggested participants may include State and Federal Education Ministers, Department heads, ICPA State and Federal representatives and Distance Education principals.

### **Presentation**

Farewell to Federal Councillor Naomi Obst

### **Presentation**

Thank You to the Convening Committee

**Carried with Acclamation**

### **Closing of Conference**

Conference arrangements

**Conference Closed 5:00pm**

## CONFERENCE REPORTS

### FEDERAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Louise Martin

Federal Life Members, Rory Treweek AM, Jack Beach, Judy Newton, Distinguished guests, State and Branch Life Members, fellow ICPA members and friends, it is with great pleasure that I present my first Federal Presidents Report. Just when I thought my days of making ICPA President speeches were over, I find myself here delivering this report as Federal President, a surprise to us all, most of all me! I have just recently retired from Qld State Council after 11 years, 3 of which were as Qld President. For those who don't know me, I am from Tambo Branch, in Western Queensland. My Husband and I have twin daughters who have just turned 18 and finished high school last year. We have followed the DE, Small School, School Bus, and boarding school route for education. We are now trying to navigate tertiary allowances etc, which I am discovering is very challenging.

Following the 2023 Federal Conference in Darwin we set off with enthusiasm to tackle the issues presented by the members at conference.

At October 2023 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 worked closely with public relations consultants C7even to build momentum, which has included an e-petition which had over 4,000 signatures and an open letter to the Minister for Social Services, endorsed by over 20 stakeholders in support of the campaign. It was extremely disappointing that the raise in the AIC was not announced in the budget.

Council continued to progress all motions carried at conference. Letters were written to government and education stakeholders, various submissions were lodged and meetings undertaken. Federal Council provided updates on motion action progress to members in early March.

The leaders of each portfolio will provide an update throughout conference of what has been happening in their portfolio through the year and the full portfolio reports are available in the conference booklet.

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 Northern Territory State Council. Yet again it proved to be such a worthwhile exercise to have all the State and Federal Presidents and other representatives from across the country come together to discuss all things relevant to ICPA. Thank you to the NT team for facilitating the meeting and hosting us all. We look forward to heading over to Perth in February for the next annual gathering. Following on from the joint council meeting progress has been made on several issues discussed.

The Distance Education Teaching Allowance was discussed at length between ICPA Councils in Darwin and beyond, 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. We all look forward to debating the upcoming motions relating to this advocacy so a solution can be realised.

After consultation and feedback with all councils, it has been decided that the Geographically Isolated Distance Education (GIDE) day 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 member base. After much



debate and discussion, a new name has been settled on RRED, Rural and Remote Education Day. The inaugural RRED day is scheduled for the 12<sup>th</sup> of September. Members will be asked to help contribute towards this day and I am sure it will be a great success as a result.

At the October council meeting a motion was carried to establish a subcommittee of the organisation to formalise the role of the ICPA Tech Team which will oversee and manage the website and database operations at a Branch, State and Federal level. The formation of the subcommittee evolved from the retirement of Sue Shotten as the Web Manager. As ICPA's reliance on the website and database continues to increase it became apparent that the responsibilities are far beyond the capacity of a single volunteer. We have a wonderful, and extremely knowledgeable, committed, and passionate team of five who ensure that the operation of the website and database is running as smoothly as possible. Thank you, Judy Newton, Kate Thompson, Nikki MacQueen, Tammie Irons and Kym Ross, for all efforts on behalf of all the ICPA family. So, if you are having any technical issues at Branch, State or Federal level please contact the Tech Team and they will endeavour to solve your problem as quickly as possible. Four of the Tech team are here at Conference so please reach out if you need a hand with anything.

This time last year Federal Council engaged C7even, an 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 assure the organisation's longevity. This engagement originated from a motion carried at the 2021 Federal Conference in Longreach Qld. The result of the work has been to focus on one or two longstanding key issues at a time, making a concerted push to government through key messaging and at times, the media.

Federal Council travelled to Canberra for delegations in February and met with The Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, the Hon Darren Chester, Shadow Minister for Regional Education and The Hon Michael Sukkar 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 2024-25 Pre-Budget Submission. It was a good opportunity to consolidate these key asks 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 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 has been finalised and federal council is now progressing forward with the implementation of the accompanying operational plan which will play out over the next five years. The Canberra session also included a media training workshop. It 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.

Federal Council's final round of delegations for the year was in May where the focus was on ensuring positive outcomes from the USO review for rural and remote families and pushing for the inclusion of nanny's and classroom supervisors to be included in the 88 day Working Holiday Maker Program. We also followed up recommendations from the University Accord review to ensure that they are delivered. It is heartening to see further funding for regional study hubs, paid placements for teaching, nursing, and social work students as well as HECS reductions.

ICPA at large made its presence felt at Beef Week this year. Thank you to Qld State Council for liaising and working with the Beef committee to bring together a Panel discussion highlighting the critically important role that access to a quality education plays in the success of our vast agricultural industries. I felt ICPA's influence and the respect in which the organisation is held infiltrated throughout the week at Beef.

I wish to also mention the valuable and ongoing support ICPA Australia receives from stakeholders and other organisations, including but not limited to the Australian Boarding Schools Association, Telstra, nbn, ACARA, Boarding Expos Australia, The Parenthood and Thrive By Five. I also acknowledge the Department of Education, Department of Social Services and Services Australia who we meet with regularly and are always just a phone call away if we need any assistance.

Since the 2023 conference we have had a few changes with councillors. We farewelled both Wendy Henning and Tracy Alder due to other commitments. We thank Tim Fletcher from Monaro, NSW and Melissa Kerr, Katherine Branch NT for being willing to be coopted on to council through the year. Many thanks to the off-council team Judy Newton, Memberships, Nikki Macqueen, Webmaster, Hannah Calcino and Tracey Dewell who both do a fantastic job producing the Pedals magazine. This year we farewell team members who have all contributed greatly to the organisation during their time on council. With this in mind I encourage you to think, is this my time to join the federal council team. There is never a right time of course, you just need to take a leap of faith and be safe in the knowledge that when you join the team, you will be well looked after and nurtured. What an opportunity it is for so many reasons, for our kids, for ourselves and our communities.

A massive thanks from me to Alana, Kim, Julia, Nikki and the rest of the team for pointing me in the right direction this year. Honestly it is surprising I am here in Sydney as I suffered from a few Joe Biden moments and wrote in my speech welcome to Canberra!!

Thank you to all members who contribute countless volunteer hours to enhance educational opportunities for all rural and remote students in your state and across Australia. Thank you again to the NSW State Council and the convening team for all the hard work you have put in and for the warm welcome to Sydney.

I encourage all attendees including guests to participate in robust debate at this conference as this always produces the best outcomes so, please don't walk away after coming all the way to Sydney with any thoughts left unspoken.

Thank you

### **FEDERAL TREASURER'S REPORT**

Nikki Mahony

In summary, the audited report for 2023-24 is in line with the budget. It reflects another year of significant increases in costs across the board, primarily to do with strategic planning, consultancy, outsourcing IT and upgrading equipment. On the income side, a generous increase in donations offset an anticipated grant that we were not successful in attaining.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Federal Council would like to acknowledge and thank the huge membership team who have worked so hard over the last year processing memberships, assisting members and promoting ICPA. Our true strength lies in our membership and the number of families we represent, so there is a real need for each of us to continue to promote ICPA to all those who benefit from our advocacy and those

who want to support the work we do. Sponsoring or gifting a membership is a great way to introduce families and community members to ICPA. If you as a branch or individuals have other innovative ideas, we would love to hear from you.

Judy Newton in her role as membership officer and database manager has offered marvellous assistance to branches and members, providing training, procedure updates and been an integral part of the feedback loop to the Federal Council. We are grateful for her contributions.

Our membership numbers remain stable, reaching 2257 at the end of the financial year. In NSW, four branches closed after a long period in recess, with another two still in recess, totalling 93 branches. The new rolling membership model, which started this year, has been a resounding success, offering twelve months of membership for online payments and receiving positive feedback from our members. Unfortunately, despite every effort to introduce the recurring payment option, issues with the latest module continue.

All states will adopt the WA/QLD manual membership processing model starting in October. Affiliation fees will be sent to state treasurers, who will forward the federal fee.

This year, an increase in the Federal affiliation fee, highlighted that some branches may not be holding their AGMs on time for constitutional compliance. Unless a branch has its own constitution, branch AGMs should occur within six months of their state's end of the financial year, typically Dec 31. As a result, most branch AGMs should be scheduled in the first half of the year. Branch executives are reminded to check their relevant state's EOFY and recommended branch AGM date windows.

With the establishment of the ICPA Tech Team dedicated to website development, the Federal Membership Office role will be split with database management moving to a Tech Team role. This strategic move will significantly reduce the workload, making the Federal Membership Officer role more manageable.

### SPONSORSHIP AND DONATIONS

The McDonald family and Four Seasons Company continue to actively support ICPA (Aust) through a sponsorship in honour of the late Zanda McDonald. Five percent of sales from the ZM Breeder and Weaner Block range enables ICPA (Aust) to provide some financial support for members attending conference and allows us a broader scope to promote ICPA's cause and maintain our presence on a federal level. In the 2023-2024 financial year these proceeds have totalled over \$30,000 (incl GST), which has been directly put towards reducing conference registration day rates across the board for ICPA members. ICPA (Aust) is immensely proud to be associated with the ZM Breeder & Weaner Block range by Four Seasons and the McDonald family and we are so very grateful for their support.

We appreciate the assistance from our longer-term supporters, the Department of Education, ABSA (Australian Boarding Schools Association), Telstra and NBN Co. ICPA (Aust) is interested in working collaboratively with other corporate organisations who service or have connections with rural and remote Australia and are in the process of seeking longer term partnership and sponsorship options as part of our strategic planning.

Donations were gratefully received from Rossco Foulkes-Taylor and the following branches during the 2023-24 financial year; Alice Springs (NT), Alpha (Qld), Arcadia Valley (Qld), Katherine (NT), Lakes District (WA), Meekatharra Air (WA), Midwest (WA), Mt Isa Branch of the Air (Qld), Nebo (Qld), Nyngan (NSW) and Winton (Qld). Every little bit helps ICPA give our families a voice and we truly appreciate the generosity from our grass roots.

### FINANCES

A small loss in 2023-2024 lines up with our budget for the year and is directly attributable to consultancy, updating equipment and escalating costs of travel and accommodation.

Technology is moving at a far greater pace than us and much of the IT work we have attempted to address within council is now beyond most of our capabilities. Federal Council has engaged ASKme to be our dedicated paid external IT support. This includes the provision of ICPA laptops along with the setup and support of these devices and we will begin the move across to Teams and more effective shared platforms by the end of 2024.

Website expenses have reduced this financial year and we have been able to build greater collaboration, coherence and communication between Federal Council, State Councils, branches and our database and website teams. Improving on this and streamlining renewal processes should see these costs decrease slightly and stabilise year to year.

ICPA (Aust) insured through Community Underwriting again in 2024 and extended the policy to include cyber security protection.

Tasmanian State Council funds continue to be held in trust on their behalf in a stand-alone account and Tasmanian membership fees are now paid to Tasmania Branch. Federal Council continues to administer the online component of Tasmanian memberships.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

As indicated last year, with significant reserves now invested to ensure sustainability for ICPA (Aust) in the medium term, Federal Council has begun utilising some funds to leverage our impact through strategic media engagement and more targeted campaigns.

This year, Federal Council has been examining what sustainability looks like for ICPA (Aust). It's not just about financial security, but member engagement, community relevance, team functionality and individual wellbeing.

ICPA (Aust) has identified that investment is required to firm up our foundations, protect our greatest assets (our volunteers) from burn out and set in place streamlined processes and reviews to remain viable for the long haul. These include:

1. Seeking longer term partnerships and conference sponsors

ICPA (Aust) was unsuccessful in our bid for a Qantas community grant in May last year. The process of applying for this grant though, encouraged us to explore other avenues with corporate organisations who have aligned values of equity, diversity and strong connections to our roots in rural and remote Australia.

2. Strategic planning, governance training, formalised budgeting, feedback and review.

Both Federal and State Councils operate effectively as a board, complete with all the protocols and responsibilities of an incorporated organisation. This year, Federal Council undertook structured group governance training to ensure all board members had adequate training and support to meet good governance standards.

Federal Council has a formalised budget in place which will operate as a working document reviewed throughout the year as a measure of how we are tracking and where our pain points and opportunities lie.

3. Outsourcing of technical work and restructure of council positions and support

We know that most council positions require dedication, learning on the fly and a significant amount of time. Moving some support positions to off-council roles and outsourcing has helped reduce some of the time-hungry components of council roles that were hampering our being able to concentrate on advocacy.

As we have already been working on member engagement, media relations and targeted advocacy strategies with public relations company C7even, in May ICPA (Aust) expanded our contract with C7even to commence a strategic planning process, board evaluation and feedback.

#### 4. Streamlining Federal Conference organisation

We are actively looking into options for running Conference more cost-effectively, and in a more streamlined manner for host states, convening committees and Federal Council. Processes and structures that have worked well for ICPA (Aust) in the past are now far too cumbersome, time consuming and cause for unnecessary frustration. (For example, the added complexity of introduced banking and ATO regulations are making it increasingly difficult in proving entity structure for the convening committee which sits as a non-profit sub entity under an incorporated charitable organisation.)

Options being exploring include:

- Using an outsourced partner who would manage finance, registrations and logistics, working closely with host State and Federal Council. This would provide greater financial transparency and easier transactional facilities through rolling bank accounts and one managing financial body and take some of the burden off time-poor councils and committees.
- Long term sponsorships for Federal Conference. Three to five year sponsorship agreements would provide more certainty for both sponsors and convening committees. Conference registration and package costs could also be confidently set well in advance making it easier for branches and attendees to plan and budget for.

#### IN CLOSING ...

Hats off to our federal conference convening committees for managing to navigate some interesting obstacles each year and running successful conferences under various trying conditions.

And thanks also to each and every one of you, our members, for your part in keeping rural and remote education on the national agenda.

When I first joined Federal Council in 2020, all I had was the knowledge that we as a family had benefited from the generations of advocacy work by ICPA and that I might have something to contribute.

I had thought about putting my hand up BUT I was not quite ready, nor did I have all the skills required for the roles I would go on to fill and those guys up the front looked like they were sorted without me! I did put feelers out though and was soon hauled onboard. Jumping in before I was ready as both an ICPA federal councillor and then Treasurer has been among the best things I made myself do. Sometimes, like parenting, the best way to learn how to do something is to live it and learn on the job. Sometimes your ducks only line up because you're walking out ahead of them.

Thank you for being part of my journey and including me on yours.

As your departing Federal Treasurer, I leave you with someone else's words

'The next time  
you refuse to sing  
because you'll never  
fill a stadium  
or decline the joy of dance  
for fear of looking  
ridiculous

or you resist risking  
the new adventure  
because you're  
not entirely ready  
or you dim your shine  
because you're not  
completely healed and whole  
the next time  
you hold yourself suspect  
because you're not  
entirely qualified  
just remember  
a bird doesn't sing  
because it's talented  
a bird sings because  
it has a song  
the moon doesn't only shine  
when it's whole  
it can show up with  
a single sliver of itself  
and still light an entire  
night sky  
show up. sing. shine.  
the world needs you  
as you are'  
(Angi Sullins)

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Tanya Mitchell

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.

Our annual NSW State Conference was held in Dubbo on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> March, hosted by Central West Plains Branch. It was wonderful to have over 120 registrations, over 70 motions from 18 branches representing over 70 member families over the two days. It is always fantastic for our branches to be able to showcase their community. It is pleasing to see so many members and stakeholders come together to meet in such a great rural community and to discuss and debate our concerns and issues surrounding access to education for our children once again.

The conference saw our Treasurer Nathan Kitto and Allowances Portfolio holder Bree Wakefield step off State Council. We have now welcomed Georgina Luckraft who has taken on the Treasurer role and Tegan Barton for joining Council as the Allowances Portfolio holder.

There were several life memberships and certificates awarded during the conference, congratulations to Ellen Walker and Lindy Kitto who received NSW State Life Memberships, David

Butler received Life Membership of Nyngan Branch and Sue Kingwill of Contact a Certificate of Appreciation for their many years of service and support of ICPA. Each of the recipients have been long-term advocates and participants of ICPA and their contributions and dedication are greatly appreciated.

With a slightly earlier conference it meant everything was brought forward and most of us spent the Christmas/New Year break working on conference matters. We thought that we might have a breather after conference however with Easter/NSW school holidays, sitting dates and councillor availability we soon found ourselves preparing for our main deputation to Sydney in early May. As other State Councillors are aware there is much preparation in the time between conference and meeting with each of the stakeholders involved to co-ordinate approximately 40 meetings during that week of delegations, then following up with meetings with those unavailable until recently.

Our conference continued to raise some issues we have been long advocating for but also brought new issues to the table. A change in government meant a sense of uncertainty as to how the change would impact our issues and the motions that members brought to the conference. Fortunately, we had developed relationships with most of the shadow ministers during past deputations, but it is interesting to navigate when they are in the hot seat.

### **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.
- 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 of safety devices on new buses.
- NBN rollout completed for all NSW Distance Education families.
- Continued monthly meetings with the Department of Education Regional, Rural & Remote Implementation (RRRI) Unit and major stakeholder in new Rural and Remote Education Strategy – targeting
  - tailored housing support,
  - strengthening professional connections, and
  - rural and remote staffing support.
- Starting in July 2025, university and TAFE students who complete mandatory placements studying courses like teaching, nursing, social work, and midwifery will receive payments of over \$300 a week during the duration of their placements.
- A Review into Distance Education delivery.

We appreciate all the time and effort that has been put in by all levels of ICPA, various stakeholders, Government and policy makers to achieve these outcomes.

Access to funding and workload sustainability is something NSW State Council continue to discuss and navigate. Since coming on to State Council in 2017 the expectations both physically and professionally appears to be increasing rapidly.

Seeking and writing grant applications to secure funding for upgrades to our technological resources, governance and training, department and stakeholder meetings, portfolio holder meetings, deputations, branch executive and state council meetings just to get through daily operations is a juggle for councillors who also hold other full time positions and have businesses to run.

We have this year made the following submissions and presentations to Parliamentary Inquiries & Reviews:

- Rural Health Inquiry
- Rural and Regional Affairs Inquiry into the shutdown of the 3G mobile network
- Improving Access to Early Childhood Health & Development checks
- Arts & Music Education & Training in NSW
- Children & Young People with Disability in NSW Educational Settings
- Covid 19 Response Inquiry
- Disability Royal Commission
- National Trend of School Refusal & related matters
- Distance Education Review
- Teacher Shortages in NSW
- Student & Parent Experience, Learning Improvement – Community Engagement Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaints procedure.

As NSW State Council we are often requested to provide letters of support to our stakeholders and partners in their various grant applications and activities. It is through this collaborative effort that we are able to support and work together for better outcomes.

This year we saw one of our last far western boarding facilities, Allison House at Broken Hill close its doors at the end of Term 1 due to financial unviability and low numbers. We have been working with the board, staff, families, federal and state local members and local community to try and find solutions both in the short term for those students who were residing at the hostel and for long term funding and viability of the facility. This also prompted a survey of members and families living in the far west of the state to ascertain what their future educational needs were. Among other data we have been able to determine a definite need for a boarding facility in the far west which has been a motion for some time and we are now advocating for.

State Council have been made aware through local communities and motions brought to conference of the need for preschools to be run in conjunction with local village primary schools. We have been advocating for this and successfully have distance education preschool running in a couple of small schools however these do not cater for three-year-olds, which in these cases, children do not have access to any other early education and one day per week will not provide students with anywhere near the 600 hours before starting school.

Along with the preschool students we are aware of secondary aged students in these remote villages who also have no access to school facilities.

NSW State Government last year announced 100 preschools would go into existing Public-School sites in areas of disadvantage and where no services existed. Whilst this investment in early childhood is greatly appreciated, in some communities with existing community preschools, they are now competing for funding, staff and causing division within communities. Many of these sites are in rural and remote areas and are in direct competition, in particular many are small Aboriginal preschools as confirmed by SNAICC (the peak body for Aboriginal children). A perfect example of Government rolling out an initiative that is a fantastic plan, but we know that each community is unique, and one size does not fit all.

Many of our philanthropy and funding stakeholders/partners such as Bush Children's Education Fund (BCEF) are acknowledging many challenges due to strong ongoing demand for Rural Boarding



Bursaries and various scholarships, as many families are looking for financial assistance to help alleviate the growing costs of education. The oversubscribed uptake of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program has delivered 100 scholarships, worth up to \$20,000 a year, to families in regional, rural and remote communities to assist with the costs of children attending boarding school.

There was significant demand for the scholarships with 353 applications for the national intake for the 2024 scholarships and already over 260 enquiries regarding opportunities for future scholarships which also signifies families need for financial assistance.

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.

We as an organisation are so fortunate to have the support of the likes of Amanda and the ABSA Team. These partnerships work both ways, but we certainly wouldn't have such successful relationships between our schools and families without them. We try and have representatives attend the Expos around the state whenever we can and promote these organisations at every opportunity.

Speaking at various forums and presenting for advocacy through events held by Thrive by Five and the Rural and Remote Action Group, local Regional Development Authority and community events all helps to promote ICPA and raise awareness of our issues at many levels.

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. Our goal, our mission is to endeavour that no rural or remote child misses the opportunity to have an education that embraces all these factors. This is the base level of education all our children deserve.

Accepting we have a formal education system 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, considering 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. 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 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.

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, properties to run, 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 a paid position 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 a quality and appropriate education.

### **SOUTH AUSTRALIA PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Belinda Hatcher

Another year, another no show! Once again, the timing of our shearing means I cannot be with you in person in Sydney but you do get the pleasure of hearing my voice and enjoying some pictures of SA ICPA families and the special places they live in. So, with that said, Madame President, Federal councillors, ICPA members and guests it is with great pleasure that I present my third SA ICPA President's report.

Our delegations for 2023 were held a little later than normal and occurred from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of September. We had a very warm and successful first meeting with Minister Geoff Brock, who has always been willing to do what he can to support SA ICPA. We also met with Julie Taylor from the Open Access College, Cara Savarton - State Government & International Relations, Ashley Smith, Christian Barnes and Constance Christou, Transport Services Unit from the Department for Education and Annie Lawless and Tarnya Eggleton from the Child and Family Health Service.

There can sometimes be a struggle for continuity when it comes to staffing within the South Australian Education Department and it is often hard to keep those connections strong. In the future the idea of more than one delegation and or periodical catch ups is one state council will be undertaking and something we hope will help deepen those connections and continue to build the understanding and reputation of ICPA.

When we met with the Minister for Education, Training and Skills, Mr Blair Boyer we were pleased when he announced that there would be a small but welcome increase to the Remote Travel Allowance component of the State Education Allowance from \$250 to \$500 per year. We are always grateful for the Minister's time during our delegations, but I still believe we have a long way to go to see our organisation and its advocacy more strongly understood and valued by Minister Boyer (and the SA Government in general) and his office. State Council will keep continue fighting for this to happen.

As well as delegation meetings, SA ICPA State Council have been busy building connections with some new stakeholders throughout the year. We had a meeting the Statewide Inclusive Education Services (SIES), which was an introduction to each other of both our organisations and with the plan to inform members of the services that SIES can offer families with children who have specific learning needs. I was also invited by the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) to convey any communication needs that our members may have. Even though there is not any specific issues at the current time, ACCAN are keen to have regular catch ups in the future. State Secretary Hollie Williams has also been busy growing our relationship with secondary schools who have an interest educating in rural and remote ICPA students and it was exciting to have several of those school attend this year's conference as a result of her communications.

We were pleased to be invited in March by the Minister for Education, Training and Skills, Mr Blair Boyer, to nominate a candidate from State Council to fill a vacant position on the Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Board. Edwina Bowie who is our Early Childhood Portfolio leader, was a perfect fit for this roll and was successful in her application. She has attended a couple of meetings so far and has gained valuable information for ICPA as well as having the chance to advocate for rural and remote children and their needs.

In February of last year SA ICPA applied for a Thriving Communities grant with the application outlining the plan to engage the services of 'Bank of Ideas' and its founder Peter Kenyon to come up with a key document that would not only enable SA ICPA State Councillors better understand and implement the objectives of ICPA, but to help further develop the passion and commitment of members and volunteers towards ICPA. With the grant application being successful we got the ball rolling by having Peter Kenyon speak at last year's conference as the first step of the process. Once conference was over, we set about organising the second and third stages – a set of one-on-one interviews with past and present members and stakeholders of ICPA and then planning and facilitating a two-day workshop for participants to work with Peter to build the story around ICPA, its members and the volunteers who become involved.

The workshop was a great success and produced some innovative and practical solutions and suggestions for propelling SA ICPA safely into the future. At this year's conference we got to hear from Peter, who gave us a final wrap up of the last 12 months and helped launch the new volunteer engagement and support manual that has been created as a result of this process. The booklet has been printed thanks to the support of Rural Aid and is ready to be distributed to members over the coming weeks.

Unfortunately, due to station commitments I was unable to attend the 52<sup>nd</sup> Federal Conference in Darwin and I know I missed an excellent few days. Thanks to everyone who went from SA, especially to Hollie and Kirsty for representing our state council. Congratulations to Alana, Federal Council, and the NT State Council for putting on such a successful conference and a big congrats to Louise Martin on her election as the new Federal President. I am sure that along with this year's councillors she will capably lead Federal Council for the future years.

SA ICPA would like to thank Federal Council for all their hard work throughout the year in advocating for our members. Thank you for always being willing to offer support and advice to myself and the whole SA ICPA State Council. The ease at which we can communicate between councils make the organisation even stronger and the outcomes for members that much better for it. I would also like to thank Judy Newton, Federal Membership Officer and the new Federal ICPA Tech Team for all their hard work in working through the challenges that have come from implementing the new rolling membership format. I am confident that this time next year all the troubles will be a distant memory and there will be smooth sailing ahead!

In February Kirsty and I attended the joint councils meeting in Darwin. It was a busy couple of days but as always it was wonderful to be in the company of other state councils as well as Kim and Louise from Federal Council. We are all so vastly different and yet we can come together to share our knowledge and skills for the great good of the organisation and our members. Thank you to Moira and Catherine for organising a wonderful catch up and ensuring that our short but sweet time was enjoyable.

We continue to deliver the Pipeline publication, in full colour now, to members bi-annually and it is always wonderful to read about all the comings and goings of members. Thank you to Mija our Pipeline Editor, who works very hard to get hold of articles, photos, and news so that we have something to look forward to and read twice a year. That along with our social media channels and the website gives members several ways to access what they need to in regard to all things ICPA. While we are on the website, a very big pat on the back to Lisa Slade for stepping into the role of State Webmaster and keeping the ever-changing landscape of news and information up to date. It has been a big year of transition and she has done a stellar job.

The 2024 SA ICPA State Conference was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March at Quorn and was hosted by the Marla Oodnadatta Branch and was a great success. Anne Scammell and Sophie Matterson were wonderful and very fitting guest speakers, all our panellists and speakers throughout the day were interesting and informative and the motions were presented and debated in a passionate and respectful manner. There was a family friendly and relaxed atmosphere at the evening events and the cricket match at the conclusion of the conference was a fitting way to end the proceedings and a good way to remind us of the core reason for ICPA – the families and the kids of rural and remote South Australia. A big thank you to convenor Dani Chapman and all of the helpers from the Marla Oodnadatta branch for organising what was an excellent State Conference. An almost full State Council was elected at the conclusion of conference proceedings and they hit the ground running the next morning for the first State Council meeting of the year (minus the president who was required to ferry her 16-year-old across Adelaide for her formal and all the appointments that are needed before hand!).

We farewelled outgoing State Councillors Steph Roeske, Jessica Bell and Helen Williams. We were especially sad to farewell Helen. She has been on State Council in some way, shape or form almost 20 years. She has been State Secretary, State Treasurer and State Publicity Officer as well as a branch rep for the Marla Oodnadatta branch. Nothing is ever too hard for Helen and her willingness to just put her hand up to be in a role or get a job done is admirable to say the least. We will miss her a lot but I have a feeling that she will be keeping an eye on us in the back ground for years to come. And a big thank you to this year's State Council executives Hollie, Kirsty, Jodie, and Ellen and all the other councillors for all their hard work over the last 12 months. We are all busy and their commitment to supporting ICPA is always exemplary.

After 12 months of waiting and some covert plans, SA ICPA were very happy to present Jill Greenfield with South Australian State Life Membership at this year's conference. Jill joined ICPA in 1998 and

over the past twenty-six years, she has held many positions as an ICPA member, including branch president, secretary and delegate and was co-convenor of two state conferences. She has also held the roles of SA State President, Immediate Past President and State Treasurer and has been instrumental in helping to shape our association to where it is today. A very deserved new State Life Member.

The past couple of months since conference State Councillors have worked very hard on drafting motion letters and gathering case studies over the past couple of months and they have now been sent to the appropriate parties. We are still waiting to get any feedback from these letters but hope it will be any time soon. We have however had some great responses from boarding schools in regard to the motions and discussions that were had around enrolments, scholarships and the ever-increasing fees. A special thanks to SA ICPA State Secretary Hollie Williams, who has been the driving force behind the push to build greater communication channels between SA ICPA and boarding schools and facilities across the state. We were very excited to receive news that one of the above-mentioned boarding schools has created a scholarship off the back of the motion letters and discussion from conference.

Through the support of two grants – one from the Foundation for Regional and Remote Renewal and one from Beech Energy, State Council had the chance to facilitate a face-to-face meeting and incorporate some professional development workshops as well. At the end of May, we met in Clare for 2 days and got the chance to run a state council meeting face to face, which I am sure we can all agree is so much more productive than one on zoom. We then did a 4-hour intensive public speaking session with Annabelle Homer from Voice It, which was confronting but also a great opportunity for us to develop and sharpen not only our public speaking skills, but to work on better ways to write speeches and documents that need publication. There were lots of laughs and a few tears and it was such a great way to bond as a council. On the second day, after lunch we were joined by Isaac Camilleri, who supported us through a strategic planning session. For the session, we picked one of our main advocacy focuses for this year and worked on how best to get the outcomes we needed for our members. We learnt how to look at things differently and now have the ability to apply what we learnt for other areas of advocacy going forward. A value cannot be put on the opportunities to be in a face-to-face setting and it is something we hope to do far more often in the coming years.

As of the end of June, SA ICPA has 122 members, which might not seem many for some states, but for us it is the largest number we have had in almost 10 years. We also have seen two branches double their numbers in 12 months, which is an amazing effort considering those branches are from the biggest land mass area but have the sparsest population base.

Having a larger and more diverse pool of members will be so important for SA ICPA and its future. We will be able to support ICPA better at both branch and state levels as well as having a wider audience exposed to ICPA, its families and their needs. Onwards and upwards for SA ICPA!

Many congratulations to Louise Martin, Federal Council, Laura Stalley and the NSW State Council for putting on what I can only imagine will be an excellent couple of days for the 53<sup>rd</sup> Federal Conference in Sydney and for dedicating countless hours of your time to ensure that everyone has an amazing time. I will definitely be seeing you in Adelaide next year – even if it is just for a flying visit between mobs of sheep!

### QUEENSLAND PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Wendy Henning

Federal President, Mrs Louise Martin, Federal Life Members, State Life Members, Branch Life Members, Distinguished Guests, fellow ICPA members, Ladies and Gentlemen: It gives me great pleasure to present my Queensland President's report for the 2024 Federal Conference.

It is hard to believe (at the time of writing this report) that nearly a month has passed since the 53<sup>rd</sup> ICPA Queensland conference was held in Townsville, hosted by the Belyando Mt Coolon Branch.

With a fresh start in June to the council year in Queensland timely to reflect on and recognise 12 months of dedication and tireless hardworking commitment from each and every member of the ICPA Qld State Council. As volunteers, the members on council and off council have committed and delivered a truly mammoth year worthy of reflection and as we embark on the new council year to plan and strategise to ensure we utilize everyone's time effectively and continue to ensure all our rural, remote and geographically isolated students are receiving their best education.

The QLD diaries over the past year has consisted of - Post-Conference Meeting, three Brisbane Delegations (August, November and March) including Face-to-Face Meetings, a Mid-Year Council Meeting, over 77 meetings with Stakeholders whilst on Delegations, three Parliamentary Hearings, more than 13 Council Teams meetings, 86 Meetings with Stakeholders when not officially in Brisbane, Mentor Branch Meetings, telephone calls, emails and messenger conversations. That is more than 184 declared meetings.....it is acknowledged that all of this is in a voluntary capacity, all members of the team having full-time responsibilities away from Council and families too. Dedicated, passionate and all extremely capable, the 23/24 State Council each deserved to be proud of themselves and their contribution to the organisation as the 24/25 State Council team look forward with enthusiasm and energy to continue the work.

With so many meetings, and extensive network and group of supporters, for ICPA Qld to meet and further the lobby or advocacy of the motions and policies, one of our key relationships is with the Department of Education. The Rural and Remote team has been led by Dr Grant Webb, Assistant Director-General, Rural, Remote and Strategic Initiatives. Our working relationship is respectful and understanding with both sides working towards equity in education. ICPA Qld appreciates the time of Grant and his team. We have the opportunity and ability to work with them along with so many sectors of the Department. This network is truly valuable for the organisation and students alike.

My belief is that hearing genuine voices of rural and remote families, through ICPA has value for those in the Department. ICPA Qld continues to take a considered approach in our advocacy ensuring that meetings, correspondence and conversations are based on knowledge and evidence and genuinely portrays the voice of members and their children. Council has been fortunate to have discussions with former Minister for Education, the Honourable Grace Grace, and now we work in collaboration with Minister Farmer; we thank you for listening and valuing our students. Over the past 12 months there has been strong evidence of the department consulting with ICPA Qld to ensure that our members issues, thoughts and suggestions are heard.

Another valuable working relationship is with Independent Schools Queensland and the Catholic Education Commission. With so many of our students receiving their education through either an Independent or a Catholic School, it is vital that we continue to ensure all bodies who deliver education hear and understand our students and the added layers of complexities they experience. QCAA, DESBT, Autism QLD, SPELD, C&K and QLD Teachers Union are to name only a few of our stakeholders who we meet with regularly.

In her President's Report at the 2004 ICPA Qld Conference, Mrs Rose Philp talked about the importance of the Joint Parent Network. Twenty years on, it has given me great pleasure to be a part of this group representing ICPA and working with Queensland Independent Schools Parent Network, P&Cs Qld and Catholic Schools Parents Association.

The group, along with Queensland Curriculum Advisory Authority (QCAA), came together in October last year delivering a webinar on "Artificial Intelligence (AI) in School and at Home", over 600 families tuned in on the night and more accessed after the day. A testament to the strength of the four groups working together.

Brisbane delegations were held in August, November and March. I would like to acknowledge Brisbane Boys College (BBC), Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) and St Joseph's College (Nudgee) for hosting State Council for our face-to-face meetings this year. These meetings are important for the planning and coordination of timetables with stakeholders, and also, the coming together of council. Face to face meetings is where we have the opportunity to ensure our thoughts and plans for the progression of motions is on course, update State Council policies for the year ahead, and strategise for the best outcomes. There is nothing more motivating than all being in the one room.

To start our time in Brisbane in August last year, Council engaged the services of Directors Australia to deliver a training course on Governance. This insightful and useful training has enabled Council to ensure the integrity of the organisation is maintained and governance is followed with diligence. It was also an opportunity for councillors as individuals, to learn and grow, and develop skills. With the overwhelming popularity of this course, we will again utilise Directors Australia when we go to Brisbane in a few weeks' time to upskill and refresh. Council will also receive Media Training through Independent Schools QLD, an investment in our councillors to have a positive flow on to our members.

QLD has a State Government election in October of this year and for the past twelve months and up to October it has been a focus and, at our Mid-Year Meeting we formalised the 2023 Key Issues Document. This document was created with the intention of circulating to all stakeholders, all sitting members of Parliament and to anyone else with whom ICPA Qld meets – our "Key Issues" are determined by the main topics raised at conference through motions. This year these issues came under TTT, DE, Travel and our small schools (in Schools) Portfolios. Our small schools are hurting and need assistance to ensure there is equity as well as equality to cover their needs immediately.

Following the distribution of the Document, we were heartened by the response and met with many stakeholders, both current and new. As a result, we can report that ICPA Qld now has a seat on the Queensland Virtual Academy (QVA) Stakeholder Group. There also has recently been an announcement of a further expansion of the CUCs footprint in Queensland.

In October, State Council had all roads leading to Theodore, where we were hosted by the Dawson Valley Branch for our Mid-Year Meeting. We thoroughly enjoyed our time, not only ICPAing but also learning about this community and its surrounds. Visiting branches throughout the state is certainly a highlight on the calendar year and is a wonderful opportunity to be able to speak directly to members and listen to issues and concerns.

Any opportunity to ensure perspective and consideration is given to rural education has been taken throughout the year including attendance as a part of the Early Years Stakeholder Group and the Early Years Forums in March and November. Attending ensures we connect with education staff,

parent body groups, and with representatives from organisations pertaining to early year education, engagement and care.

The statewide Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership and their Country Collaborative group broadened our reach, experience and knowledge.

To ensure that any organisation is sustainable and viable we need to foster and maintain relationships with valued partners. We acknowledge our partners ABSA and Outback Insurance who have also now been joined by Telstra. Their financial support as well as in-kind support is valuable and appreciated. Partnerships is an area, in the new council year, we will continue to look at, evaluate, develop and strengthen. We are also extremely grateful to Bush Christmas for their generous support each year, with 2023 being no exception. This is a special relationship supported by past ICPA members who enjoy supporting current members. We are also privileged to have a working relationship with Ningana Trust for whom Gina and Tim Fairfax are Trustees. We must also mention a thanks to Greyhound Australia, we have made it onto the back of two buses, so keep an eye out for them!

The Joint Council Meeting brought all ICPA Council's together in Darwin. The knowledge and experience in the room was incredible and the opportunity to discuss all things ICPA, along with the sharing of information, tools and ideas was valuable. Amanda Clark and I were the Queensland representatives. We thank the Northern Territory State Council for hosting and chairing the meeting. February in Darwin was certainly a warmer place to be!

At the beginning of May, Council made the decision to publish another document with the lead up to the election – the ICPA Qld Election Commitment Document was created and has now been circulated to all sitting members of Parliament, along with listed candidates. As an apolitical organisation, ICPA Qld is happy to talk to any interested persons about these requests and encourages those who are seeking to lead the state to give priority to rural and remote students and their families.

Council has been a team of strong knowledgeable 'doers' in On and Off Council positions. I thank Tina Barrett, who has been on a steep learning curve as our Membership Officer, a role that is continuing to evolve, as does the membership process. Lisa Southern, has continued another year of compelling compilations to bring the News & Views editions to you all.

Fiona Murray is our Fundraising Officer; this task, bigger than it looks, is vital to help ensure the name of ICPA is visible. Tammie Irons has continued in the role of Web Tech and keeps our website updated and running smoothly. In the Off-Council role of Hospital Schools, we have our State Life Member, Judy Treloar. Judy attends meetings and we look forward to her reports as they are always fascinating. It is important to ensure that there is a rural and remote perspective on the board.

This year State Council saw Tammy Bailey step off Council in October and at conference Kylie Camp, Megan Easton and Anneli Day retired from their roles as Councillors. Melissa Iland stepped down as the Publicity Officer and Louise Martin as Immediate Past President. We thank them all for their commitment, dedication and knowledge. We wish each well, with all of those extra hours that you will acquire back into your day - though I am sure at times you will miss ICPA!

Amanda Clark, Belyando-Mt Coolon Branch, convened with her team of helpers a conference that was not only well attended by 34 branches and over 260 attendees but thoroughly enjoyed by one and all. Conference was not only a fantastic few days of "business" but also a celebration and gathering of so many members, guests, sponsors, stakeholders and members of parliament in



attendance including The Education Minister, Assistant Education Minister and Shadow Education Minister. With motions being debated, stakeholders and members speaking, guest speakers and presentations for retiring councillors and two Certificates of Appreciation presented.

Mrs Wendy Hick, Mt Isa BOTA Branch was recognised with a Certificate of Appreciation for her tireless dedication to not only her branch and state council but also all members. An acknowledgement that came as a surprise to Wendy but not to those who in the room, she has assisted and worked with over many years. The second COA was to the Westmar Inglestone Branch for compiling and sending out New Member Packs to all QLD Members who join. The branch has been doing this at their own expense for over 17 years and are often the point of correspondence from the organisation upon joining. State Council are very appreciative of their work and commitment.

QLD State Council are delighted to have Christy Bredhauer join in the role of Treasurer, Stephanie Cowper as Publicity Officer, Rhiannon Newsham and Sally Campbell as councillors. These ladies joined the experienced councillors, and we now also have Amanda Clark, stepping down as Treasurer and joining Kate Bradshaw as Vice Presidents. QLD State Council is certainly in safe hands.

State Council has been committed to raising the organisation's profile, attracting the next generation of members and increasing communication and connection between Council and its branches, members, and potential members. This year we have sponsored episodes of "Married to the Land" podcast, had a presence at Channel Country Ladies Day, Westech Field Days and Beef Australia's Beef Week. As a member-based organisation, we need you and encourage you all to spread the word of ICPA and encourage others to join. There is a continual stream of the next generation entering the rural industry and it is so vital that the ICPA message and ultimately membership finds its way to them and then to us.

### **WESTERN AUSTRALIA PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Jane Cunningham

We have had a great 12 months despite facing challenges at times, but that is what makes us stronger and more determined. This year we have not had a full State Council however, at our State Conference in March we welcomed Chelsea Mott from the Lakes District and at our recent face-to-face meeting in June we co-opted Jasmyn Allen from the Midwest Branch and Michelle Abbott, a former State Treasurer, also from the Midwest Branch, rejoined the State Council. Jasmyn and Michelle and fellow councillors Kym Ross and Sally Brindal are here today.

Over the past 12 months, ICPA WA has continued to build and strengthen its positive relationship with the Minister for Education Hon. Dr Buti and Department of Education officials. We have regularly met with Director General Lisa Rodgers, who has always been attentive and proactive in addressing our concerns. Sadly, in May Lisa announced that she will be leaving her role to take up the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) and will be greatly missed by ICPA WA. Minister Buti continues to engage positively both through our correspondence and during in person at delegations.

The 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual State Conference: "Where Imagination Meets Learning" was held at Aloft on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024. We welcomed members from all over Western Australia along with key stakeholders in education.

Dr Tony Buti Minister for Education addressed and officially opened the Conference and announced a review of regional education and the development of a Regional Education Strategy. ICPA WA welcomed this announcement and has met with Wheatbelt District Director Doug Cook who will be leading the project.

Lakes District Branch hosted the Conference and ensured personal connections were made with all attendees receiving personally made and assigned biscuits. John Bailly, Manager of School Bus Services endured a long day with many school bus motions and questions directed toward him, but I believe his spirits were lifted by a beautiful handmade and decorated school bus biscuit.

The conference was a powerful day that continued to build on the amazing work of those that have come before. With weather events and a short, cramped Term 1 it was a challenge for members to attend in person. After the conference and before planning for 2025, we sent a Survey Monkey questionnaire to all members. This survey covered various aspects of the conference to ensure everyone's voices were heard and to help us better serve our members in the future.

ICPA WA has connected Melesha Sands, Deputy Director of Schools to a dedicated and passionate group of School of the Air (SOTA) parents from across the state. Many of these parents have been feeling a great disconnect with SOTA schools. Changes and uncertainties regarding home visits, curriculum, camps and the overall expectations of home tutors have caused considerable angst. These parents are hoping for positive changes in this very unique method of schooling.

Western Australia has five Schools of the Air, spread across five different districts of education. These schools are essentially standalone and lack a cohesive link to bind them together. In October, ICPA WA representatives along with REVISE representatives and 18 parents from across the state met online with Melesha Sands to highlight this issue. They questioned the absence of collegiate groups to support each other and share best practices across the five SOTAs. After what felt like a very long wait, we have recently received some great news.

The Department of Education will be appointing a networking Principal for the Schools of the Air (0.4 FTE) starting in Term 4. This appointment will allow for the exploration of various strategies to strengthen and align the five SOTAs. Additionally, an external consultant will be engaged to facilitate a session with members of the SOTA School Councils, Principals, and ICPA WA members to consider the establishment of a possible parent advisory body.

These outcomes would not have been possible without Louise Linke who has recently stepped down from State Council. Louise's dedication has won support for greater consultation, consistency in education delivery and communication for our SOTA families.

Late in 2023 ICPA WA welcomed the news prior to Christmas of an increase to the Conveyance Allowance for school travel in regional areas effective Term 1, 2024. The Bus Fair Report - an inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy (STAP) Framework conducted in 2022 by the Public Accounts Committee, recommended the Public Transport Authority review the Conveyance Allowance to ensure it is based on a contemporary benchmark, adjusted in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), and the basis for adjustments is transparent. The increase from 25.24 cents per kilometre to 55.6 cents per kilometre will be very beneficial for our families.

Though this is great news, the report contained over 40 recommendations covering the overarching principles of STAP, student eligibility criteria, forms of transport assistance, processes and response times and local engagement to date only a few have been implemented. Orange school bus concerns

continue to be prominent in motions presented at the Conference. Although we maintain good communication with School Bus Services, our issues have yet to be acknowledged as important by our Minister of Transport, who oversees this area and we struggle to engage with the Minister effectively.

Recently ICPA WA State Council held face-to-face meetings at our regular venue, the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE). SIDE has generously hosted us in their student camp accommodation at a very reasonable cost and provided us with meeting rooms for many years.

As the fastest growing school in the State with approximately 4100 students, State Council was privileged to receive an invitation from Principal Paul Mathews to observe a Design and Technology woodwork class in progress. The students' engagement and rapport with the teacher, along with the impressive quality of their final pieces, truly showcased excellence. Paul and his team at SIDE demonstrate a solutions-based approach that proves there is no limit to what can be achieved in the distance education classroom. He also spoke to us of plans to develop units of competency for distance education support staff and we look forward to meeting with Paul again to discuss this exciting idea.

Consistent staffing in our small rural and remote schools remains an ongoing issue. Case studies from our members have assisted in discussions with Department of Education officials. We are currently awaiting the finalisation of the Commonwealth Funding Agreement and the State School Teachers of WA General Agreement. We have been advised that there are specific measures in these agreements that should greatly benefit our regions.

Jim Bell, Deputy Director General, Department of Education recently provided information regarding the use of international teachers in Western Australian schools. International recruitment is an option available for all schools in Western Australia if they can demonstrate that a suitable and available teacher cannot be found.

The distance education teaching allowance has been a topic of discussion, especially following new motions presented at Conference directing it to be a focus at State level. Minister Buti responded to a recent letter regarding the implementation of an allowance to remunerate home tutors in geographically isolated areas with the following, *"The State Government does not have any plans to introduce a State Government distance education teaching allowance. You may wish to raise your ideas with the Hon Bill Shorten MP, Federal Minister for Government Services."* We are in the process of securing a face-to-face meeting with the Minister of Education to continue this discussion.

With many promising 'wins' this past year, we look forward to the next 12 months.

#### **NORTHERN TERRITORY PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Moira Lanzarin

It is with immense pride and humility that I take my turn to stand before you today to present my third annual NT President's Report.

Our children are our WHY. Giving our children the best opportunities possible whilst living and working in far flung places across Australia is the heart and soul of ICPA.

By the very nature of our charter - working for geographically isolated children and families - there will always be a need for ICPA. We cannot change the geography or the distance, and nor would we

want to. Australia needs families in the bush. Our children are only children for a short period in time. New children are and need to continue to be coming through. It must be a continuing cycle.

Just as we are all about growing our children and their education – ICPA provides a personal growth journey for parents and teaching staff too. I love seeing the increasing confidence and capacity as new members come through, taking their turn in leadership roles, so ably supported by those who have been before or by those stepping aside to make space. This year my ICPA time was severely limited and two of our Councillors were dealt extremely dramatic and challenging personal situations. All are extremely busy. Despite this, our NT State Council have so graciously and capably stepped up and collectively ensured work continued (regardless of who's job description it is) and that our people are supported and nurtured. My most sincere gratitude and appreciation of a truly remarkable team.

NT only has 3 branches – Alice Springs & Katherine Branches based around the respective Schools of the Air; and Territory Wide, our Lone's Branch. All three have representatives here with us today. My task as NT State President is to lead the State Council in our advocacy to NT Government and relevant stakeholders about state related issues. I also see my task as a conduit and connecting mechanism between all three groups (Branch, State and Federal ICPA) and our stakeholders.

Hosting the amazing Federal Conference in Darwin last July with the awesome green and blue shirt team, nearly seems like a distant memory – and at the same time, only a click of the fingers ago. Organising and hosting takes a serious toll on one's volunteer hours and last year felt as though we were regularly on catchup for NT State Council core business. I take my hat off to NSW and salute you for a superb conference this week.

But NT Council did catch our breath, and we did achieve some great outcomes of which we can rightly be proud of. We have decentralised delegation into a more fluid process as opposed to single intense blocks of meetings in Darwin. We have met Ministers and Department officials and stakeholders out and about across the Northern Territory. At campdrafts and field days; in offices and coffee shops; at supermarkets; on station; in bush classrooms and by the side of the road. Taking every opportunity given to advocate and progress the concerns and issues of our members. In September we went to Alice Springs and participated in Branch activities, had meetings with local and Federal politicians in their electoral offices and helped celebrate Connellan Airways Trust 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Our 2024 NT State Conference – Leaping into Learning, Feb 29 – was so capably hosted by Alice Springs Branch in Alice Springs. We very nearly achieved 100% physical attendance of NT state councillors – a feat not yet achieved in my time. Our Secretary however, was only able to join us virtually from an inland sea of water at Bulloo River. Katherine Branch will be our next host, and we are excited to be returning to Katherine for Conference in 2025 on Tues 4<sup>th</sup> March.

Last year, the NT Government commissioned Deloitte to conduct a review into Secondary Education in the NT. "Complex and Unique" was the general theme from their findings. In fact, they found the NT was the most complex and unique anywhere in the world. This is something that our members are only too aware of for all stages of education for our children - and something that we regularly reinforce and remind Government and stakeholders when advocating on member's behalf - that families need to be supported to make the best choices possible so that they can educate their child so that their child may thrive.

In March, despite, unprecedented wet weather conditions in the desert, we once again flew the ICPA flag at the NT Cattlemen's Annual Conference in Alice Springs, with an information booth. This exposure and interaction create such an important connection and link between our combined membership base.

At every opportunity possible, I reinforce that one cannot achieve economic development and advancement of the regions without looking after families. And to look after families, one must consider access to EDUCATION (and medical, communications and roads).

Another most useful event on the ICPA annual calendar is the Joint Council President and Secretaries meeting - a weekend of shared learning and strategic connection. This year, instead of it always being hosted and Chaired by Federal Council, we moved to a rotation among the Councils. Catherine and I welcomed all Councils to Darwin for a most productive weekend. Meeting space was generously provided by Darwin's Haileybury Rendall School and we were able to proudly showcase their amazing facilities. We are looking forward to WA next February.

Likewise, attending Queensland's State Conference in Townsville last month was a huge privilege and a great eye opener for me. I highly recommend attending interstate ICPA conferences if possible. This cross-state collaboration, in person or virtually, via messenger, Zoom and emails is so productive.

"Bridging the Divide" is such a poignant and powerful metaphor for so much of what ICPA is and does. I thank the Convening Committee and Federal Council for bringing us all together and offering such amazing hospitality and opportunity. The geographically isolated learning experience is so unique and varied. There is so much to share and learn amongst ourselves not to mention with our urban counterparts.

We are a huge great country, and country needs people to care for it. It needs ALL people to care for it. Country cares about connection, commitment and continuity. Families are the best mechanism for this to occur. A fly in, fly out workforce who doesn't live onsite, doesn't cut it. All Australians need families living and working across our great wide land. On the farms and stations, national parks, roadhouses, tourist destinations and indigenous communities; at small police stations and clinics and regional towns and service centres.

We can only keep, attract and retain families in the country if they are able to adequately EDUCATE their children, feel safe and have access to good communications, health and roads. When these things are met, ingenuity and entrepreneurship will sort the rest.

Thank you everyone.

#### **PEDALS EDITOR'S REPORT**

Hannah Calcino

I thought I would start my report by answering an age-old question – how did the national magazine of ICPA come to be known as 'Pedals'? It is a question I have often pondered myself and one that I have never been able to answer. In preparing for this report, I contacted our federal archivist Carmel Elliott, who sent me the following excerpt from the second edition of Pedals published in 1981. To paraphrase, the word 'pedals' is derived from the Latin word 'pedis' which translates to 'foot' and ICPA has long since provided foot holes for equity for rural and remote children. From the days of John Flynn and Adelaide Miethke, who with their pedal-operated radios, changed the way geographically isolated children were educated; to the children who peddle their bikes down their dusty driveway to catch the school bus into town and the many families who foot the bill to boarding school – ICPA has been there every step of the way championing for funding, resources and education for Australia's most isolated children.

Pedals is delivered to over 8,000 mailboxes each quarter. It sits on bedside tables, in receptions of boarding schools and, as I've recently discovered, once read, is used by my father as a

Firestarter! On average 25-30 schools and businesses advertise in each quarterly edition. Our publisher, Tracey Dewell, sends an invitation to advertise each November; however, primarily new advertisers are reaching out directly, which is promising. More and more advertisers are recognising the reach that our magazine has and are choosing to showcase ICPA families that are connected to their business or school within our pages.

From a publishing perspective, Tracey would like to encourage our readers, members, and advertisers, to please continue to support Pedals to keep it in its peak condition. This is achieved by supplying your amazing stories, delicious recipes, puzzles, book reviews, event photos and informative advertising. She loves reading and compiling your information into this important magazine and your feedback is always welcome and appreciated.

In my report last year, I highlighted a couple of my favourite articles from the previous 12 months. This report, I'd like to shine a light on a few faithful contributors, who without fail, send me content for almost every edition.

Stephanie Cowper, from Charters Towers branch has supplied 2 incredible cover images in the last 12 months. Her stories about Charters Towers ICPA sports camps showcase the benefit of providing sporting opportunities for children who do not have access to regular sporting programs.

Mary Killeen of Yaraka Isisford branch and Hollie Williams, South Australia State Council and Marla Oodnadatta branch, faithfully send me branch updates and happenings from their respective regions.

Lara Jensen of Meekatharra Air Branch has contributed 3 lovely pieces of the last 12 months about the Sandstone ICPA camp, Kalgoorlie School of the Air drama camp and the benefits of the REVISE scheme for distance education families.

Finally, who could forget our resident book reviewers, Magenta Williams and Ivy Anderson. At 11 and 13 respectively, these avid readers review books sent to us through Fremantle Press. Their way with words is advanced far beyond their years and I appreciate the fresh perspective and youth they add to our magazine.

I would also like to reaffirm the thoughts I include in the editor's letter that begins every edition – Pedals exists because of the people who sow into it and I am eternally grateful to all who contribute articles. I love reading what is happening across every corner of Australia and feel that 'thank you' does not adequately articulate my gratitude for all who help this magazine to keep turning.

I am convinced that ICPA is fuelled by late nights at the computer, thoughts of advocacy at the most obscure times and ponderings about how our organisation can have a greater reach while staring at 100s of kms of road – at least, that's how Pedals comes together. But what's remarkable about this, is that I'm not alone. I'm not the only member of ICPA who is cramming to meet deadlines after a full day of work. I'm not the only one who's sprucing our advocacy to my colleagues, friends and family and I'm not the only one who gets a bubble of excitement at the pit of their stomach when they think about being in a room full of people who are also passionate about equitable education for rural and remote children.

In our fast-paced world, time is a precious commodity. But generosity extends beyond the gift of time; it encompasses our willingness to advocate for change. Advocacy is not merely a duty; it's a privilege and a responsibility. The generosity of everyone in this room, who gives up their time to work towards something bigger than themselves, is not unnoticed. Working as part of an organization run purely by volunteers is truly a testament to the power of passion and dedication. It's a reminder that change

doesn't always come from those with titles or positions of authority but from the collective efforts of individuals driven by a common cause. I think I echo the sentiments of all present and all who have come before – ICPA is a tapestry of compassion, drive, authenticity, and generosity, and for that reason alone – it's worth being a part of.

## **PORTFOLIO REPORTS**

### **BOARDING/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME REPORT**

Jennifer Ruska

The proverb “it takes a village to raise a child” is no more accurate than when applied to rural and remote boarding children. As representatives of boarding parents and their children, ICPA (Aust) is pleased to work closely with other groups to ensure the standard of boarding in Australia continues to be first-class.

It has been a full year for the Federal Boarding/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio, with the support of all of Council and our members, particularly in regard to seeking an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance. Further though, the topics of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship (Pilot) Program, the AIC application and renewal forms, the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) School Funding Model and financial assistance for boarding facilities to adequately cater for students with disabilities have all been actively advocated.

#### **Costs of Boarding**

ICPA (Aust) continues to spend a significant amount of time advocating for recognition of and additional assistance for the extensive out of pocket expenses associated with educating children from geographically isolated locations. In 2023, Federal Council's research found that many of our members bear out of pocket expenses in excess of \$20 000 per student per year for their children to attend boarding school. Seeking an affordable, equitable compulsory education has been high on the ICPA (Aust) agenda for many years, indeed, as we know, our forebears spent much time advocating in this space, with the inception the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme in 1973 by the then Labor Government, directly attributed to the advocacy of ICPA.

In 2023, ICPA (Aust) welcomed the announcement of the pilot program known as the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship (Pilot) Program which was developed to provide scholarships for low and low to middle income families from regional, rural, and remote areas to assist with boarding school fees and associated costs. ICPA (Aust) worked closely with the Federal Department of Education as this program was developed and had the opportunity to suggest criteria for eligibility including those requested in a motion carried at Conference. The pilot program eligibility and criteria were finalised in late 2023. More information can be found here <https://www.education.gov.au/commonwealth-regional-scholarship-program> ICPA (Aust) understands that the first roll out of the scholarship saw 70 rural and remote recipients gratefully receiving the assistance. At our recent delegations and at other opportunities, ICPA (Aust) has endeavoured to seek advice as to the future of the program, however at the time of writing of this report we have not been able to ascertain any firm direction. We have been assured that we will be informed of any future updates and will be consulted in any review of the program.

Late last year, after Federal Council again raised concerns of the impact of the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) funding model for non-government schools and the flow on effect that this will have on school fees, particularly for boarding families, the Assistant Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm responded acknowledging these concerns. He noted that the Direct Measure

of Income methodology is deemed to be a robust and accurate funding model and cited that the aforementioned Commonwealth Regional Scholarship (Pilot) Program could potentially help to address the concerns raised. While Federal Council were pleased to receive this acknowledgement and welcomed the implementation of this program, its scope in its first year has provided assistance to only a limited number of families, whereas there is potential for many more families to be impacted should the DMI methodology result in fee increases.

Federal Council would welcome any information or data related to the impacts of the DMI on schools and the families who must utilise them to access compulsory education which may assist our advocacy in this space.

While the additional assistance made available through the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship (Pilot) Program was welcomed in 2024, ICPA (Aust) continues to firmly believe an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) - Basic Boarding Allowance (BBA) is required to ensure that all rural and remote families who have no choice but to send their children to boarding school to access their compulsory secondary education can afford to do so. All rural and remote families who do not have access to equitable education require adequate financial assistance. To this end, Federal Council has continued on a dedicated campaign appealing for an AIC-BBA increase, citing that geographically isolated families are faced with unique costs to educate their children, not felt by those in metropolitan locations and these are ever-increasing. With the support and guidance of communications and advocacy consultants C7even, Federal Council has employed a variety of strategies aimed at compelling the Federal Government to restore the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance to its original value of 55% of average boarding fees, including an [e-petition](#) which now has over 4000 signatures and an open letter endorsed by other stakeholders, both directed to the Minister for Social Services, Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, who has jurisdiction over the AIC. We also included the request in our [2024-25 Pre-Budget Submission](#).

Federal Council has also had two delegations to Canberra with Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators since the 2023 Federal Conference at which the request for an AIC increase was the central advocacy. We were pleased with the support received across all parties with a number of Members of Parliament and Senators following up with a variety of actions in support of our request.

We also welcomed the opportunity to hold a virtual meeting with Minister Rishworth in April. At this meeting, the Minister raised some concerns about unintended impacts an increase of the AIC – BBA may have on school fees, citing the possibility of resultant fee increases. Following discussions with other stakeholders, including the Australian Boarding Schools Association we have advised the Minister that ICPA (Aust) firmly believes this would not be an issue. Unfortunately to date however, the request has continued to fall on deaf ears and regrettably, no additional funding was allocated in the budget handed down in May.

Federal Council has also continued to request an expansion of the AIC eligibility criteria and in particular criteria associated with the Limited Program Schools to allow more disadvantaged rural and remote students to be eligible for assistance to access equitable educational opportunities. ICPA (Aust) has detailed specific suggestions included in the motion last year which could be implemented. In raising this topic, Federal Council has highlighted the nature of the educational facilities in some very remote and remote towns whereby students face limited subject choices and reduced educational opportunities and that an expansion of the Limited Program Schools criteria to facilitate increased AIC eligibility for rural and remote students would address the educational disadvantage some students face in these very remote and remote contexts. Unfortunately, at this time this has not been addressed.



On a positive note, Federal Council was pleased to report to members late last year that the request for the AIC Renewal Form to allow 'Assessment for Additional Boarding Allowance' to be selected when students transition from Distance Education to Boarding School was actioned and finalised prior to the mail out of 2024 renewals. Further, over the renewal period we did not receive any contact from members experiencing issues with the process. This is a welcome outcome, considering the many problems members faced in the recent past. Federal Council works closely with representatives from Services Australia and the Department of Social Services and are grateful for the continued support and assistance we receive from them. Should members have any issues or queries which they wish Federal Council to raise on their behalf, please make contact with us.

### **Fringe Benefits Tax**

Over a number of years, Federal Council has sought on behalf of members the removal of the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) for businesses who assist their employees residing in geographically isolated areas, by providing financial assistance to enable their children to attend boarding school. Federal Council continue to highlight to the Federal Government that in many rural and remote locations, there is insufficient access to suitable compulsory education facilities and therefore boarding school is the only option available. Thus, some employers offer valuable financial assistance to their employees to assist with the exorbitant expenses incurred to provide their children an equitable education in rural and remote locations, in order to retain staff. Currently this assistance is deemed a Fringe Benefit. We have also noted that in recognition of conditions in rural and remote locations, the Australian Tax Office already offers certain FBT concessions and benefits such as for employer provision of housing where there is a lack of sufficient residential accommodation in remote locations and Federal Council has requested similar concessions be made for employers in geographically isolated locations to assist employees with the costs associated with expenses incurred for their children's compulsory education.

Correspondence has been sent to the Treasurer Hon Jim Chalmers MP, along with other relevant Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators, including the Minister for Agriculture, Senator the Hon Murray Watt on several occasions this Council year. A response received from Treasury on behalf of the Federal Treasurer in March, acknowledged that access to quality and affordable education is a high priority for regional, rural and remote students, families and communities and the difficulties faced by employers in remote and regional areas in attracting and retaining their staff and their families. While making no commitment to implementing our recommendation for the removal of Fringe Benefits Tax on employer contributions to employees' children's education expenses in a geographically isolated context, we were informed that Treasury would use our correspondence to inform advice made to Government on policy issues impacting the tax system.

### **Funding for students with a disability in residential boarding facilities**

Federal Council have made contact on several occasions with the Minister for the NDIS & Government Services, Hon Bill Shorten MP seeking additional funding for geographically isolated students with a disability who must live away from home in a residential boarding facility to access appropriate education, so that their needs can be met, and reasonable adjustments and accommodations can be implemented in accordance with The Disability Standards for Education 2005. We highlighted that it is imperative that boarding facilities be equipped to adequately cater for geographically isolated boarding students with specific education needs. Unfortunately, we have not received a response from the Minister. Federal Council was however, pleased to see the recent additional certificate course being offered to boarding staff by the Australian Boarding School Association (ABSA) - "Fostering Inclusive Environments for Boarders with Disabilities". It is heartening that the need for such learning has been recognised and is being facilitated.

Leading the Boarding/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio this year has been a privilege and I thank my fellow portfolio members, Julia, Ali and Jennifer, along with all of Council and ICPA members for their contribution to our advocacy in this area.

## **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

Sally Brindal

Communications continues to be a very active portfolio with new technologies and enhancements to existing technology providing the opportunity for improvements to rural and remote connectivity. The Portfolio remains a focus for Federal Council to guarantee communications services are maintained and to ensure new technologies and enhancements continue to always provide our rural and remote students and their families with adequate communications services commensurate to their needs.

ICPA (Aust) continues to engage with key communications stakeholders. This ensures we are able to raise both ongoing and more time-sensitive topics and issues. ICPA (Aust) remains active in the Rural, Regional and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC), Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) Consumer Panel, Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) Consumer Consultative Forum and Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), where we have the opportunity to raise members' issues. ICPA (Aust) also participates in regular meetings with NBN Co and Telstra, including Telstra Roundtables with representatives from Federal Council and all ICPA State Councils to discuss topics from across the country including the closure of the 3G mobile network and the review into the Universal Service Obligation (USO). ICPA (Aust) also engage with the Regional Tech Hub (RTH) on a regular basis and we are able to assist members with communications needs through this channel. The introduction of RTH Regional Partnership Officers in each state and territory has boosted the awareness of the Regional Tech Hub and the valuable services they offer.

### **Internet Access**

Members continue to raise the necessity for adequate internet access commensurate to the educational needs of geographically isolated students. Despite rapid growth and enhancements in rural and remote internet connectivity ICPA (Aust) is aware there are still challenges for our members. It is also prudent to ensure that despite these improvements ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate for services to be maintained and enhanced. ICPA (Aust) encourages members to raise their specific connectivity challenges and requirements via case studies to be presented to the Federal Government and other stakeholders to ensure that issues can be resolved, and future developments are directed to areas with maximum advantage for educational access.

Following the 2023 Federal Conference, ICPA (Aust) wrote to the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications, citing all motions carried at the conference, underpinned by an overall request that adequate internet access is available for all rural and remote students with regards to speed, quality, capabilities and cost of the services. In January 2023, Mr Shervin Rafizadeh, Chief of Staff to the Minister, responded on her behalf noting our previous meeting with representatives from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts where we had raised concerns about the speed and quality of members' broadband services. Mr Rafizadeh provided details of the responsibilities of retail service providers and the process to be undertaken for unresolved issues. Mr Rafizadeh also outlined that the upgrades to the nbn fixed wireless network and subsequent movement of premises off the nbn Sky Muster satellites will relieve satellite capacity and has allowed nbn to offer better services on Sky Muster Plus premium plans.

Whilst acknowledging there is no subsidy for Low Earth Orbit Satellite (LEOSat) technology services, Services Australia offers a Telephone Allowance payment to eligible recipients to assist with phone and internet costs. Mr Rafizadeh also referenced the Government's \$4.5million investment in the School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI), which is offering free nbn services for eligible families, now until 2025.

Our correspondence also outlined the disparity of internet connection costs to families between the states and territories for the delivery of education to children enrolled in distance education. ICPA (Aust) requested the Federal Government encourage state and territory governments to provide for the delivery and maintenance of a high-speed internet connection to geographically isolated families with children enrolled in distance education at no cost to families.

Since the introduction of the nbn Sky Muster service in 2016 a number of initiatives have been implemented to improve the service; the most recent development being the announcement by nbn of three offerings in their Sky Muster Plus Premium uncapped data range all offering unmetered data at different speeds and price points.

- Entry level 25/5: max download 25Mbps, maximum upload 5 Mbps, typically 17 Mbps download
- Mid-tier 50/5: max download 50Mbps, maximum upload 5 Mbps, typically 32 Mbps download
- High-tier 100/5: max download 100Mbps, maximum upload 5 Mbps, typically 50 Mbps download

Nbn are also upgrading their Fixed Wireless network enabling some customers who were previously on the satellite Sky Muster network to transition to the Fixed Wireless network. This has allowed improvements to the Sky Muster products resulting in the Sky Muster Plus Premium products being unmetered. Many of these developments have occurred as a result of the direct involvement and requests from ICPA (Aust) and other stakeholders seeking upgraded services for rural and remote residents and nbn continue to commit to enhancing the Sky Muster service.

In the 2022-2023 Budget the Government committed \$2.2 billion to regional connectivity over the next 5 years, including \$480 million towards an upgrade of the entire NBN fixed wireless footprint by the end of 2024. Additionally, this upgrade is resulting in improving broadband speeds on the fixed wireless network and greater data speeds to satellite premises.

The installation of nbn Sky Muster equipment continues to be provided free of charge for eligible rural and remote residents and at this time, ICPA (Aust) continues to receive assurances on a regular basis from both nbn and the Federal Government that there are no plans to change the installation process for Sky Muster services.

The School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI) launched in February 2023, to provide free home internet for up to 30,000 unconnected families with school aged students, has been extended until the end of December 2025. Subject to eligibility criteria parents/carers are now able to self-nominate via the National Referral Centre.

More information can be found at the below links:

- [Sky Muster Plus Premium satellite service explained | nbn \(nbnco.com.au\)](https://nbnco.com.au/sky-muster-plus-premium-satellite-service-explained)
- [nbn® Sky Muster® Plans – Compare the Benefits - Regional Tech Hub](#)
- [School Student Broadband Initiative \(SSBI\) | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts](#)

ICPA (Aust) and nbn have collaborated on a series of short videos to increase awareness of the new suite of Sky Muster Plus products featuring Federal President Louise Martin and Elise Petty, Executive Manager Education and Regional Stakeholders Relations. The videos expand on the previous series featuring, then President, Alana Moller, to learn more about nbn, nbn Sky Muster services and help answer common questions that our members and others may have regarding nbn internet services that are available to them.

ICPA (Aust) are pleased to be able to share these videos with our members and the videos can be found here: [nbn Australia Q&A | ICPA](#)

In August 2023, ICPA (Aust) commenced hosting a series of webinars as part of the ICPA (Aust) and nbn digital skills series, which has been continued in 2024. These webinars offer online information about the digital world and internet connectivity on a variety of topics including Online Safety for Families, Home Internet Helper, Smart Devices, Scam Awareness, Staying Protected & Online Safety and Researching Family History Online to name a few. The webinars in 2023 were monthly from August to December and recommenced in April 2024 through to September 2024 at varying time slots to suit the different time zones. The digital series is open to all members and there is no requirement to be a nbn customer. ICPA (Aust) is extremely grateful to nbn for providing their expertise to our members.

ICPA (Aust) has continuously maintained its advocacy with the Federal Government and NBN Co for affordable portable internet products for the delivery of education to students from transient working families in remote locations of Australia. The availability of LEOSat technology and other transportable options have assisted in providing a solution to this problem for some, however no subsidy currently exists to assist families with the associated significant costs of these services.

### **Telephone**

In rural and remote areas, landline telephone connections remain a significant and essential part of the communications services relied on by residents. Understandably, at the 2023 Conference, ICPA members again requested for services to be reliable, fit for purpose and maintained at a fully functioning standard. In our correspondence to Minister Rowland following conference, ICPA (Aust) sought a commitment to ensure all communication providers fulfil their Universal Service Guarantee (USG) obligations in the provision and functionality of essential communication services to enable the delivery of rural and remote education. ICPA (Aust) sought assurances that until such time as viable alternatives are made available, High Capacity Radio Concentrators (HCRC) and copper landline services for voice will be maintained and upgraded as required.

ICPA (Aust) also sought reassurance that the USG be maintained to ensure rural and remote customers are not left without adequate communications due to stringent repair timeframes not being upheld and that any new Universal Service Obligation (USO) voice service exceeds the reliability and quality of existing voice services.

ICPA (Aust) acknowledged that new technologies and alternative voice services are being investigated. However, some of these alternatives seem to be reliant on access to a mobile service (which is not available to many rural and remote families) and other services would rely on satellite. ICPA (Aust) has reiterated the imperative need for two communications services which are independent of each other in rural, regional and remote locations. ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate that all residents living in geographically isolated areas should have access to two independent communications services and not be solely reliant on one communication source while stressing that a move from existing HCRC or copper line services to Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) services

reliant on satellite is not a satisfactory replacement for legacy voice services at this time, where rural and remote residents currently only have satellite internet access.

ICPA (Aust) also highlighted a further barrier to digital technology use in regional, rural and remote areas is the concern that in order to access these services, the equipment required needs electricity to work. Both mobile and internet services require power (especially if using fixed Smart Antennae or Cel-Fi equipment) and if there is a power outage, which can be frequent in rural and remote areas, the service cannot be relied upon. In addition, many properties that are on self-generated power are unable to run their generators 24 hours a day, which would leave them without a voice service in times that their generators are off.

ICPA (Aust) also emphasised that in considering alternative voice services it is imperative that any possible solutions are rigorously tested for robustness in a variety of areas where there remains no mobile coverage to prove that they can be relied upon and withstand the harsh weather and environmental events of rural and remote Australia. Testing their reliability, durability and quality in urban settings is not reflective of the environments in which they will be used and relied upon.

Ms Nicolle Power, Assistant Secretary, Universal Services Branch responded on behalf of Minister Rowland. Ms Power informed ICPA (Aust) the Government is interested in looking at ways to improve the delivery of USO services and welcomed the views of ICPA (Aust). ICPA (Aust) presented a submission to the Australian Government's Review into the Better Delivery of Universal Services on March 1, 2024, emphasising the requirements of service delivery for regional, rural and remote families. The USO is a long-standing consumer protection that guarantees access to a standard fixed landline phone services, regardless of their location in Australia. Telstra is responsible for delivering the USO and must provide fixed voice services on request to premises in Australia within reasonable timeframes and maintain its copper network outside of the nbn fixed line footprint, until 2032.

Telstra also has guaranteed repair periods specified by the Telecommunications (Customer Service Guarantee) Standard 2023 (CSG), which is the end of three business days from date of report. Some members are reporting being offered a Next G Wireless Link or 4G Fixed Wireless Service instead of having their landline repaired. However, unlike a landline, this service requires standard power to operate, and mobile coverage. If there are any cases where the CSG is not being fulfilled or if members are being pushed into an alternative service, ICPA (Aust) is interested in receiving your information.

ICPA (Aust)'s full USO submission can be found here: [2024 ICPA \(Aust\) Submissions | ICPA](#)

Ms Power also advised that, under current USO arrangements, Telstra is required to publicly report on its performance in delivering regional voice services at the local exchange level against key indicators, including service availability, connection time frames, faults and outages, repair time frames and appointment timeframes, as well as providing national complaint and customer contact handling performance data. Generally, this data across rural and remote areas suggests there is high availability, low fault rates and most voice services are restored within required time frames. Ms Power is keen to hear if there are situations where Telstra are not fulfilling this requirement.

ICPA (Aust) was further reassured that while the Government is carefully monitoring technology developments, including Low Earth Orbiting Satellites (LEOs) that Telstra is not currently able to decommission its rural and remote copper network where it is supporting voice services under existing USO arrangements.

In relation to the issue of power and reliability Ms Power explained the Australian Government is

taking important steps to support more resilient telecommunications services, however the responsibility for broader regulation of the supply and generation of electricity rests with state and territory government.

Federal Council met with Ms Power in person at our October delegations together with Dan Irvine, A/g Director/Regional Broadband/Universal Services and Garth Donovan, Director, USG Reliability/USO Delivery. Discussions centred around the reliability issues of our members, trials of new technologies and reinforcing the need for the delivery of two separate forms of communication independent of each other. At every opportunity, ICPA (Aust) raises this topic.

ICPA (Aust) has also implored that any testing or investigation of alternative services needs to be undertaken in real life situations and in particular in remote locations where our members will be impacted by any changes. ICPA (Aust) have received assurance from Telstra that this will be the case. Rain fade (loss of signal strength in radio communications due to rainfall) is a known phenomenon. Telstra have been undertaking measurements to determine if, and if so to what extent, it causes service outages for Starlink. Measurements were conducted from November 2023 through to May 2024 at seven locations across Australia including the Northern Territory, Far North Queensland, Victoria and South Australia, using rainfall gauges also at those locations. The results are encouraging. However, no testing was undertaken for impacts from smoke or dust storms. Federal Council understands that the reliability of new or alternative technologies remains a considerable concern for those members who may be impacted and will continue to ensure we maintain robust advocacy on this topic.

At May 2024 delegations ICPA (Aust) reaffirmed members' concerns for telephony services to be provided and maintained in regional, rural and remote areas. In addition, ICPA (Aust) advocated that USO obligations must continue to provide for the unique and challenging needs of regional, rural and remote Australians. During delegations ICPA (Aust) met with Senator Gerard Rennick, Member of Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport, Mr Colin Boyce MP, Member of Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport and Hon Mark Coulton, Member Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts to discuss these issues.

### **Mobile Coverage/Service**

Mobile connectivity topics are consistently raised in a variety of forums with reliability of coverage and backup power constantly on the agenda. Telstra is keenly aware of these concerns and continue to expand their resiliency programs and emergency response for the mobile network. Federal Government funding grants are providing some assistance in meeting the necessary infrastructure improvements to meet these requirements. [Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts](#)

### **Improving Mobile Coverage Round (IMCR)**

ICPA (Aust) welcomed the announcement on 19 October from the Minister of grants totalling \$37.2 million to deliver improved mobile coverage and quality of service to [42 Target Locations](#) through the Improving Mobile Coverage Round (IMCR) of the Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP). The IMCR is implementing the Government's commitment to improve mobile coverage and quality of service at [54 Target Locations](#) across rural, regional and remote Australia. Unfortunately, the IMCR did not result in outcomes for 12 Target Locations:

- five locations did not receive applications
- four locations received applications which were assessed by the department as not delivering value for money
- three locations received applications that the department assessed did not satisfy the

technical coverage or solution requirements of the Guidelines.

Four of these locations are expected to receive coverage improvements from projects previously funded under the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) and Peri-Urban Mobile Program (PUMP), or through commercial solutions.

There will be further opportunities under the Government's Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia through the \$400 committed to boost multi-carrier mobile coverage on regional roads, improve mobile coverage in underserved regional and remote communities, and increase the resilience of communications services and public safety communications facilities.

In early May a national audit of mobile coverage commenced to identify coverage gaps and highlight where industry maps might not reflect the experience of Australians on the ground. The audit is due for completion by end 2027. ICPA (Aust) supports any proposed projects which will expand and improve connectivity for our members.

### **Mobile Network Hardening Program (MNHP)**

In addition to maintenance, upgrade and improvement of mobile coverage concerns, current mobile services need to have sufficient backup power to provide consistent and uninterrupted delivery, where the education of children is reliant on mobile coverage.

The Mobile Network Hardening Program is an Australian Government initiative funding upgrades to improve the resilience of Australia's mobile network telecommunications infrastructure in regional, rural and remote Australia to:

- prevent outages during a natural disaster
- strengthen the resilience of telecommunications facilities to allow them to operate for longer during natural disasters
- support the rapid restoration of services following an outage.

Round 1 provided \$23.5 million in funding to the mobile network operators to deliver over 1000 projects to strengthen the resilience of regional telecommunications infrastructure, including enhancement of the battery backup power to at least 12 hours at 467 base stations funded under the first two rounds of the MBSP. Additionally, funding will deliver over 532 resilience upgrades including:

- the deployment of new portable and permanent generators to supply additional back-up power during power outages
- upgrading battery systems to increase back-up power capacity
- adding battery extension devices to enhance existing back-up power capacity at key sites within mobile networks
- improving transmission resilience within regional mobile network clusters to reduce single points of network failure
- physical hardening of sites against bushfire damage.

All projects are due to be completed in 2024.

Round 2 is providing \$14.2 million in grant funding for 386 projects to strengthen the resilience of regional telecommunications infrastructure, across regional Australia. The full list of projects being funded can be found here: [Mobile Network Hardening Program—Round 2 funded sites \(infrastructure.gov.au\)](https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/mobile-network-hardening-program-round-2-funded-sites)

The Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia is providing funding for a further round of the Program.



**Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP)**

ICPA (Aust) welcomed the extension of the Regional Connectivity and Mobile Black Spot Grants applications to 11 August 2023. On 11 December 2023, the outcomes of the combined grant opportunity for Round 7 of the MBSP and Round 3 of the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) were announced with \$170.2 million in funding awarded for a total of 136 mobile and broad band solutions.

- \$55 million through Round 7 of the MBSP to deliver 62 new mobile solutions
  - \$41.3 million to deliver 43 new base stations across Australia
  - \$13.6 million for 19 base stations located in First Nations Communities.

A list of the funded MBSP locations can be found here: [Mobile Black Spot Program Round 7 – Funded Solution List – December 2023 | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts](#)

**3G shutdown**

Since the announcement in 2019 Telstra has been working towards the closure of the 3G network on 30 June 2024. In May 2024, Telstra announced that it would be delaying its 3G closure until 31 August 2024 to allow customers more time to upgrade their handsets. There were major concerns hundreds of thousands of Australians could be blocked from making emergency calls due to customers still using 3G-only mobile phones that will no longer work when the network is switched off, or a subset of older 4G phones that are configured to default to the 3G network for triple-0 calls, that could also be caught out in the shutdown.

Telstra have created the SMS checker tool to determine if your handset is compatible. Customers simply have to SMS 3 to 3498 to check compatibility. Where devices are identified as being impacted by the upcoming 3G network shutdown customers may hear a short Recorded Voice Announcement (RVA) when making outgoing calls. *"When the 3G network closes on 31 August 2024, it's likely this phone won't be able to make calls, including emergency calls. Contact your service provider for details."*

Telstra continues to convey that where areas currently have a 3G signal they are committed to providing 4G before they close the 3G network. However, this is only applicable to 3G coverage showing on their coverage maps, it does not include those who receive fortuitous 3G coverage, that is, their property does not appear on the 3G coverage maps, yet they are able to receive limited 3G service. Members have been advised that if they are not on the Telstra coverage map there is no guarantee that they will have access to the 4G network in the same way as they have had 3G service.

ICPA (Aust) has reiterated that, for these families to have adequate access to this fortuitous 3G coverage, families who reside in rural and remote Australia need to purchase equipment over and above the standard requirement, such as the requirement for a Cel-fi booster and/or smart antennas, which now need replacing as services change from 3G to 4G. Without a guarantee of 4G coverage families are reluctant to purchase new, often expensive to purchase and install, equipment only to find out they do not in fact have coverage and the equipment is rendered useless. Alternatively, they may in fact get sufficient 4G coverage, so they do not require such equipment.

For some members, the availability of 3G mobile coverage has resulted in the cancellation of their copper or High Capacity Radio Concentrator (HCRC) landline services, especially in situations where the reliability and maintenance of the landline service was problematic. However, some of these families are now realising that their 3G coverage was only fortuitous and as a result when the 3G shutdown occurs they may have no voice service other than relying solely on satellite internet



connections for voice service.

The existing Telstra 3G Next G Wireless Link (NGWL) service will be decommissioned when the 3G network is shutdown with customers migrated to newer technologies prior to the closure. Most customers will be migrated to Telstra's 4G Fixed Wireless network (4GFW). Customers on the 3G NGWL service may be a customer who only has fortuitous 3G coverage. If their equipment is migrated to the 4GFW without adequate investigation there may be a situation where they have no service when the 3G shutdown occurs.

The migration from the 3G NGWL to 4GFW is not an automatic process. Existing 3G NGWL users will receive a text, mailed letter and/or an email regarding the migration process (not all NGWL customers in an area will receive the migration information at the same time). Telstra then needs to be contacted on 1800 258 503 to arrange migration (Monday-Friday, 8am-7pm AEST). This will involve the ordering of new equipment that will be sent out with either instructions for you to self-install or in other cases a technician will need to attend to your premises install additional equipment.

If you have not received any correspondence yet (some letters are being sent to physical addresses not mailing addresses, causing delays) ICPA (Aust) encourages NGWL users to contact the migration team as soon as possible. If you are experiencing migration issues, please reach out to Telstra with your details, including your service number to the following email address: [regionalaustralia@team.telstra.com](mailto:regionalaustralia@team.telstra.com)

BIRRR – Better Internet for Rural, Regional & Remote Australia have some great information on the 3G shutdown and the NGWL migration process.

- [3G Shutdown – Better Internet for Rural, Regional & Remote Australia \(BIRRR\) \(birrraus.com\)](https://birrraus.com)
- [Telstra NGWL Migration – Better Internet for Rural, Regional & Remote Australia \(BIRRR\) \(birrraus.com\)](https://birrraus.com)

As the changeover from 3G coverage to 4G eventuates, assurance is needed that the new coverage is equal to or better than the existing service. Members have raised a number of concerns with ICPA (Aust) including reduced voice coverage in regions that previously had strong coverage and increased call drop outs.

Telstra have informed ICPA (Aust) that in order to keep all customers connected, artificial constraints have been put on 4G to limit its reach to ensure customers whose devices can only make voice calls on their 3G network remained connected. At the closure of the 3G network these artificial constraints will be removed.

Telstra is promoting with great confidence that the 4G service will be equivalent to or an improvement on the current 3G experience, but that sentiment is not supported within the wider community. There is a general feeling of great uncertainty and anxiety as to the coverage that will be available when 3G is shutdown. The consistent reports of loss of service as customers transition between 3G and 4G coverage and the diminishing access to the existing 3G service raises concerns of the coverage area and access to 4G.

Recently, the shutdown of the 3G mobile network was referred to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for Inquiry. ICPA (Aust) made a submission in May 2024 to the inquiry. ICPA (Aust)'s full 3G shutdown inquiry submission can be found here: [2024 ICPA \(Aust\) Submissions | ICPA](#)

ICPA (Aust) will be monitoring this changeover closely and encourage members to raise with us specific connectivity challenges to ensure that future developments are meeting the needs of rural and remote families accessing education.

Vodafone shutdown their 3G network on 15 December 2023 and Optus are due to close their 3G network September 2024.

### **Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Satellite Services**

Emerging developments in technologies associated with Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite is providing opportunities to enhance rural and remote communications and provide increased choice and opportunities for ICPA members, both in the areas of telephony and internet. The Low Earth Orbit Satellite Working Group, established in October 2022 to examine the future role of satellite technology in delivering telecommunications services and to explore the capability, features, affordability, consumer support and commercial sustainability of LEOSat products, met four times during 2023. In February 2024, Mr Richard Windeyer, Chair, LEOSat Working Group released his report which contained five recommendations.

#### **Recommendation 2.1 Consider the role of LEOSats when reviewing the universal service framework**

*As the Government considers a modern universal service framework, consideration should be given to the future role of LEOSats. The inclusion of LEOSats should only follow extensive testing of their suitability.*

This recommendation supports the view of ICPA (Aust) that it is important to test new technology with a cross-section of rural, remote and very remote customers and more specifically in locations where the technology may be relied upon, as communications needs, environmental factors and the other aspects of rural and remote Australia which may impact reliability and quality of telecommunications services varies greatly.

A copy of the report can be accessed here: [Low Earth Orbit Satellite Working Group—2023 Chair's Report—February 2024 \(infrastructure.gov.au\)](https://infrastructure.gov.au/leosat/2023-chair-report)

In March 2024 Telstra announced the availability of its satellite home internet plan via Starlink:

- \$125 per month with upfront hardware cost of \$599 for the Starlink Standard kit
- Unlimited data and a download and upload speed cap of 50 Mbps and 10Mbps respectively
- Includes a Telstra Smart Modem 3
- A home phone connection and 4G back up (with 25Mbps speeds)
- 30-day service guarantee

Optus has signed a deal with SpaceX's Starlink to provide direct-to-mobile voice and data services. This agreement will not require customers to obtain any specific hardware and will work on all compatible handsets. The phased rollout will start with SMS in late 2024, followed by voice and data in late 2025.

ICPA (Aust) acknowledges the potential for LEO technology to provide improved and alternative choices and options for our members. LEOSat technology has already provided opportunities and benefits to some of our members. However, ICPA (Aust) continues to maintain that it is essential that any changes to current services should not be made unless an equivalent or better alternative is available and that rural and remote residents are not left with communications reliant on only one source.

ICPA (Aust) will continue to monitor future developments and assure members their interests continue to be represented as these technologies are explored, established and advanced.

### **Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC)**

The Regional Telecommunications Review occurs every three years and provides an opportunity to examine the existing and future telecommunication needs in regional, rural and remote communities across Australia. The 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review has now commenced. RTIRC are travelling to each State seeking face to face community and stakeholder engagement. As yet, ICPA (Aust) has not received an invitation to specifically be a part of the review however fortunately, I was able to attend a RTIRC session in Geraldton, WA in March and I ensured the issues and concerns of ICPA members were front and centre.

ICPA (Aust) will be making a submission to the review. Individual members are also able to make their own submissions which need to be submitted by 31 July 2024. ICPA (Aust) encourages any members who would like to express their views on regional and rural telecommunications to make a submission. RTIRC have also opened a short online survey where individuals can also provide feedback on their communications experiences. Information on making a submission and the survey can be found on their website. [2024 Regional Telecommunications Review | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts](#)

### **Regional Tech Hub (RTH)**

The RTH is a federally funded government initiative offering free and independent advice to regional, rural and remote Australians to get connected, stay connected and improve their connection. The Regional Tech Hub offers independent advice and support, helping regional, rural, and remote Australians negotiate often confusing phone and internet options and technical issues. The team are all based regionally across Australia. Call them during the times below to speak to someone directly about your phone and internet options. Alternatively, complete the following options through their website:

- Book a time to speak with them through the 'Book an appointment' tab
- Ask for a free, customised Connectivity Report on your options
- Ask to progress an issue with your service provider using their Escalation Form
- Hotline/Live Chat Operating Hours (AEST/AEDT): Mon: 12pm – 5pm Tue: 12pm – 5pm Wed: 9am – 2pm Thu: 9am – 2pm Fri: 9am – 2pm

The RTH can be contacted at [regionaltechhub.org.au](https://regionaltechhub.org.au) or 1300 081 029.

The Communications Portfolio continues to be a frequently evolving portfolio but presents exciting opportunities for positive development for communications for regional, rural and remote Australians. I would like to thank all the Councillors who have assisted with the Portfolio over the past twelve months, including Alana Moller, Julia Broad and Nikki Mahony. I would also like to thank Wendy Hick in her off-council role of Federal Communications Advisor. It has been a great comfort to have the support of Wendy's depth and breadth of knowledge.

## **CURRICULUM REPORT**

Anna McCorkle and Naomi Obst

The Curriculum Portfolio received one motion in 2023, citing the need for reporting timeframes for the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing to be expedited to better support specific learning needs of rural and remote students. Federal Council continues to advocate on behalf of members in the NAPLAN space and keep abreast of other key issues in the Curriculum space, such as the inclusion of food and fibre production within the curriculum.

Federal Council continues to hold a position on the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) National Peak Parents body (formerly the National Peak Parents and Principals Group) which has recently held its first meeting in the new format, discussing issues specific to the parent member groups. This group provides a direct line of contact with ACARA and the opportunity to raise members' issues regularly.

The Australian Curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping the education and future of students across the country. The implementation and delivery of the curriculum in rural and remote schools presents unique challenges that need to be addressed. This report aims to provide an overview of the current state of the Australian Curriculum in rural and remote schools in 2024.

Rural and remote schools face several challenges when it comes to implementing the Australian Curriculum. These challenges include limited access to resources, difficulty attracting and retaining qualified teachers, and a lack of support for professional development. As a result, students in these schools may not be receiving the same quality of education as their urban counterparts which can be inferred from the NAPLAN data.

Rural and remote schools often struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers resulting in a high turnover of staff and a lack of continuity in learning for students. This lack of continuity of learning or a "break" in a student's learning places these students at a significant educational disadvantage and is an area where programs need to be in place to limit this disruption.

Without initiatives designed to attract and retain experienced teachers in rural and remote schools, such as offering financial incentives, professional development opportunities, and adequate support networks, students' ability to engage with the curriculum and the quality of their education can be hindered.

### **NAPLAN**

2024 saw the second year of NAPLAN testing being administered online to students from years 3,5,7 and 9 in term one. 1.2 million students across 9411 educational campuses completed the testing in Maths and English. ICPA (Aust) is pleased to report that preliminary results, with the exception of writing as it takes longer to mark, were provided to schools at the commencement of term 2, eight weeks earlier than in 2023, and a full school term earlier than in 2022. Schools will receive their full results from June 2024 and parents and carers will receive their results from the start of term 3, 2024.

ACARA is expecting to publish the National Results in mid-August of 2024. A new look reporting format to parents with their child's individualised student report (ISR) will be issued. Feedback on this new reporting format is welcomed by ACARA. Please send your feedback to the Curriculum Portfolio leader for collation and presentation to ACARA.

Rural and remote schools face unique challenges in delivering education to students, including limited resources, teacher shortages, and isolation. These challenges can impact student achievement and performance on standardized tests such as NAPLAN. However, despite these challenges, NAPLAN results in rural and remote schools can provide valuable insights into student learning and inform strategies for improvement.

A quote from the ACARA media release ...

“Not only does NAPLAN show us whether young Australians are developing the literacy and numeracy skills that provide the critical foundation for learning and for their adult life, but it also helps government and educational authorities know how education approaches are working and where changes and support might be needed.”

By addressing the unique challenges faced by rural and remote schools and implementing targeted interventions and support programs, we can work towards improving student learning outcomes and performance on standardized assessments such as NAPLAN.

Media Release on NAPLAN can be found here:

<https://www.acara.edu.au/docs/default-source/media-releases/media-release-successful-naplan-testing-concludes-for-2024-26-3-24.pdf>

### **NAP Science Literacy Report 2023**

In addition to NAPLAN, in 2023 ACARA offered schools the option to also have their students in years 6 and 10 sit the National Assessment Program – Science Literacy Assessment. The assessments tested the students’ general science literacy skills and knowledge in a sample of schools across the country. The 2023 assessment had a stronger focus on Critical and Creative Thinking, which tested skills in reasoning, analysing and evaluating. Results indicate that students who reported engaging more frequently in creative and critical thinking activities tended to have higher levels of science literacy. The results in science literacy across Australia have overall remained steady.

2018 Year 6, 58 % of students gaining proficiency

2023 Year 6, 57 % of students gaining proficiency

2018 Year 10 50% of students gaining proficiency

2023 Year 10 54% of students gaining proficiency

Further analysis of the NAP Science Literacy Report 2023 indicates that results overall have remained steady, however it also highlights that some disparities persist depending on a student’s background and location. Students from a metropolitan location tended to have higher levels of science literacy than students from a regional or remote location for both years 6 and 10.

The media release on NAP Science & Literacy Report can be found here:

<https://www.acara.edu.au/docs/default-source/media-releases/media-release-national-assessment-program-science-literacy-2023-public-report-29-05-24.pdf>

To conclude, we want to remind members to be aware of updates in curriculum requirements set by state entities, particularly regarding the upper secondary assessment processes, and how these may alter the pathways for students within each state. As an example NSW has seen an update in their curriculum with the Assessment Certification Examination (ACE) rules and procedures, revised for the first-time since 2012. The ACE rules sit behind the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) who are responsible for the assessment required to issue students the Record of School Achievement (ROSA) and the Higher School Certificate will come into effect on 14 October 2024.

The state of the Australian Curriculum in rural and remote schools in 2024 remains challenging, but there are opportunities for improvement. Federal Council encourages members to continue to raise any concerns or issues they feel need to be addressed at any time and we will endeavour to ensure these are raised with the appropriate authorities. We also encourage members to engage with the ACARA suite of websites whereby a variety of information and resources related to all curriculum topics is housed at <https://www.acara.edu.au/>.

Many thanks to all involved in compiling the 2024 Curriculum Portfolio Report.

### **DISTANCE EDUCATION REPORT**

Louise Martin

Distance Education will always be a critical component of the educational journey for many rural and remote students and families. The advocacy around the equitable provision and delivery of distance education schooling continues to be a priority for ICPA (Aust), noting that the constitution states that free education is to be made available for all students.

The remuneration and recognition for geographically isolated distance education classroom supervisors has been on the ICPA agenda for 50 years. It has been presented in many ways and has had different names and iterations over the years, in an attempt to achieve traction with government, without success thus far.

A conjoined motion presented at the 2023 Federal Conference by four branches, Western Australia State Council, Alice Springs Branch (NT), Far North Queensland Branch (QLD), Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA), Katherine Branch (NT), requesting a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) continues to highlight that the need for home tutor recognition and recompense is high on the agenda. Post conference, a letter was written to the Hon Fiona Nash, Regional Education Commissioner seeking her support for the Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA). The commissioner advised in her response that she had raised the issue of a DETA in her 2022 Annual Report and will continue to consider how best to assist with progressing this issue.

With no traction having been made, discussions this year have revolved around how the topic can be reframed and presented in a potentially more progressive manner in the current political and social climate. ICPA (Aust), alongside the State Councils have had lengthy discussions regarding DETA over many years, and again at the most recent Joint Council meeting in February.

At this meeting Federal Council provided State Councils with an overview of the federal advocacy currently, primarily that feedback continues to be that it is a state and territory government issue. The risk however if state and territory governments are approached separately is that they might fund at different levels, and some may not fund at all. ICPA (Aust) has also requested on several occasions that the topic be added as an agenda item at an Education Ministers Meeting (EMM), which is a periodic meeting of all state, territory and federal education ministers.

Given the current financial climate, complexity, and longevity around the DETA advocacy, it was agreed that the direction of the advocacy needs to be revisited, reconsidered, and adjusted with some fresh methodology in order to have more impact and certainty in the future. In particular, the distance education tutor role, terminology, and details on what an alternative to DETA would look

like. Federal Council has also taken the feedback from the Joint Council meeting to our public relations and strategic planning consultants, C7even, and requested advice on ways forward with this advocacy. Federal Council is absolutely committed to resolving the DETA issue for home tutors all over Australia.

More recent discussions with Ms Nash to ponder the issue further and potential opportunities to reframe the lobby has taken place and the Commissioner is encouraging and supportive of refreshing the approach. At our recent delegations to Canberra, we had the opportunity to meet with Mr Tony Cook PSM, Secretary of the Federal Department of Education. Federal Council posed the thought of reframing the DETA to be a classroom supervisor subsidy, which was well received by Mr Cook.

It is a fact that all families must sign a compulsory document to secure enrolment in a school of Distance Education, declaring that all students under 12 years of age will be supervised whilst undertaking distance education.

It is noted that a subsidy in this format would be the responsibility of State Governments, however Federal Council will continue to advocate vigorously for a blanket result across the country for this very important recompense to acknowledge the work of distance education classroom supervisors.

A motion carried at the 2023 conference requested that ICPA (Aust) investigates the existing precedence of the Centrelink Jobseeker payment which is available to single principal carers with exemption from mutual obligation requirements because they are a home or distance educator of child/ren in their care, and its possible application, adaption and or leverage for the creation of an applicable Distance Education Tutor Allowance for geographically isolated families. Federal Council has had a response from the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, regarding this motion. The Minister stated that “Any extension to this provision, such as to all home tutors in rural and remote distance education classrooms where there are no other choices for schooling, as suggested, in your letter, would involve changing legislation.” This is due to the current eligibility criteria in section 40P of the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999 not being fit for purpose. ICPA (Aust) will continue to investigate the possibilities and opportunities for legislative change.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE REPORT**

Julia Broad

ICPA (Aust) has taken many opportunities this year to continue to raise the inequities faced by rural and remote families in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector, to shape the services provided to support the education, wellbeing and development of Australia’s rural and remote children. 2024 has seen the finalisation of the reviews of ECEC in Australia with the release of the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) Price Inquiry into Childcare final report in January and the final report from the Productivity Commission Inquiry into ECEC delivered to the Federal Government on 30 June. Public release of the report will be within 25 sitting days of that release date to government. At the time of writing, the final report from the Jobs and Skills Australia capacity study on the workforce needs of Australia’s Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector has not been made public.

Key issues that have been repeatedly raised in meetings and submissions this year include the need for:

- Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) for 3–4-year-olds

- Changes to the Working Holiday Maker Visa scheme to accommodate home tutors and nannies to be eligible to work for their 88 days for visa extensions.
- A rural and remote In Home Care program that caters specifically for geographically isolated families.
- Long term continuity of funding for rural and remote mobile early learning services.
- Access to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for unique rural and remote ECEC programs.
- Flexibility within Family Daycare Guidelines to meet need in small towns.
- Specific rural and remote staff incentives and pay parity to support the staffing of these programs.
- A National Working with Children Check.

Please follow this [link](#) for the ICPA (Aust) submissions.

### **In Home Care (IHC)**

Price Waterhouse Coopers released the final IHC review report in August 2023. The review found IHC partially met its objective but was hampered by workforce shortages, affordability and access issues. It recommended the program is tailored to serve the three cohorts it seeks to serve. As a result of the review, ICPA (Aust) has been contributing to IHC Quality and Safety Project being implemented by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). That project has been through a pilot phase which was supported by a professional development program designed to build awareness, knowledge and capability through eLearning modules, webinars and workshops. While the aim of the project is to create a framework to guide quality and safety of children and educators, ICPA (Aust) has been calling for practicality and no further administrative burden on families and educators in the implementation of this framework. ICPA (Aust) has been invited to attend a workshop with ACECQA and Department of Education staff in September to build on the information that came from the pilot.

### **Working with Children Check (WWCC)**

The response from the Attorney General, the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP to ICPA (Aust) requests for a national WWCC was, that while the WWCC is constitutionally a State Government responsibility, the National Office for Child Safety within the Attorney-General's Department is working collectively with states and territories to improve national consistency of WWCC. The reply detailed the work of the Care and Support Economy Taskforce with National Cabinet to establish a national strategy for the care and support economy. The Attorney-General hosted a Ministerial Forum on Child Safety in November 2023 with all state and territory ministers to promote national consistency in WWCC and renew commitment to embed the National Principles for Child Safety Organisations into legislation. The Attorney-General advised that states and territories have been progressively implementing the National Standards for WWCC and that the Federal Government is fully committed to improving the frameworks that underpin child safety in Australia.

### **Pre Budget Submission**

The Pre-Budget Submission lodged by ICPA (Aust) once again included Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) for 3-4 year old geographically isolated children and surety of funding for mobile early learning programs. ICPA (Aust)'s advocacy in regard to these topics continues to cite the recommendation from the 2020 Report into Education in Remote and Complex Environments, namely that the Commonwealth implement AIC for 3-4 year olds to support early childhood education and that funding arrangements be modified for mobile early childhood education to provide flexibility and surety of funding for these services.



### Partnerships

ICPA (Aust) has partnered with The Parenthood in:

1. the release of the report '*Choiceless' The plight of parents in accessing regional, rural and remote early learning and care.* which details the barriers to accessing quality ECEC for families across Australia.
2. The development and launch of their Access for Every Child: Regional, Rural and Remote Coalition Joint Statement for Government Action.

ICPA (Aust) has continued to be involved in the Thrive by Five campaign. Jacqueline Emery from Royal Far West facilitated **Country Kids and Communities**, a virtual event coordinated by Thrive by Five to highlight their call to make ECEC accessible to all children to support their early development and enrich their lives.

Speakers at the event included:

- Minister for Regional Development, The Hon Kristy McBain MP
- Shadow Minister for Regional Development, The Hon Darren Chester MP
- Director, Thrive by Five, Jay Weatherill AO
- CEO of SNAICC, Catherine Liddle
- CEO of Royal Far West, Jacqueline Emery
- CEO of Yarriambiack Shire Council, Tammy Smith

The speakers highlighted how the early learning crisis in rural and remote Australia is playing out in their particular situations. Following the presentation, Minister McBain detailed the funding her government has provided to the ECEC sector so far but then acknowledged the issues and that more needs to be done and that improvements in this sector will have a positive impact on regional economic development. Shadow Minister Chester supported the Minister's comments and acknowledged that rural and remote families deserve flexibility of choice in ECEC services and that blanket approaches are not the answer.

The event was attended by over two hundred families and ECEC stakeholders.

The Australian Government released its Early Years Strategy earlier this year which is a 10 year plan to create the vision that all children in Australia thrive in their early years and that children have the opportunity to reach their full potential when nurtured by empowered and connected families who are supported by strong communities. ICPA (Aust) now awaits implementation of recommendations from the Productivity Commission report to deliver real and meaningful change for our rural and remote families.

Thank you to our Early Childhood Education and Care team of Alana, Ali, Kate and Nikki for your support and guidance as we have continually raised the issues within this portfolio.

## **RURAL SCHOOLS REPORT**

Naomi Obst

As we know, rural schools play a vital role in providing education to children living in remote and isolated areas. This report aims to provide an overview of the current state of rural schools in Australia and highlight some of the challenges and opportunities that they face.

The 2023 Federal Conference had one motion presented in the Rural Schools portfolio requesting federal funding to further incentivise experienced teachers to take up contracts in regional, rural and remote locations. Following Federal Conference, Federal Council sent correspondence to the Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP with copies sent to relevant Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators.

Federal Council received a timely reply to our correspondence from the Minister via Assistant Minister for Education Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm.

Assistant Minister Chisholm advised that the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan is now in progress with a focus on students from across the country in both regional and metropolitan settings. Part of this action plan is the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships Program and special measures to reduce the HELP debt for teachers in the very remote areas of Australia.

The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan agreed to in December 2022 has several initiatives designed to address teacher shortages. The Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships program for new students commencing an initial teacher education course (ITE) in 2024, with scholarships of up to \$40,000 per student, is available for full-time undergraduate initial teacher education students. (\$10,000 per year for a four-year qualification) and up to \$20,000 for full-time postgraduate ITE students (\$10,000 per year for a two-year qualification).

Applications are strongly encouraged from school leavers and career changers who meet the eligibility criteria. Scholarships will be available for one thousand students every year until 2028.

For more information, please click on this link:

[Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships - Department of Education, Australian Government](#)

During the May 2024 delegations to Canberra Federal Council spoke of our support for these scholarships, however also raised concerns that this is a missed opportunity for rural and remote schools. The criteria for receiving the scholarship is that an applicant will be required to commit to teaching for a time equivalent to the length of their ITE program (up to four years undergraduate and up to two years postgraduate) in a government school or a government run early learning centre, this can be in any location.

ICPA (Aust) believes this scholarship could be an excellent opportunity to include a rural and remote school teaching position as part of the qualifying criteria, or an extra financial incentive if teaching in a rural and remote school was undertaken.

Assistant Minister Chisholm advised that teacher shortages are a national priority and that state and territory governments are responsible for employing teachers and may also have initiatives in place to attract and retain teachers in rural and remote areas with some of the initiatives being similar to the Rural Health Outreach Fund (RHOF).

In New South Wales, the “Teach Rural” program offers financial incentives, rental subsidies, professional development days and locality allowances. Similarly in Queensland, a range of supports and incentives include additional payments, relocation assistance, subsidised housing and wellbeing support.

Assistant Minister Chisholm encouraged ICPA to reach out to our individual State Governments with information on RHOF as they will be able to consider initiatives already in place and determine the merits of adopting the practices under RHOF.

Rural schools in Australia continue to face challenges such as limited resources, teacher shortages, and difficulties in accessing educational technology. During delegation meetings in Canberra, Federal Council also spoke with Ministers, Members of Parliament, Senators and staff from the Education Department and Social Services to raise these concerns with them. However, there have been some positive developments that ICPA (Aust) hopes will help to improve the quality of education in rural and remote areas.

The Federal Government had just announced prior to delegations that for those students studying to be a teacher, nurse, midwife or social worker they would now be eligible to receive \$319.50 per week while on a compulsory practicum placement. The payment, which is part of the 2024 Federal Budget, is due to start in July 2025. The payment will be means tested, however at the time of writing this report ICPA (Aust) is not aware of specific details.

Unpaid practicums are a valuable part of the learning experience for university students, allowing them to apply their theoretical knowledge in a real-world setting and gain practical skills that will benefit them in their future careers. However, the practice of unpaid practicums has come under scrutiny in recent years, with concerns raised about the exploitation of students and the impact on their financial well-being. In 2024, it is estimated that a significant number of university students in Australia are participating in unpaid practicums as part of their degree requirements. For students studying in the city, a country practicum is often welcomed, however the financial implications of continuing to pay rent in their metropolitan residence as well as the time they are on practicum in the country and taking leave from their part time jobs makes this a really difficult time for these students.

During Canberra delegations Federal Council also requested that the paid practicums be extended to include all students from both rural and urban settings in the allied health areas in the recent announcement as we can see that this would have a significant impact in attracting students to rural and remote schools. Assistant Minister Chisholm advised that this was unlikely to happen and that it was more likely that a HECs reduction type scheme would be more beneficial to attracting university graduate students to rural and remote schools.

Despite the challenges that rural and remote schools face, there are opportunities for improvement in rural and remote schools. By investing in programs that provide training and support for experienced teachers and recently graduated teachers in rural schools, we can help to improve the quality of education and reduce staff turnover to help level the playing field for students. Financial and wellbeing incentives to attract and retain experienced teachers in rural and remote schools will benefit the students being taught and the recently graduated teachers providing an experienced support structure which is lacking in many small rural and remote schools.

It is pleasing to see glimpses of government policy addressing student and teacher shortfalls in rural and remote schools, but there are also more opportunities for improvement. The 2018 Halsey Review, Independent Review into Regional, Rural & Remote Education recommended to reduce the

impact of administration on workloads to create more time for teaching and learning be implemented. Investing in teacher training and retention coupled with improving access to allied health services, rural and remote schools can become schools where an equity of education is possible. This will ensure that children receive a higher-quality education than is currently possible in many rural and remote schools in geographically isolated locations.

I would like to thank members for their contributions to the Rural Schools portfolio. Your motions, explanations and case studies are what drives the direction of this portfolio. Grateful thanks to fellow portfolio members for their assistance throughout the year.

### **STUDENT TRAVEL REPORT**

Jennifer Ruska

I feel fortunate to deliver my first report as leader of the Federal Student Travel Portfolio.

It has been a productive year advocating for the portfolio which has seen the Federal Council send letters, issue surveys and have many discussions at both state and federal level, particularly regarding the motions carried in Darwin in 2023.

Currently there are huge inequities in student travel allowances offered by the commonwealth. The Federal Government has in place Fares Allowances to assist with student travel under the ABSTUDY and the Youth Allowance Schemes, however, there is no provision for travel in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme which is the assistance category many geographically isolated children fall within. Federal Council has continued to impart these inequities to the Federal Government.

ICPA (Aust) has also focused on raising rural students' travel needs outside of government with letters distributed to all domestic, major and some smaller airlines that operate within our regional, remote and isolated regions requesting consideration for the introduction of capped airfares for students from rural and remote areas when flying to and returning home from educational institutions.

As a result of this correspondence, Federal Council has commenced discussions with Chris Kwong, Senior Manager, Government and Public Affairs Qantas around the issues facing our members, student travel costs and the cancellation of flights and routes post-COVID-19.

At the end of November 2023, the Federal Council issued a survey to all members at the request of Qantas, seeking information regarding students' current travel, and the choices available to them. We received over one hundred responses and the information was passed on to Qantas. Following this, Qantas are constructing a new 'how to use' pamphlet, around the use of their Resident Fares program. The new pamphlet will be issued to all ICPA members via email once completed. ICPA (Aust) understands that this does not help all members, and we will continue to advocate with Qantas and all other airlines for a Capped Student Fares program.

ICPA (Aust) has also continued its lobby for the installation of sensors that not only detect sound but also movement in all vehicles used within Australia that transport students to and from their place of education.

As part of this advocacy, the Federal Council sought feedback from all State Councils on movement within their state regarding this issue. New South Wales State Council advised that some news from “BusNSW,” that New South Wales has implemented the passenger alarm check system which is to be installed in all new rural and regional buses. They also noted they are advocating for the addition of such devices with the Minister for Transport.

With this knowledge ICPA (Aust) sent correspondence to the Federal Minister for Transport the Hon Catherine King MP, urging the federal government to work with state jurisdictions to make this program a federal one.

The Minister responded informing ICPA (Aust) that the matter was of importance to the Federal Government, and they had formed a working group in February of this year that will be working with the United Nations World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations.

We look forward to accessing these notes and outcomes from these meetings once they are released. I would like to thank all ICPA members for their contributions toward the School Travel Portfolio. Thanks also go to fellow portfolio members who have made my first year on Federal Council so much more relaxed. They are always on hand to assist with letter writing, helpful thoughts and support. I could not have done this without such a supportive team.

### **SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS REPORT**

Miffy Waugh

Welcome to the Specific Education Needs Report. It has been an education for me over the past year, learning about the issues faced by rural and remote students with Specific Education Needs and their families. This is an area that is very new to me.

#### **Remote Australians Matter**

Soon after Federal Conference, I attended the inaugural Remote Australians Matter (RAMs) conference in September 2023 held at Charleville, along with Tracy Alder. It was a terrific gathering of many health professionals across the board and other attendees from across Australia. Health professionals too are struggling with the rural and remote health issues our members face.

There was an “Open discussion on rural and remote experiences of healthcare” and areas of ICPA member interest include:

- Access to health services
- Impact of crisis and emergencies on rural communities as linked to health
- mental health and wellbeing
- maternity

During this discussion Federal Council broached the subject of access to specialists and wait times to see health services, as well as telehealth and allied health. This was a major issue across the board. Federal Council looks forward to monitoring the progress of the Remote Australians Matter organisation as they endeavour to make a difference in the remote health space.

#### **National Rural Health Commissioner's - Consumer Advisory Group (CAG)**

Throughout the Council year, I have attended the National Rural Health Commissioner's - Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) chaired by the Commissioner, Dr Ruth Stewart. It is described as a “forum to

support and inform the work of the National Rural Health Commissioner to further understand consumer experiences of rural and remote health care and explore rural health topics.” Federal Council has had the opportunity to contribute to the discussion of a range of topics during these meetings including:

- Access to health services
- Waiting lists
- Cost of health services
- Availability of health services
- Turnover of health professionals
- Travel to receive health services

### **2023 Conference Motions**

Over the last year Federal Council has sought action on the motions that were submitted at Conference in Darwin, including:

- Federal funding for access to specialists
- MBS number specifically for telehealth
- Early childhood intervention funding
- Federally funded health clinics be accessible for all

Letters were sent to the Minister for Health Hon Mark Butler MP, and the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Government Services Hon Bill Shorten MP.

In a response received from Minister Butler regarding access to specialists, the difficulty that many communities are facing in attracting and retaining health professionals to provide local primary care services were acknowledged and a range of current measures which the Federal Government has in place to attract and retain health workers were outlined, including:

- A key measure announced in the Budget, will support free GP consultations for 11.6 million children under sixteen. This increase to the bulk billing incentive will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 23.
- From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024, a new Workforce Incentives Programme Payment- the Rural Advanced Skills payment – will be available to GPs with advanced skills in a range of disciplines (including child health and mental health) that practice in rural and remote locations.
- a historic \$6.1 billion investment in Medicare to lay the foundations for significant reform to general practice and access to primary care for all Australians. Further information can be found at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/incentives-and-support-for-gps-and-general-practices-in-mm-locations?language=en>
- The National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020-2030 (Action Plan) outlines the Government’s approach to improving health outcomes for all children and young people. The Action Plan recognises the difficulties experienced by communities, in accessing health services because of social, geographical and other determinants.
- The National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (Children's Strategy) is guiding the Government's investment for supporting the mental health and wellbeing needs of children and families across Australia. The Government is currently implementing several key recommendations in the Children's Strategy, including the creation of a national network of Head to Health Kids Hubs (mental health and wellbeing centres), and providing access to integrated, multidisciplinary care for children 0-12 years and their families with outreach to improve access to regionally dispersed families.

From 1 March 2023, several improvements will be made to M10 (face-to-face) and M18 (telehealth equivalent) items of the MBS currently available for children with potential complex Neurodevelopmental Disorders (such as Autism Spectrum Disorder) and other eligible disabilities, including:

- the eligible age limits will be increased from under 13 years old for assessment, and under 15 years old for treatment, to under 25 years of age for both.
- there will be an increase in the number of allied health assessment MBS services from four to eight per lifetime.
- inter-disciplinary referrals between allied professionals will be supported during the assessment phase to facilitate timely diagnosis. The list of eligible disabilities will be expanded to include Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Lesch-Nyhan Syndrome & 22q deletion syndrome.
- expansion of access to include stuttering and Speech Sound Disorder to the list of eligible disabilities under these M10 items and this is currently being considered.

The final report for the “Working better for Medicare” review will be delivered by 30 June 2024. ICPA (Aust) looks forward to the outcomes of this review.

ICPA (Aust) continues to address the issues that affect rural and remote students with specific needs. Case studies are always welcomed. Please contact the Specific Needs Education Portfolio with recent case studies and issues as they arise to provide up-to-date facts and information to strengthen our advocacy.

### **TERTIARY REPORT**

Kate Thompson

I proudly present the 2023-2024 Tertiary Portfolio report which will be my final report as Tertiary Portfolio leader.

Despite significant reviews and measures implemented over the last decade, rural and remote students continue to face significant challenges in accessing higher education including geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, socioeconomic barriers, and the financial burden of relocation, tuition, and living expenses. These issues contribute to their under-representation in higher education and exacerbate disparities in access and opportunity compared to metropolitan students.

Key barriers include high up-front and ongoing costs associated with relocating, such as rent, electricity, phone and internet, securing accommodation and travel expenses, amplified by the rising costs of basic living commodities which recur throughout their education. Adequate financial assistance is crucial to mitigate these challenges and increase their participation in tertiary education.

The priority for the tertiary portfolio is to address these barriers to ensure equity of access, improve participation, retention, affordability and educational outcomes for rural and remote tertiary students commensurate to their needs and aspirations enabling them to pursue the career path of their choice. The ICPA (Aust) commends the Federal government's commitment to and prioritising of rural and remote students and will continue to advocate for equitable access to tertiary education.

### **2023 TERTIARY MOTIONS**

Motions presented at Federal Conferences continue to highlight the issues that the rural and remote tertiary cohort face when accessing higher education.

All the tertiary motions carried at the 2023 Federal Conference and previous unresolved motions have been actioned through correspondence sent to and delegations with relevant ministers, members of parliament, senators, the Regional Education Commissioner, the Hon Fiona Nash and government departments, quarterly meetings with the Department of Education, Services Australia and Department of Social Services, submissions and consultations. The full 2023 Motion update can be read here: [www.icpa.com.au/au/resources/motion-updates](http://www.icpa.com.au/au/resources/motion-updates).

### **Tertiary Access Payment (TAP)**

The Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) is a means-tested one-time payment of up to \$5000 designed to support eligible school leavers from inner regional, outer regional, remote, and very remote areas who relocate more than 90 minutes by public transport from their family home to undertake a full-time, eligible higher level tertiary education course (Certificate IV or above) following year 12 or equivalent, with parental income below \$250,000. It aims to alleviate the financial burdens associated with relocation, start-up expenses, living costs, education or training expenses and travel costs.

Recommendations from the Australian Universities Accord Final Report, included adjustments to the TAP with the aim to address financial disparities and enhance its accessibility and effectiveness:

- Removal of the requirement to commence an eligible course within 12 months of completing Year 12 (or equivalent).
- Amend the timing of payments to provide timely financial support for relocation costs before students relocate, rather than after they begin their studies.

### **Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships (RRES)**

The Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships (RRES) program played a crucial role in supporting undergraduate, postgraduate and higher-level vocational education and training (VET) students from rural and remote areas with the financial costs associated with tertiary education. However, the program closed for new applicants after the 2022 round, leaving a gap in ongoing support.

The importance of a permanent equity-based scholarship program for undergraduate tertiary and VET students, is vital. Despite advocating for the reinstatement of the RRES program or the implementation of an equivalent similar program, the response from the Assistant Minister for Education, and the Assistant Minister for Regional Development, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm was that the RRES program was a terminal program with no plans for a similar program in place.

### **Recommendations from the *Education in Remote and Complex Environments Report***

The *Education in Remote and Complex Environments Report* highlights several recommendations aimed at improving access to higher education for rural and remote students. These recommendations include:

- Reviewing the current government income support policies and arrangements for students relocating from their family home for further study or training.
- Improving the income support and high quality career information and advice.
- Providing greater flexibility in pathways to qualify for Independent Youth Allowance.
  - access to Youth Allowance as an independent for rural and remote students who successfully complete their first year of tertiary study externally if they relocate to continue study for a further minimum of one year,
  - the reduction of the earnings required for rural and remote students who are qualifying for independent Youth Allowance under the Concessional Workforce test and
  - the review of the changes to the parental means test cut-offs for independent Youth Allowance under the Concessional Workforce test.



- Enhancing the quality and range of student support services, including pastoral care, mentoring programs, and academic support.
- Improving the availability and information on accommodation support for relocating tertiary and training students.
- Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet services.

While there has been a response from the Assistant Minister for Education and Assistant Minister for Regional Development, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm indicating efforts in areas identified by the Naphthine Review, ICPA (Aust) continues to urge the Federal Government to implement all recommendations outlined in the report. The Regional Education Commissioner has also been briefed on these matters, as they fall under her responsibility. Further details and the full report can be accessed here: [www.education.gov.au/access-and-participation/resources/national-regional-rural-and-remote-tertiary-education-strategy-final-report](http://www.education.gov.au/access-and-participation/resources/national-regional-rural-and-remote-tertiary-education-strategy-final-report)

### **Regional University Centres (RUCs)**

The Federal Government's continuing commitment to the expansion of Regional University Centres (RUCs) is welcomed as a means of providing greater access to tertiary education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) in rural and remote Australia. RUCs offer campus-like facilities and support services, including study spaces, computer facilities, internet access, administration and academic support, and pastoral care, allowing students to study online while they remain closer to their community, social and family supports resulting in an affordable alternative choice. The establishment of additional centres is a recommendation in the Australian Universities Accord Final Report along with a suggested name change to Regional Study Hubs to recognise VET and higher education.

The benefits of RUCs for rural and remote students include affordability, choice, ease of access, peer and supervisor support, and flexibility in course delivery options. Many students consider engaging in face-to-face campus activities, including social, sporting, cultural, and academic pursuits, as essential to their tertiary education experience. Therefore, having facilities available for rural and remote students to access these opportunities closer to home is highly beneficial.

However, it is important to note that many students who live in rural and remote areas may still need to relocate significant distances even if they choose to study at an RUC, bearing the associated high costs.

### **HELP Debt Reduction for all Rural and Remote Health Professionals**

ICPA (Aust) has raised the need for the scheme to reduce the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt, currently limited to rural doctors and nurse practitioners to be expanded to include all health professionals, including speech pathologists, psychologists and physiotherapists and those who work with geographically isolated children with specific education needs. Reductions or waivers of indexation on HELP debt would assist in incentivising these health professionals to work in these areas to support the educational and developmental well-being of children, particularly in the early assessment, identification and management of those with specific needs.

A response to this request on behalf of the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP, reiterated the Government's commitment to improving access to health services and workforce recruitment although there are no immediate plans to expand the current HELP debt reduction program. However, it will be reviewed in 2025 and 2028 to assess its effectiveness in attracting and retaining health professionals in rural and remote Australia. Information on several ongoing

programs and initiatives particularly for the rural health workforce can be found at:  
[www.health.gov.au/topics/rural-health-workforce/programs](http://www.health.gov.au/topics/rural-health-workforce/programs).

#### **HELP Debt Reduction for all Rural and Remote Teachers**

Extending the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt reduction scheme to include teachers committed to all rural areas, not just very remote regions, will address teacher shortages, providing incentives to consider this move and help with the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers and enhance educational outcomes for students in these areas. Teachers in rural and remote areas face similar challenging conditions as very remote areas.

Correspondence from the Assistant Minister for Education and the Assistant Minister for Regional Development indicated that the Regional Education Commissioner, the Hon Fiona Nash, will review programs including HELP debt reduction for very remote teachers.

#### **HECS-HELP Debt Repayments**

Concerns regarding the repayment of HELP loans upon completion of a student's course have been raised by members. The Department of Education's HELP Policy Team explained that repayments are made through the income taxation system, with repayments not credited to an individual's HELP account until the completion of their tax return. This process aims to help individuals meet their tax obligations when due and prevent large tax bills upon tax return completion.

The recommendations for fairer and simpler indexation and repayment arrangements to alleviate the financial pressure of HELP loans in the Australian Universities Accord Final Report are welcomed. Proposed measures include:

- reducing student contributions on high-cost courses e.g. humanities, communications,
- aligning student contributions with projected potential lifetime earnings and
- changing the timing of indexation for HELP loans so amounts withheld are accounted for before indexation is applied.

#### **Availability of 'Certificate IV in School Based Education'**

The availability of a 'Certificate IV in School Based Education Support' in all tertiary institutions nationwide would provide crucial support to geographically isolated distance education home tutors who educate children with specific understanding, knowledge and skills to effectively manage the home distance education school room.

In correspondence received from Universities Australia, most universities do not offer qualifications at the Certificate IV level, whereas dual sector universities that provide both higher education and VET courses do. Universities Australia has passed our correspondence on to the dual sector universities: Charles Darwin University, Central Queensland University, Federation University, RMIT, Swinburne University of Technology, and Victoria University.

#### **Diplomas and ECEC Degrees**

To address the shortage of early childhood educators and to encourage early childhood educators to work in rural and remote communities, greater accessibility to early childhood diplomas and degrees is needed. This can be achieved through targeted programs and incentives such as financial support, scholarships, flexible learning options, professional development opportunities, mentorship programs, and community engagement initiatives.

Recommendations from Universities Australia to the Australian Universities Accord Review include improving access to higher education for regional and remote students, particularly those studying

education to stay in regional or remote areas for their studies and placement.

**THE FOLLOWING MOTION ISSUES HAVE CONTINUED TO BE PURSUED:**

**Liquid Assets Waiting Period**

The Liquid Assets Waiting Period is the number of weeks a student who has been deemed eligible for Youth Allowance, must wait before their payment begins if they have savings of over \$5500. Rural and remote students who have proven their independence through part-time work or earnings and have been assessed as eligible for Youth Allowance as an independent, are often penalised by the Liquid Assets Waiting Period. These students require their saved income to fund the high relocation and ongoing costs of living and attending university, before their payment begins.

A tertiary student's liquid assets may be reduced by allowable deductions either incurred or likely to be incurred relating to their course including up-front course fees, HECS-HELP payments, student union fees, textbook costs and tools or IT equipment required to undertake the course. Despite this, ICPA members request to have the waiting period removed has continued to be pursued.

**Independent Youth Allowance (YA) Parental Income Limit**

ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate for the removal of the Parental Income Test as a criterion for rural and remote students qualifying for Youth Allowance as independent under workforce participation criteria as these rural and remote students have demonstrated their independence from their parents through earning the required amount in a 14-month period.

**Rent Assistance**

Despite the increase to Rent Assistance of \$40 per fortnight to income support payments (Austudy and Youth Allowance) in the 2023 Federal Budget, rural and remote students relocating to major regional and large cities for tertiary studies continue to struggle to secure accommodation with the rental market being very competitive and rental costs rising significantly. Rent Assistance has not kept pace with the exponential rise in rental costs and does not reflect the real living costs and the actual rental market. Affordable rent is paramount to these students' retention and success at tertiary level and further assistance is required to combat the rise in cost of living. There was an increase to rent assistance announced in the 2024-2025 Budget which has been welcomed.

**SUBMISSION**

**Australian Universities Accord**

ICPA (Aust) contributed to the Australian Universities Accord, the recent significant review of the Australia's Higher Education System, through submissions and consultations with the Regional Education Commissioner, the Hon Fiona Nash, highlighting the key issues and challenges concerning access to tertiary education for rural and remote students. Issues included Regional University Centres, online learning and services to support this mode, Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships or equivalent program and financial assistance, Tertiary Access Payment (TAP), Relocation Scholarships, Youth Allowance including eligibility criteria, liquid assets waiting period, rent assistance, HELP debt and transitioning to tertiary education. The ICPA (Aust) submissions can be viewed here:

[www.icpa.com.au/au/2023-icpa-aust-submissions](http://www.icpa.com.au/au/2023-icpa-aust-submissions).

The Australian Universities Accord Final Report, released on 25 February 2024, outlines 47 recommendations aimed at reforming and improving the quality, accessibility, affordability and sustainability of Australia's Higher Education system.

The report recognises regional tertiary education as a priority area, building upon previous reviews and strategies focused on rural and remote education; the 2017 Halsey Review, the Independent

Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education and the 2019 Napthine Review, the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy. ICPA (Aust) welcomes the recommendations specific to rural and remote students, some of which align with longstanding requests from ICPA members and are crucial for addressing the unique challenges faced by families in rural and remote Australia:

- Expansion of Regional University Study hubs for both VET and higher education including increasing the use of existing infrastructure, extending eligibility to existing universities, and potentially renaming the program to Regional Study Hubs to reflect its role across both vocational education and training (VET) and higher education.
- Tertiary Access Payment:
  - Removal of the requirement to commence an eligible course within 12 months of leaving year 12 and
  - amend the timing of payments to provide timely assistance with the cost of relocation for eligible rural and remote tertiary students before moving.
- Improved student income support to alleviate financial burden and reduce the cost-of-living pressures by:
  - Increasing the Parental Income Free Area for dependent Youth Allowance to \$68,857 per family, indexed to the higher of the Consumer Price Index or Male Total Average Weekly Earnings.
  - Expanding the income support eligibility by providing pro rata student payments to students who study part-time (studying 50%-74% of a full study load).
- Eligibility criteria and payments are reviewed including for rural and remote students.
- Introduction of financial support for mandatory unpaid work placements. Financial support for placements aims to support students, particularly from rural and remote areas, to alleviate the financial strain of mandatory unpaid placements by covering additional accommodation, travel expenses and additional expenses incurred during these placements.
- Key elements include:
  - Government Funding for placements in nursing, care, and teaching professions.
  - Employer Contributions for placements in other fields by both public and private employers.
- Reduce the burden of HELP loans by introducing a fairer and simpler indexation and repayment arrangements:
  - Reduce Student Contributions: Lower contributions for high-cost courses such as humanities, society and culture, communications, and human movement, transitioning to a system based on projected potential lifetime earnings.
  - Marginal Rate Repayments: Move towards HELP loan repayments based on marginal rates, benefiting low-income earners.
  - Indexation Timing: Change the timing so that amounts withheld are accounted for before indexation is applied to HELP loans.
  - Align HELP Loan Growth with Wage Growth: Set the indexation rate to the lower of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the Wage Price Index (WPI).
- Further review by the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education to address the social security system complexity with a report due by early 2025 to ensure:
  - Focus on students with the most need with eligibility criteria regularly monitored.
  - Allowing students to undertake reasonable amount of work while studying – reviewing arrangements such as the income bank.
  - Eligibility criteria for youth payments should take into account regional students have specific needs including high relocation costs and that they are effectively independent once they have left home and therefore should be considered for eligibility for Youth Allowance as an independent.
  - Adoption of a needs-based funding model which includes:

- Per-student funding for each under-represented student.
- Location-Based Funding providing additional funds for courses delivered in regional and remote areas to address equity issues and higher delivery costs.
- Completion Bonus - introducing a bonus for higher education providers who achieve agreed completion targets, focusing on supporting students with significant barriers to success.
- Increase Commonwealth Supported Places: Significantly increase places allocated to universities with regionally based medical schools to attract and retain medical graduates in these areas.
- Increase participation in tertiary education among under-represented groups and foster greater aspiration, participation, and success in tertiary education through effective outreach programs including:
  - Prepare students for higher education.
  - Establish a consistent national framework for career guidance.
  - Ensure post-school pathways are visible and integrated into the high school curriculum.

All these measures aim to enhance students' financial security, provide support services, reduce barriers, improve access, participation, retention and attainment of rural and remote students which will address the under-representation in higher education. Federal Council will continue to advocate for prompt and effective implementation of all the recommendations.

The Final Report and Summary report can be viewed here:

[www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord/resources/final-report](http://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord/resources/final-report).

### **Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships**

The Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships commenced in 2024, offering 1000 scholarships annually worth up to \$40,000 each over five years. Recipients are required to commit to working as teachers in government schools or government-run early learning settings for the equivalent duration of their teaching degree. These scholarships aim to support undergraduate and postgraduate teaching students financially while addressing teacher workforce shortages, including in early childhood education. Eligible applicants include high-achieving students, First Nations peoples, individuals with disabilities, and those from regional, rural, or remote locations.

More information on the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship including eligibility criteria can be found here: [www.education.gov.au/teaching-scholarships](http://www.education.gov.au/teaching-scholarships)

### **National Teacher Workforce Action Plan Consultation**

The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, agreed upon by Education Ministers in December 2022, aims to address teacher workforce shortages in Australia. It encompasses initiatives across five priority areas:

- Improving teacher supply to increase the number of people choosing teaching as a career
- Strengthening initial teacher education to ensure initial teacher education supports teacher supply and delivers classroom ready graduates.
- Retaining existing teachers to improve retention by increasing support for teachers, enhancing career pathways, reducing unnecessary workload and freeing up teachers to focus on core teaching tasks and collaboration.
- Elevating the teaching profession's status to recognise the value teachers bring to students, communities and the economy.
- Better understanding future workforce needs to improve the information available for teacher workforce planning.

The plan includes measures to attract more people to teaching, support teacher education, enhance retention through career pathways and workload reduction, recognise teachers' value, and improve workforce planning. The Australian Government is investing \$337 million to implement the plan, with states and territories contributing \$5 million for a national campaign. Collaboration among jurisdictions will ensure coordinated implementation of the five priority initiatives. The plan aligns with efforts to address workforce challenges in early childhood education. The plan can be read here: [www.education.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/consultations/national-teacher-workforce-action-plan](http://www.education.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/consultations/national-teacher-workforce-action-plan)

### **Centrelink Issues**

Federal Council has been made aware of an increasing number of rural and remote students having issues getting through to the 132490 Student phone line, experiencing a lengthy wait-time on hold, receiving automated messages to use the MyGov app and a sudden cutting off from the call. Services Australia have been contacted. These concerns will be reiterated at the quarterly meetings with the Departments.

### **Youth Allowance Overview 2024 Document**

The Youth Allowance Overview 2024 document aims to simplify the Youth Allowance eligibility and application process and provide information to help rural and remote students planning to study full-time, to navigate their Youth Allowance applications effectively including eligibility criteria, application process, payment details and available additional payments and services. This guide has been updated by the Tertiary Portfolio in collaboration with the Department of Social Services and Services Australia.

It is available in *Pedals* and on the ICPA (Aust) website here: [www.icpa.com.au/au/federal-tertiary-financial-assistance](http://www.icpa.com.au/au/federal-tertiary-financial-assistance).

For further information, advice, clarification or assistance, please phone **132490** (dedicated Youth Allowance phone number) or visit: [www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/youth-allowance](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/youth-allowance).

### **Budget 2024/25**

Measures announced in the Budget that will benefit rural and remote students include:

- As part of the response to the Australian Universities Accord,
  - A tertiary attainment target of 80 per cent of the working age population to have a VET or higher education qualification by 2050. To achieve this target, the Government is committing \$1.1 billion over five years, and an additional \$2.7 billion from 2028–29 to 2034–35, to expand access to higher education and support future productivity.
  - Needs-based funding - Universities will receive additional funding to provide dedicated support to students from low-socio economic backgrounds, First Nations students, students with disability and students studying at regional campuses.
  - HELP debt - Cap the HELP indexation rate to be the lower of either the CPI or the Wage Price Index and will back date relief for HELP, VET Student Loan, Apprenticeship Support Loan and other student support loan accounts that existed on 1 July 2023.
  - Commonwealth Prac Payment - Commencing 1 July 2025, the Commonwealth Prac Payments will be paid to eligible students studying nursing including midwifery, teaching and social work students in higher education and nursing students in VET. This is a means tested payment to assist students financially while they undertake mandatory placements. Eligible students will receive payments of \$319.50 per week for the duration of their placement. The Program Guidelines are yet to be developed. More information on the Commonwealth Prac Payment can be found here: [www.education.gov.au/higher-education/commonwealth-prac-payment](http://www.education.gov.au/higher-education/commonwealth-prac-payment)

- An Australian Tertiary Education Commission to be established by 1 July 2025, to be responsible for tertiary education system stewardship, delivery of funding arrangements for higher education, ongoing tertiary harmonisation and data collection and reporting.
- Commonwealth Rent assistance – increase maximum rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 10% from September 2024.
- Accommodation - The Federal Government will work with the higher education sector to develop regulations requiring universities to increase their supply of student accommodation.
- Destination Australia program - From 1 July 2024 the Federal Government will cease funding rounds of the Destination Australia program. All current Destination Australia scholarship recipients will continue to be supported for the remainder of their studies, for up to four years, provided they continue to meet eligibility criteria.
- Services Australia staff – Funding for more frontline service delivery staff, 4030 new staff in 2024-2025 and a further 3530 the following year.

At every opportunity Federal Council will continue to pursue, progress and raise the profile of our members' issues and advocate for the implementation of measures and recommendations to ensure rural and remote tertiary and training students have the financial assistance, support and services to access, participate and complete a tertiary education of their choice commensurate with their aspirations and career plans. Where we have not had responses to issues, we will continue to follow these up and will inform members of the outcome or any developments.

I would like to thank my fellow Tertiary Portfolio members Julia Broad, Anna McCorkle, Naomi Obst and Miffy Waugh, Federal Council and the State Tertiary Portfolios for their invaluable support, guidance, and knowledge. It has been a pleasure to again lead the Tertiary Portfolio and I look forward to following further developments in the tertiary sphere for the benefit of rural and remote tertiary students.

### **TRAINING REPORT**

Anna McCorkle

ICPA (Aust) believes engaging in Australia's workforce through Australian Apprenticeships and traineeships<sup>1</sup> should be an option for any young Australians who have the ability, ambition and motivation to succeed in these vocations, regardless of their socio-economic status or geographic location. However, for many students living in rural and remote areas, it is proving difficult to undertake apprenticeship and training opportunities.

Access to further education, qualifications and credentials can be life-changing for an individual and their families. There is also potential for rural and remote young people to stay in, or return to a rural setting post training, growing their skillset in small communities, thereby enhancing economic and social sustainability in rural and remote Australia. In reference to the *Australian Apprenticeship Services and Supports Discussion Paper*, regional and remote apprentices in training equated to 36.7% of the total number of Australian Apprentices, as of 31 March 2022. This is a significant representation which needs to be harnessed by appropriate support services with a view to increasing the completion rates for this cohort.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the 2024 Training Report please note the term Apprentice will cover Australian Apprentices and Trainees.

*The Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities, 25 September 2023 predicts that "Over the next 10 years, more than 9 out of 10 newly created jobs will require post-secondary qualifications. Addressing skills shortages and proactively building a strong and skilled workforce will be fundamental to achieving full employment and productivity growth. To do this will require substantial growth in the high-skilled workforce."*

Post-school qualifications are beneficial in today's jobs market.

- Almost 90% of jobs currently being advertised require post-school qualifications.
- Almost 40% of jobs currently being advertised require a Bachelor's degree or higher.
- Around half of jobs currently being advertised require a Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification.

In 2022, 70% of Australians aged 20–64 years had a non-school qualification - a certificate, diploma, or a degree (this has increased from 57% in 2005). Employment outcomes improve for those that have completed further post-school education.

Within the midst of a National Skills shortage, we still have alarmingly low completion rates of both Apprenticeships and Higher Education especially in rural and remote Australia.

In Australia, in the 12 months ending 30 June 2023, compared with the 12 months ending 30 June 2022:

- there were 377,715 apprentices and trainees in-training, a decrease of 12%
- commencements decreased by 40.1%, to 166,375
- completions increased by 13.6%, to 101,580
- cancellations and withdrawals increased by 7.4%, to 130,470.

Yet amongst the data, reviews and apparent assistance schemes ICPA (Aust) still receives case studies from our members of challenging experiences.

#### Case Study 1

December 2023 - an employer on Australia's eastern seaboard informed a Bourke branch family that although a very skilled and capable candidate, their son was not going to be offered an apprenticeship with the company, as the employers knew that the cost of the applicant relocating and then living independently 900km from his family would be unviable.

This raises the question of how it can be that employers can see the barriers rural and remote students face when undertaking post school pathways in apprenticeships, yet structures within government do not offset this with supports that enable access for rural and remote students to these opportunities.

ICPA (Aust) families continue to witness the recurring disparity between rural and urban opportunities for apprenticeships and other study forms undertaken in the post-school pathway space. Our members' children who undertake apprenticeships do so in one of two ways as outlined in Table 1. For the majority of students living in rural and remote areas, it is necessary to relocate to larger centres to access off-the-job training centres and businesses with the capacity to provide on-the-job training throughout an apprenticeship. This can be a barrier for rural and remote students commencing or indeed completing an apprenticeship.



*Table 1 – Full-Time Australian Apprentice delivery modes, within the ICPA (Aust) membership.*

<b>Australian Apprentice from a Rural and Remote location*</b>	<b>Type A Off-the-Job Training</b>	<b>Type B Off-the-Job Training</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
<b>Group 1</b> <b>On-the-Job Training</b> Secure an apprenticeship with an employer in a rural and remote location. NB – reported in NCVER as rural apprentices due to the on-the-job training location.	Local delivery - (near the employer's location and apprentice's home or residence) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– face to face,</li> <li>– a visiting RTO</li> </ul> or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– online from another location but completed at work or at home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Require travel more than 90km for day or block training in another location.</li> <li>– Accommodation may also be required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Still able to live at home, in a known and supported environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Group 2</b> <b>On-the-Job Training</b> In order to secure an apprenticeship, the apprentices needs to relocate to a larger regional or metropolitan area, that is too far to commute from home. NB – Not reported in NCVER as rural apprentices due to the on-the-job training location.	Relocated delivery (near the employers' location) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– face to face,</li> <li>– a visiting RTO</li> </ul> or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– online from another location but completed at work or at home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Require travel more than 90km for day or block training in another location.</li> <li>– Accommodation may also be required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Relocation costs.</li> <li>– Ineligible for Tertiary Access Payment (TAP)</li> <li>– Excluded from the Relocation Scholarship even if apprentice is eligible for dependent Youth Allowance.</li> <li>– The only relocation assistance available is when an apprentice must 'relocate' to another employer to continue an apprenticeship.</li> </ul>

*\*Both of these apprentices are rural and remote but only one is recorded by NCVER as such, and as a result we are concerned there is a disparity between the financial and non-financial supports available to both the employer and the apprentice as a result.*

## 2023 MOTION ACTIONS

The 2023-24 Council year has been focused on current and previous motions, which continue to highlight the difficulties rural and remote students face when choosing to continue with their post school education as apprentices and trainees.

### Tertiary Access Payment (TAP)

ICPA (Aust) wrote to the Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP with recommendations for the expansion of the TAP criteria to include apprentices who must relocate from a rural or remote location to access their apprenticeship. Apprentices relocating to undertake training face similar relocation and set up costs (travel, bond/rent, uniforms) as students relocating to undertake tertiary study. It is imperative that apprentices are well supported financially to attract rural and remote students to take up apprenticeships and to increase retention and completion rates.

Our letter was forwarded to the Assistant Minister for Education and the Assistant Minister for Regional Development the Hon Anthony Chisholm to reply.

In a response the Assistant Minister cited the government's commitment to a 12-month review of Australia's higher education system, the Australian Universities Accord (the Accord). Further that one of the Terms of Reference for this review focused specifically on supporting greater access and participation for students from underrepresented backgrounds, including students from regional and remote areas.

The Accord Panel held a consultation facilitated by the Regional Education Commissioner, the Hon Fiona Nash to hear directly from regional voices on the unique challenges of regional higher education delivery. ICPA (Aust) participated and highlighted that the eligibility criteria of the TAP can be a barrier to some regional students, specifically, flagging that eligibility for TAP should not include parental income, and should extend to students who choose to take a gap year, and who are undertaking an apprenticeship.

The TAP for apprentices remained unaddressed in the Assistant Minister's response but has continued to be raised by ICPA (Aust) at every opportunity.

It was pleasing to see in the February 2024 release of the Australian Universities Accord Final Report that many of the unique needs of rural and remote students have been considered in the recommendations, although it did not address the eligibility of apprentices to the TAP.

### **Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN)**

Following the 2023 Conference, ICPA (Aust) also detailed Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) issues in a letter to the Minister for Skills and Training, the Hon Brendan O'Connor MP, making the following recommendations:

- The implementation of regular comprehensive audits of AASNs to ensure that the delivery and support intended by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) is actually received by rural and remote apprentices/trainees
- That DEWR mandate specialist support structures for regional, remote and rural apprentices/trainees from within the AASNs.

It was also requested that there be trained rural and remote specialist support staff within the AASNs who are contactable by employers, trainers and apprentices/trainees (and their families if the contract is signed before the apprentice is 18 years of age) in rural and remote areas, and for those who must relocate and live independently from their family to undertake their on and off-the-job training.

ICPA (Aust) has recommended that assistance for the rural and remote apprentice requires mandatory actions from the AASNs including (but not limited to):

- visits to the workplace and/or training facility to check that the apprentices are being suitably trained, educated and supported
- documented semester reviews on all parties involved
- knowledge and assistance with state and federal support programs
- knowledge and assistance with state and federal financial supports such as the Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA)
- follow-up contact and interviews should the apprentice/trainee or employer terminate the contract prior to its completion
- knowledge and documentation of the residential addresses of apprentices - it is concerning that some employers and trainers do not know and subsequently do not support apprentices who have relocated vast distances from family and supports to undertake the working and training aspects of the Australian Apprenticeship.

ICPA (Aust) members expressed concerns that in their rural communities there are many examples of minimal AASN support, contact or follow-up for apprentices, trainees and their employers once they commence a training contract. To date, ICPA (Aust) has not received a response from the Minister.

On the back of the 2022 Skills Summit the government reviewed the non-financial supports available to apprentices during 2023, focusing on apprenticeship supports from contracted AASNs. It is pleasing to see the 2024-2026 contracts which commence on July 1, focus on four new key client groups, (but fell short of targeting rural and remote apprenticeship support as a specialisation):

1. Women in male-dominated trades
2. First Nations Australian Apprentices
3. Australian Apprentices with disability
4. Australian Apprentices located in remote Australia.

The above-mentioned changes to Australian Apprenticeship Support Service (AASS) are explained fully further in the report.

### **Trade Support Loan Scheme**

ICPA (Aust) wrote to the Minister for Skills and Training recommending an increase to the discount of Trade Support Loans on trade completion from 20% to 30% for rural and remote-based apprentices. This adjustment to the criteria would not only be of benefit to apprentices but would also assist in the attraction and retention of apprentices in rural and remote areas thus boosting local economies.

Minister O'Connor responded that there is no change to the 20% discount being considered but indicated upcoming legislation changes to the Trade Support Loan will provide access to additional cost-of-living support (up to \$5000) to apprentices including those in rural and remote areas.

As pre-empted by Minister O'Connor in his communications, the government did follow through with changes to reduce the indexation that is applied to Australian Apprenticeship Support Loans within the 2024-5 Budget.

### **Recent Changes Within The National Apprenticeship Space**

#### Australian Apprenticeships Information website

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) is transitioning information from the Australian Apprenticeships and Traineeships Information Service to a new website, <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.au>

The website has further details on available supports for apprentices including:

- Trade Support Loans
- The New Energy Apprenticeship Support Payment
- The Australian Apprentice Training Support Payment
- The Living Away From Home Allowance
- In-Training Support Services.

We recommend rural and remote apprentices, trainees and their families familiarise themselves with the Apprenticeship Support Provider (ASP) changes and introduction of specialisations along with the Australian Apprenticeship Priority List and the updated Incentives System.

#### New contracts and service areas for Apprenticeship Support Providers (ASPs)

On 1 July 2024 the Australian Apprenticeship Support Service (AASS) which replaced the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) providers, commenced. The federally funded AASS is a free national service tasked with apprenticeship commencement, retention and completion processes

providing information including available assistance/incentives to the apprentice and employer. Supports available specific to rural and remote potentially need highlighting to the AASS.

The *Apprenticeship Support Services Outcomes Factsheet* outlines the new services available to improve apprenticeship support services and outcomes for apprentices. Apprentices in remote Australia have been identified as a Key Client Group for the provision of greater support intended to “increase the diversity of the apprentice workforce and service offer to increase participation rates and provide tailored wraparound support.” Remote Australian Apprentices have not been identified as one of the three Service Specialisations. The full factsheet can be read here:

[www.dewr.gov.au/australian-apprenticeships/resources/apprenticeship-support-services-outcomes-factsheet](http://www.dewr.gov.au/australian-apprenticeships/resources/apprenticeship-support-services-outcomes-factsheet)

### **School Leavers Information Kit (SLIK)**

The National Careers Institute (NCI) has developed the SLIK which contains information on the education, training and employment options available for school leavers including gap years, volunteering, short-term work placements and courses and starting a business with localised support in each state and territory.

It also includes access to tailored guides to suit needs and circumstance, including:

- support for young people with disability
- support for students in regional, rural and remote areas
- support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The SLIK can be found on the Your Career website [www.yourcareer.gov.au/school-leavers-support/school-leavers-information-kit](http://www.yourcareer.gov.au/school-leavers-support/school-leavers-information-kit)

A *Parents and Guardians Guide* has also been developed and has been designed to help carers understand options available to support and assist their young person in making their choice after they leave school. Whether they choose to start working straight away, continue education and training or take an alternative pathway such as a gap year, this guide sits alongside the SLIK and includes information on financial assistance and other support available. The guide is available at: [www.yourcareer.gov.au/school-leavers-support/parents-and-guardians-guide](http://www.yourcareer.gov.au/school-leavers-support/parents-and-guardians-guide)

### **Budget News**

<https://www.dewr.gov.au/about-department/corporate-reporting/budget/2024-25-budget>

### **Australian Apprenticeship Incentives System**

From 1 July 2024 the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System (Incentive System) guidelines will be updated to reflect the following changes in financial support for new employers and apprentices that take up an apprenticeship from 1 July 2024 are able to claim:

- Priority Occupation Employers – Priority Hiring Incentive of up to \$5000 over 1 year in two instalments of \$2,000 at 6 months and \$3,000 at 12 months and a part-time rate of \$1,000 at 6 months and \$1,500 at 12 months
- Priority Occupation Apprentices – Australian Apprenticeship Training Support Payment of up to \$5000 over 2 years, paid over four instalments, with \$1,750 paid at 6 months and 12 months, and \$750 paid at 18 and 24 months and a part-time rate of \$875 each paid at 6 months and 12 months, and \$375 each paid at 18 and 24 months.

Apprentices and employers who have financial assistance under the Incentives System approved prior to 30 June 2024 will continue to receive the support through grandfathering arrangements. A full copy of the updated guidelines will be published on 1 July 2024.

Apprentices, employers and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) will also still be able to access the following:

- Commonwealth Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA)
- Disability Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS)

### **New Energy Apprentice Support Payment**

Apprentices who sign up from 1 June 2024 will be eligible for the New Energy Apprenticeship Program if their employer can demonstrate that they will undertake or are transitioning to clean energy work and can provide meaningful exposure, experience and work for apprentices in clean energy. Apprentices employed by Group Training Organisations (GTOs) who meet the revised definition will also be eligible to apply.

### **Australian Apprenticeship Support Loan**

The government is proposing changes to reduce the indexation that is applied to HELP and other student loan schemes, including Australian Apprenticeship Support Loans.

- The proposed change to indexation is to apply the lower of the Consumer Price Index or the Wage Price Index, with effect from 1 June 2023.
- After the passage of the relevant legislation, the revised indexation rates will be automatically applied by the Australian Taxation Office to a student loan.
- This means that it is likely that you will receive an indexation credit that will reduce your outstanding loan. The indexation rate applied on 1 June 2023 was 7.1 per cent and under the proposal, this would be reduced to 3.2 per cent.
- The indexation rate to be applied on 1 June 2024 is projected to be 4.7 per cent and under the proposal, this would be reduced to 4.0 per cent.

### **2023-24 Submissions**

ICPA (Aust) continues to take motion issues forward through advocacy, consultation and submission opportunities. During 2023-24 the Training Portfolio contributed to the following national submissions:

#### National Skills Passport

Early in 2024 ICPA (Aust) collaborated with the National Rural Women's Coalition to prepare a joint Submission in response to the proposal of a National Skills Passport. Consequences of a National Skills Passport system were outlined including the challenges rural, remote and regional individuals face when accessing the following:

- Training services to obtain qualifications
- Secure and stable telecommunications and internet
- Support to complete their 'National Skills Passport' (including ECEC services to care for children if they return to work or upskill their current vocations).

#### Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System

A much-awaited Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System was conducted during 2024. ICPA (Aust) participated in online consultations and contributed a submission with the following 10 recommendations. Preliminary reports are to be released on the review findings mid-2024. The submission can be read here: [www.icpa.com.au/au/2024-icpa-aust-submissions](http://www.icpa.com.au/au/2024-icpa-aust-submissions)

### Recommendations:

1. Extend employer incentives to ensure apprenticeship positions are available for rural and remote apprentices.
2. Maintain Australian Apprentice Training Supports Payment.
3. Training and ongoing support to employers.
  - a) Increase to the Commonwealth Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA) to better reflect and adequately assist with living costs for apprentices.
  - b) The indexation of the LAFHA to the CPI to ensure the allowance keeps pace with the rising cost of living.
4. Review and create guidelines that provide a national increase in travel and accommodation schemes across Australia for required Vocational Training and Assessment participation by apprentices.
5. Create an Access Payment for apprentices– Australian Apprenticeship Access Payment
6. Eligibility to the Relocation Scholarship for VET students and apprentices who receive dependent Youth Allowance.
7. Increase the discount of Trade Support Loans on completion from 20% to 30% for rural and remote based apprentices.
8. Australian Apprenticeship Support Service (AASS) providers to ensure rural and remote apprentices are fully supported by each provider and are recognised as a Service Specialisation. Clarification of the variances of a rural and remote apprentices due to their frequent need to relocate.

All issues within the Training Portfolio continue to be raised through every avenue available to ensure all rural and remote young Australians have the opportunity to pursue a VET pathway, apprenticeship or traineeship of their choice, regardless of their geographical location.

### SPEECHES

#### **President's Welcome 2024**

Louise Martin

Welcome members and guests to the 53rd annual Federal Conference of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (ICPA Aust), hosted by the New South Wales State Council. Thank you for travelling from across all corners of the country to attend and participate in our Conference.

ICPA (Aust) is dedicated to advocating for equitable access to education for all geographically isolated children living in Australia, regardless of their location, background or circumstances so that they may access the education they deserve in order to reach their full potential, which brings us all together for this conference.

The Conference theme this year "Bridging the Divide" embodies the message which Federal Council endeavours to portray in our advocacy across all portfolio areas, that our children are unique, living and learning in unique situations and have unique needs which must always be considered and adequately addressed.

The conference days provide an opportunity to learn from each other and collaborate, so please take the opportunity to engage in enthusiastic and informed conversations and debate. For your convenience, Rules of Debate have been included in this booklet, along with an Acronyms List.

I wish to thank everyone involved in bringing the 2024 Federal Conference to fruition, including the

New South Wales Convening Committee, Federal Council, sponsors and others too numerous to mention. Your efforts are acknowledged and appreciated. To access all conference information and social media, simply scan the QR codes in your conference booklet.

Thank you all again for being here in Sydney to participate in the conference and for bringing with you your individual expertise, knowledge and lived experience. Your participation contributes significantly to helping to ensure the advocacy for equitable access to education for geographically isolated children is strong and continues to be heard. I look forward to joining in the collaboration, passion and commitment which encapsulates our organisation over the coming days.

### **Opening Speaker**

Mr Rory Treweek AM

Elders' past, present and emerging, greetings from Yuwaalaraay Country, President Louise, Wendy Hick, former ICPA President, Members of Federal Council, Distinguished Guests fellow members of ICPA.

Thank you for the distinct honour of being asked to open this Annual Conference of ICPA members from around Australia.

Having looked in some detail at the motions that will come forward for debate my first reaction is that the overall education scene is far more complex than it was fifty years ago. But, there is no area of concern in the education field that is left out of consideration, and every area impacts on the ability of rural and remote students to access the level of education pertinent to their age and stage.

One thing is quite clear - access to the appropriate level of education is still viewed by many Governments as social welfare rather than a student's inherent right in our society since the late 1800's to have equitable access to education facilities regardless of where they live and it just should not be regarded as social welfare. Access should not be governed or restricted by where one lives. One quarter of our population live where we come from and much of the wealth of this nation is generated there.

Together with "access", "choice" of school is still a burning issue in many areas, and it should not be.

ICPA has always been unique as a parent body in that we cover all education systems, Government and non-government. Some of the children we represent start and complete their education careers in the government systems, but most, while starting in government systems through local schools or distance education, complete their secondary education in the non-government systems as they provide the necessary boarding facilities missing from government provision.

The lengthy explanations accompanying many motions demonstrate once more the ability of our members to do thorough research and present their case for change most cogently as they and their children are the one's experiencing the negative impacts of current policy. In the late 1970's a federal conference asked Federal Council to investigate the use of professional lobbyists - during a deputation in Canberra we did that and unanimously agreed that we could be our own best advocates. In 1981 during the International Year of the Disabled I was privileged to accompany to Canberra a group of ICPA mothers who had disabled children. Their stories direct to administrators and politicians had an impact that was profound – and no one else could have presented as they did.

What is also obvious is that because of the work done by ICPA over the past fifty plus years, the

number of people with tertiary and trade qualifications is rising as a proportion of those living in the bush. It is still very hard to entice some professions, particularly those in education and health to serve in the bush, but ingenious ways are being found and with more rural university campuses there is more hope of attracting graduates to a life in the bush.

I note that Communications is still critically important in ICPA business, and we have moved on from learning how to spell "satellite". In the early days of ICPA many members and office bearers did not have telephones of any sort, when I was Federal President, my Western Australian president had no phone whatsoever, they had to rely on the RFDS telegram service. So, those people relied on the telegram service of the RFDS bases using HF radio, which was very subject to atmospheric interference as we all know. It is remarkable to think how far our telecommunication has come in the last fifty years. But the business was still done, and I note we still have four "air" branches that still operate today but using updated technology.

Early childhood services have advanced but the early diagnosis of learning disabilities is a very long way from being adequately covered. 190,000 children throughout Australia need these assessments and diagnoses and appropriate learning paths mapped out. But they need the attention of the specialists and the specialists they engage with need to know how they can help those kids. Modern communications can assist in the delivery of these services, but the provision of such services is totally inadequate in the cities, let alone in the bush. What the politicians must learn, and be prepared to budget for, is that early intervention will save society as a whole billions of dollars in the long term. It just will make so much difference. The old adage of 'A stitch in time saves nine' was never more appropriate.

I also see that form filling, and frustrations with long turnaround times for various applications have not gone away even though much of it is now done online, and the inability of the rules and regulations to cater for the vast variety of circumstances that people face in the myriad of geographical locations we occupy is alive and well.

We all know that the population in the bush has shrunk in the past fifty years, but the efficiency of our farmers has continued to improve, and education has played a big part. The figures shown in the motions supporting payments for home tutors, whether they be mums, governesses or tutors, demonstrate the real financial cost to families.

However, ICPA has continued to be a vibrant family organisation that has continued to be the vital link in representing to all educational providers the educational needs of geographically isolated children, and how access may be improved.

The great thing about Annual Conferences is that they are forward looking, always planning for the future. At each conference attendees know the current situation in every field and have nussed out what improvements are needed. They come with proposals that if implemented will lead to that improvement, so both the current and future generations of children may be better served.

In that spirit of always looking forward, I commend the Agenda to you for vigorous debate, look forward with keen anticipation to the Guest Speakers and have much pleasure in declaring this 53rd ICPA Federal Conference open.

Thank you.



**Conference Address**

The Hon Fiona Nash - Regional Education Commissioner

Thank you very much Louise for that very kind introduction.

Can I firstly acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting today and extend my respect to anyone in this room as well. Good morning everyone. It is absolutely delightful to be here this morning and Rory, thank you for that opening. I was sitting there listening and just thinking the wealth of experience and knowledge that you have is extraordinary and I also want to acknowledge Joan because you can't possibly have done all that without her, so thank you both very much. And also, to Louise, thank you for asking me here this morning, it really is a privilege and I am actually very humbled to be following Rory, to see people that have worked for rural and remote Australia who have just been giants, speaking about what they have done and how important it is that we have advocates for rural and remote Australia is just extraordinary.

I note 'Bridging the Divide' is the slogan for your conference and it's just so important that you are in this room doing what you do. I can tell you, having spent twelve years in parliament and now two and a half as Regional Education Commissioner, equity doesn't happen by itself. Equity happens because people are working day in day out to make sure that decision-makers and people making the policy, people in government and people in opposition and cross benchers actually understand what the issues are. Because they don't just know by osmosis, they don't get it, they are not out there, they are not in the dirt, they are not in the homes, they are not on the farms, they are not in the businesses. So, they simply can't know. It's not actually even a criticism, often they just simply cannot know what it is like being out there and what needs to be done to find those solutions. So, there is equity of access, and I think when we talk about equity when it comes to education, people don't expect a full-blown university on every corner out in rural and remote Australia - they know that's not going to happen. What they want is equity in that people in those communities, be they young or old, have access to the educational opportunities they need to reach their full potential, and that is what the equity is. And it's about fairness, and I know I said at the last time I spoke to you that I am yet to hear any government or any decision-makers saying everybody in rural and remote Australia should move to the coast and move to the cities and everybody should live there and that will be fine. So, until we actually hear that, governments and decision makers have a responsibility, a social good responsibility, to ensure that there is equity for people living in those places. Particularly, as Rory mentioned earlier, recognising the extraordinary contribution that they make to the nation's economy. And it's really important that decision-makers keep that in mind constantly.

I have been very privileged to be doing what I can on your behalf, I am certainly here to help and support you as much as I possibly can and I think one of the things that I mentioned is so much about fairness, people don't like things being unfair. Whether that's resources expended by government, access to services that are much better in the cities than they are in the bush, people just don't like things to be unfair. So, where I have been really fortunate is in being appointed to this role.

Really the most fortunate thing is the privilege of working with all of the stakeholders across the regional education sector. Families, people in communities, businesses, industries, groups - my job is to make sure I have the best understanding of what is needed for the solutions to the challenges, because it is not sitting in my head, it is not sitting under Parliament House, it is actually sitting out on the ground with all of you, so it's really important that I spend as much time as I possibly can talking to you and getting my head around what exactly the priorities are.

There are a whole different lot of ways I am doing that and what I have found over the last two and a half years is that people in decision-making roles have kind of become used to the Regional Education Commissioner being around now. I think in the beginning people wondered, how is this going to work, but now I think that they are really starting to value having a Regional Education Commissioner, whether it's me or someone else, whoever it is. Having a Commissioner who is connected back into those communities who can actually provide advice that they know is real, that these are real issues and real things that need to be taken into account when they are making decisions.

I have been really pleased to see the breadth of the ways in which it is starting to happen. I do an annual report for Minister Clare once a year that contains a number of issues for consideration that I expect the government to take very, very seriously and I work very closely with him and his office throughout the year. I work very closely with Assistant Minister Chisholm, who has asked me to pass on his apologies, he was very disappointed he could not be here today. But again, working really closely with him as one of the key decision-makers that are in there, so that they really do understand that perspective as I say from on the ground.

I have made, as you all do as well, quite a number of submissions to inquiries and contributions on your behalf and what is really interesting in that process is the follow up I have been asked to put in, from the Productivity Commission and a number of places for that further information as a result of that submission, so I think never underestimate how important the work you do, in putting submissions in, actually is. And within the department itself, while I am not in the department, I am independent of the department, but I work very closely with them, and on your behalf, having a lot of conversations with different areas within the department to really bring home and make sure they are understanding what those concerns are. Just as an example, just a couple of days ago, I was asked by the childcare In Home Care team to have a discussion with them about what I saw some of the challenges and solutions were and I was able to very closely mirror what the ICPA may have said in submissions and to briefings.

But, one of the things that often happens, and this is not a criticism of the people who are running the programs at all, is that they have got systems and ways that they are expected to do things and I get that, but what I do find is occasionally when I see something and the lack of common sense sometimes in decision-making that we spend a lot of time thinking about every day - but they do say common sense isn't that common. But looking at things like In Home Care, and part of a number of things I raised, one about why couldn't an In-Home Care educator care for more than one family's children at the same time, if you're on a massive property in the middle of nowhere - How can you get an educator to come into each home? So, trying to get those sorts of things across, the technical term for me for that is it's just bonkers - they should absolutely be able to do it. I get the Department of Social Services system is just not set up to work like that, but I always think there is a way, no matter what's in front of you - there is always a way. So, I will continue to work on that and a number of other issues on your behalf.

I have been fortunate in providing input into other departments and I am on the Expert Reference Group for the Murray Darling Medical School Network Evaluation through the Department of Health and that has been a great opportunity as well. I am now on the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee which convenes every three years to look at the state of regional education and I know there are people like Jen Medway in the room and others, Elise Petty from nbn. So really, it's important that if you want to put in a submission or respond to the survey, that you

have got until the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, so only another few days but please take the opportunity, it's taken very, very seriously. This review will report at the end of the year.

And of course, being on the Accord Panel for the Review into Higher Education last year, that was a real privilege, and we are now seeing the government's response to that coming forward. It's really pleasing to see that the whole Accord process, and this ties back into what we were talking about this morning, is around equity, is around equity of access and making sure that those people who aren't as easily able to go on to tertiary education have the support that they need to be able to do so, and regional, rural and remote people are part of that. It was terrific to see the focus, we managed to get the word regional into the report 470 times, so I was quite proud of that. But it was important in that whole process, rural, regional, and remote people were really one of the key issues that were being discussed. So, when I see in those types of processes, the importance of rural, regional and remote people and outcomes that they need being taken so seriously, it's just really terrific to see.

One of the things that I think is so important, and this goes right across the board but in particular for rural and remote young people, is the issues of raising aspirations. The government has actually set a target of 80% by 2050 of people in the workforce having a tertiary qualification, if that is going to be reached, we are going to really need to increase those numbers of people out in rural and remote areas who are going on to tertiary education. To do that, we need to raise the aspiration, we need to make them think about what are the things in front of me? What are those opportunities? What are those pathways that they could take to go on into that future. A lot of people say to me that young people in the bush don't have aspirations and I say, some don't but an awful lot do, what they don't have is confidence and self-belief, that they don't think they are smart enough, they think, I want to be an engineer, but I am not smart enough, no one in my family has ever been to uni, I could never afford it, I don't know how it works, how would I even get there – I just won't even think about it. So, they do have the aspiration, what we have got to do is find better ways to give them belief, belief that they can go on and explore those pathways and be the best they can possibly be.

When we look over time, there have been terrific improvements in allowing access to education for our rural and remote students. One of those of course has been the Regional University Study Hubs - which have been an absolute game changer in allowing particularly young people but a lot of middle age, career change people as well, or people going into a career for the first time, - to allow them to have access to the possibility of that education and the support they need to do it that they hadn't had before. We started off and there was one in Geraldton, I remember being with Duncan Taylor in Cooma, before Cooma was even Cooma - I am getting old. It has just been the most extraordinary thing and I am going to give a shout out to Duncan Taylor because I can tell you right now we would not have this program to the extent it is with well over 30 Regional University Study Hubs around the country and bipartisan support from both sides of government if it hadn't been for Duncan Taylor, so I take my hat off to you Duncan and thank you.

And it is those types of things that make a difference. We are now seeing Regional University Study Hubs spreading out into really small population centres. One of the things, and it was actually Duncan who raised this with me initially but I think is really sensible is, how do we look at expanding that out into opportunities for secondary school students. There are some already accessing the Regional University Study Hubs, but how do we look at that in such a way that makes it easier and makes it a thing of value that these Regional University Study Hubs might actually expand their support out into secondary students, I will certainly keep working on that with the government.

I just want to wish you all the very best, I am very privileged to be asked to be here again Louise, I do appreciate it very, very much because it's important that you know that in this role as Regional Education Commissioner I will do everything I possibly can to help you get the outcomes you need for your children, for your families, for your friends, for your communities because let me tell you, you are the backbone of the nation. I wish you all the very best for your deliberations over the next couple of days and again, thank you very much for asking me to be here with you today.

Thank you

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### **Farewell to Alana Moller**

As you all may have noticed, Alana Moller, our Immediate Past President is not here with us in Sydney. I suspect she is most likely to be home at Star of Hope mustering the bullocks with her husband Scott. Scott will be the happiest bloke on the planet right now as he has finally got his best ringer home for good.

I would like to acknowledge that Alana has chosen not to continue in her role as IPP going forward so I Thank you, Alana, for all your support over the last twelve months, not only to me as I pull on this role, but to all of council. We all really appreciated you sharing your knowledge with us, proofreading documents, and going the extra mile in the lead up to the conference. Portfolio leaders, me included, welcomed your offers to work on portfolio snapshots and hand over documents.

We all hope that we will see Alana back at a federal conference sometime soon, however, that could depend on the timing on the bullock muster!

### **Farewell to Judy Newton**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

It is my great honour to present this thank you message, and I extend my sincere gratitude to President Louise for this opportunity. I am privileged to stand here and speak about an extraordinary woman; someone I have been fortunate to know and work closely with during my time involved with ICPA.

Judy Sinclair-Newton joined the Walgett Branch in 2005 and was awarded a Walgett Branch Life Membership in 2013. True to her remarkable style, Judy became a Federal Councillor in 2009 and ascended to the role of Federal President in 2011. Her unwavering dedication and continued involvement since then were fittingly recognized with a Federal Life Membership in 2023.

In 2022 Judy stepped into the Federal Membership Officer role. I am sure that the retiring officer, Jane O'Brien and the then federal president Alana Moller would have been jumping up and down with glee to have Judy take this role on. Technology has certainly changed in recent times and ICPA as an organisation is racing to keep up. Judy took the MO role on with gusto and began fine tuning procedures while working closely with all state treasurers and MO. It wasn't easy as there is no other organisation structured like ours and in this digital age, we seem to be inventing the wheel.

Judy has been instrumental in driving major updates and changes to the ICPA membership process on the website. Her key role extends to the newly developed ICPA tech team, where her contributions are invaluable. Judy's dedication is evident through countless emails, phone calls, and

Zoom meetings with the website developer, tech team, and state and federal executives. Her exceptional presence is not just physical but deeply mental. She remains fully engaged and committed, never merely going through the motions. This level of dedication is highly appreciated and valued by all who work with her. Judy is an asset to any team, and those fortunate enough to have her know they are truly lucky.

So as Judy steps down from the Federal MO role, she is not moving very far away at all. It is more a slide to the right. She has transformed the MO into a role that someone is now willing to take on due to the drastic decrease in workload and she is staying on to work with Kym Ross, Kate Thompson, Tammie Irons and myself on the Tech Team which we are eternally grateful for.

### **Farewell to Kate Thompson**

Our Minutes Queen, otherwise known as Kate Thompson, joined Council in 2014 and her conscientious efforts as VP from 2015-2017, Tertiary portfolio leader and then again on the executive as Ass Sec from 2019-2023 have been a critical part of the success of federal council and ICPA (Aust) over that time.

Kate has led the Tertiary portfolio since 2016 and there is nothing she doesn't know about how the tertiary system in this country effects our members. She has tenaciously actioned motions and had serious wins over her time as portfolio leader as detailed in her update earlier.

Kate has been a massive asset to ICPA from a federal perspective but also especially as a committed advocate for members in Tasmania. She has represented Tassie on Federal Council while also supporting the Tasmania Branch to continue with its work. I'm sure she will continue to raise the unique needs of Tasmania into the future in her role as President of the Tasmania Branch.

In preparation for farewelling Kate from Federal Council after 10 years, I asked those who had worked with her for one word to define their thoughts and experiences of working alongside Kate.

Nikki Mahoney kicked it off with her own version of one word - Minute Queen and I let her have that as I wanted to add Editing Queen and Tertiary Queen is another crown Kate wears well. Hard working, conscientious, knowledgeable, organised, proactive, and professional were some other terms used to describe all that Kate has done for ICPA members in her time on council. Kate's attention to detail is second to none and something federal council is definitely going to miss.

Other words used to describe Kate were more about the type of person she has been while on council rather than what she has done and these personal traits are what we on council will miss the most when not working so closely with Kate. Those who have worked with Kate over the 10 years described her as supportive, kind, came up many times, as did generous and dependable, thoughtful, warm, calm, clever, reassuring, tenacious, passionate, determined, funny, gentle, considerate. To add something from Jana's presentation, Kate is a bumble bee for ICPA.

Kate has been known to get into some shenanigans while away on ICPA business. Apparently, she's well versed in short sheeting beds and planking in cities all over the country. She is always up for a good story, a good laugh and fun times alongside all the work she gets done. In 10 years on Council, we only found one thing that Kate wasn't that good and that was up at Darwin last year and involved trying to ride a scooter. I wasn't there to witness this but much laughter and fun came of some councillors trying ride Neuron scooters on the Darwin foreshore which maybe involved some very close calls for our Kate.

Kate's husband David has joked over the years about the affair she is having with Ivan Charles Percival Anderson and how much time she spends away with 'him'. All I can say is that this Ivan Charles Percival Anderson chap is going to miss you, Kate.

As Kate leaves Federal Council, she isn't leaving ICPA as a whole and the organisation will be a richer environment for our volunteers and members as a result. Luckily for ICPA, Kate is staying on in her role on the ICPA Tech Team to continue supporting the organisation as a whole from that technical point of view.

Kate has been a very special friend to many on council and is the most dependable person to be with in a meeting so we will all miss you Kate and thank you for all you've given to ICPA.

The final slide shows everyone's words in a word cloud image which sums Kate up well.

### **Farewell to Kim Hughes**

Whilst unlikely; If I ever had to do prison time with anyone, I hope it would be Kim Hughes! I imagine her with **#iamicpa** tattooed across her knuckles, rehabilitating her cell mates, interrogating the correctional officers on procedure and reorganising the whole facility to be running to a more efficient routine in no time!

Kim and her husband Brian live on their family's cattle property "Harrogate" north-west of Richmond in North West Queensland. Their children, Keeley, Ben and Sarah were educated through Charters Towers School of Distance Ed, Mount Isa School of the Air and boarding school in Townsville. Kim's crowning achievement in her children's eyes was not raising them nor teaching them but managing to wrangle a photo wearing Bob Katter's hat on a delegation visit to Parliament House.

Kim has been involved in the Richmond ICPA Branch for over 20 years and presented with life membership in 2022.

In 2011, when she joined Queensland State Council, Lorraine McGinnis (then Qld Pres) cautiously sounded her out about taking on a portfolio straight away, which was not often asked of new councillors. Kim apparently replied "Well, I didn't come here to sit around and read magazines" She served on Qld Council for nine years, as portfolio leader, Vice President and President, where she was affectionally nicknamed Constitution Kim.

Now I don't know who remembers the 2020 Federal conference, but it transpires that when you are in the midst of figuring out how to run a completely online interactive event from three separate locations with a new president, in the middle of a pandemic .....one diligent little suggestion of a foreshadowed amendment deep into proceedings can cause more scrambling and chaos at ground control than the massive solar flare which took down all telecommunications on day 1.

Kim may never live that one down, but boy has she made up for it, enthusiastically nominating for federal secretary then and there .....and never looking back! I have never witnessed anyone hit the ground running in quite the way that Kim did. She was shaking up our protocols, constitution and by-laws and pulling us all back into administrative line by the end of our first meeting.

Kim actually LOVES taking minutes. She is fond of prettying up documents, rustling up a Canva poster and stumbling across interesting, archived paperwork in need of a little update.

Just when I'm pouring through my emails, tearing my hair out to find all the miscellaneous things I might need to print before leaving home for conference ..... BING..... in comes an email from Kim

“Hi Everyone, I know these have already been sent out, but here is everything again in the one place which you may wish to print and bring along, perhaps in a display folder for easy access.” She then follows up with “Do you want me to pick up some folders when I’m at the centre of the universe?” (Office Works that is!)

YouTube, Instagram reels and TikTok have taught Kim to be a “thorough” packer among other things, but she could most definitely create her own content with hints, tips and examples of how to pack a suitcase.

With a boost to her internet service thanks to a private local provider, Kim is also an expert on TV streaming series and can be hit up for any and all recommendations. She has one non-negotiable hour a month that no other meeting can interfere with - earmarked for her and her brother to watch and critique the next drop of House of the Dragon.

While Kim can seem quite serious, she laughs easily at herself, has a wicked quick wit and regularly makes us all laugh out loud too! She has taken to muttering the mantra “Stay in my lane, stay in my lane” to herself when feeling frustrated which reminds us to smile and do the same.

It can however be easy to lose track of time when nutting out things with Kim. It once took the two of us four hours to pull together a decoration for a Field Day cocktail party that might have looked like a deconstructed snowman to many but felt like a spectacular masterpiece to us. We had also solved most of the world’s problems in the process.

Kim is passionate, meticulous about detail and very much a “can do” person, always looking to see what or how things can be done to make something happen. She absolutely excels in supporting everyone else in the team to undertake their active front line work.

It has been an absolute pleasure working alongside you Kim. Unlike your cat, we cannot drape ourselves across your precisely packed suitcase to stall your departure. Thank you ..... for lighting up our lives, keeping us on our toes, in our lane and on track.

### **Farewell to Miffy Waugh**

As with others saying farewell to fellow members of Federal council, I have sought thoughts and ideas from others on council - the repeated word that came up for our departing Councillor Miffy Waugh most was fittingly kindness.

To that - I offer the following from Mark Twain, “Kindness is the language that the deaf can hear, and the blind can see”

Federal Council, and ICPA as a community, have been fortunate to have Miffy Waugh on our Team. Nikki McQueen aka ICPA’s champion recruitment officer found a true gem in Miffy when she encouraged her to join Council. It was November 2022 when Miffy was co-opted onto Federal Council.

Without selfless volunteers ICPA simply wouldn’t exist, and beyond that is the fact that without volunteers who courageously but gratefully step beyond their comfort zone to support others for a cause ICPA wouldn’t be what it is to us all today.

I haven't had the chance to check with any of Miffy's four children but I think they would agree she has a sixth sense or maybe eyes in the back of her head - she is incredibly perceptive, and this incredible skills allows her to check in, or offer assistance just when its needed most. Talk about read a room! Miffy's capabilities, kindness and humility are endless, as Council and members are all too well aware, it would only be Miffy that doesn't see this in herself as often as we all see it in her.

Miffy cares deeply for everyone accessing education at all stages and knows full well its ability to create and grow opportunities at all stages of our lives. Building on her personal experiences, The Special Needs portfolio has been in very tender hands during Miffy's watch, with members reassured by her careful attention when they have reached out at critical times in their access journey.

Although an adjustment is ahead for us all we wish Miffy all the best as she steps off council. As our current delegation dinner coordinator - there may be a few more Kingo meals ahead until we find a trusty replacement for the position.

Members need to look out for Miffy as she and her winning smile move onto future endeavours. We know she will be cheering ICPA on no matter where the days and roads take her.

Thank you Miffy for the grace you have shared with us all during your short but most generous time on Council.

Please join me in thanking Miffy.

#### **Farewell to Naomi Obst**

Naomi and her husband Aiden have three boys who they have taken through a small rural school and then boarding pathways for their schooling, parallel to that of Naomi and Aiden's. The Obst's are long term community members of Mingenew and are wonderful community and long term branch members of Midwest Branch Western Australia.

As a primary school teacher and avid advocate for education in rural Australian communities Naomi stepped up and joined the WA State Council in 2019 and then in November 2021 at the 50th anniversary Longreach conference, nominated and joined Federal Council with Wendy Henning, Laura Stalley, Anna McCorkle and I. Due to covid many of us were only present online as that council year commenced so it wasn't until early 2022 that her first face to face Federal Council meeting in Canberra that formal introductions and her badge presentation occurred.

Naomi figuratively and literally slipped into the swing of Federal Council with such conviction and ease that she managed to break her ankle on her first trip to Canberra - slipping as we were walking to dinner - and yet didn't miss a beat, she just kept at it. Wisely she had her ankle medically checked in Perth on her way home, and yes, a fracture was confirmed! After returning home - yes driving herself - into the care of Aidan and family for her recovery. We her ICPA family - later learned this recovery was simply a makeshift elevation system for the said ankle in the tractor with Naomi covering chaser bin duties for the remaining days of harvest. Talk about a dedicated Grain Queen.

At Naomi's first delegation session to Parliament House - she was extremely excited to learn all she could from Wendy Hick as Immediate Past President and was relishing being in the same group for the scheduled meetings at Parliament House - she did say she didn't know how she would keep up with Wendy's navigation and quick draw McGraw ability with facts and examples for the ministers



and staff they met with. Naomi possibly didn't realise she had just as much to offer as Wendy in her willingness to learn the details of an issue and her ability to ask the 'on point' questions.

Team ICPA and Federal council travelled west to Perth for the 2022 Federal Conference, and Naomi's pride in her state, and WA councils conference hosting skills was certainly evident. As the home state Federal councillor Naomi had the honour of introducing and thanking Dr Craig Challen -and like many present possibly thought seriously about taking up caving there and then- I'm yet to hear international caving trips are not on Mingenew's public school's excursion activity short list.

Naomi's passion for sound education in rural areas has always been evident in her dedication to council and its activities, with each question, comment or report reinforced by her personal experience and passion as a parent and also as a teacher in a rural community.

It is Naomi's community and family's gain that she is stepping off council as we conclude the council year, but it is our loss. The Rural Schools Portfolio and temporarily the Curriculum portfolios have been in very safe hands, and her ongoing support in other portfolios has been both constructive and appreciated. We know she has notable calm snake wrangling skills that she is yet to display for council but we won't hold her to a demonstration before she departs!

Naomi is clever, kind and fun, and is such wonderful company. As a council we have all enjoyed her gentle nature and great sense of humour.

We wish you all the best and know we will continue to cross paths as your passion for education and rural and remote communities in Australia aligns with ours.

Could everyone please join me in a round of applause to show our appreciation and thanks to Naomi.

### **Farewell to Wendy Henning**

In the vast Australian outback, where the red dust swirls,  
There's a lady named Wendy, with a heart that unfurls.  
With Andrew, her Husband, Anabelle, Kate, Peggy and Jane,  
"Murchison Park" is their home with their cattle and grain.

In the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, she takes her stand,  
A voice for families in the outback, and across our vast lands.  
Wendy Henning is her name, a leader strong and true.  
Advocating for a fairer education, for all our children out of view.

With passion and dedication, she fights for their rights,  
For an equitable education, that's surely their right.  
Through the challenges of distance and isolation,  
Wendy works tirelessly, with determination.

Westmar Inglestone is where it all began,  
there was no Prep?  
Well, that was the start of the Journey to come,  
ICPA had found another champion to advocate for equity,  
that seems a foreign concept for some.

Travelling the dry dusty roads, through sunburnt plains.  
Meetings on zoom and ministers on speed dial.  
Championing our concerns with her organised file,  
Empowered with the knowledge,  
and support of this great organisation called ICPA.

The rigors of branch advocacy morphed into State,  
a different type of voice with much more at stake.  
In the halls of government, she raises her voice,  
Speaking for those often without a choice.  
For Wendy knows the importance of an education,  
In shaping young minds and building a nation.

So, onto Federal Council to give that a whirl,  
nothing could stop this determined girl.  
With her eyes wide open and glasses to match,  
A considered opinion was always the norm,  
Wendy from Glenmorgan, the mother of four.

So, roll on Queensland State Conference 2023,  
I'm not sure what you were all thinking?  
But wonder women Wendy, was now your new chair.

The volunteer hours that these roles demand,  
Is not to be challenged or taken off hand.  
Wendy took stock, like all good women do,  
of the lot she'd amassed and lightened the load.  
Wendy's not lost to our great advocating cause,  
As within the great state of Queensland she remains a force.

So let us salute this lady so giving,  
For her time on Federal Council was short but not left wanting.  
For Wendy and ICPA, the story continues,  
A passion still burning deep within.

She's a beacon of hope for the remote and the rural,  
A champion for education, and a listening ear to all.  
With those eyes wide open and the glasses to match.  
Wendy's the one the Pollies all need to catch.

**CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE****FEDERAL COUNCIL**

President	Lousie Martin
Vice President	Julia Broad
Secretary	Kim Hughes
Assistant Secretary	Shennah Joiner
Treasurer	Nikki Mahony
Publicity Officer	Ali Allison
Councillors	Sally Brindal
	Anna McCorkle
	Tim Fletcher
	Naomi Obst
	Melissa Kerr
	Jennifer Ruska
	Kate Thompson
	Miffy Waugh
Federal Webmaster	Nikki Macqueen
Pedals Editor	Hannah Calcino
Pedals Publisher	Tracey Dewell
Federal Membership Officer and Federal Life Member	Judy Newton

**FEDERAL LIFE MEMBERS**

Federal Life Member	Rory Treweek AM
Federal Life Member	Jack Beach

**STATE COUNCIL DELEGATES**

New South Wales	Tanya Mitchell	Libby McPhee
Northern Territory	Moiria Lanzarin	Jacinta McInerney
Queensland	Wendy Henning	Amanda Clark (1)
		Kate Bradshaw (2)
South Australia	Hollie Williams	Jodie Keogh
Western Australia	Jane Cunningham	Kym Ross

**BRANCH DELEGATES**

Alice Springs NT	Danyelle Haigh	Katy Hayes (1)
		Amber Driver (2)
Boulia-Bedourie-Birdsville QLD	Heidi Millership	Kerry Morton
Bourke NSW	Prue Ritchie	Amanda Bell
Broken Hill NSW	Georgina Luckraft	Britt Anderson
Central West Plains NSW	Vanessa Gibson	Fiona Aveyard
Charleville QLD	Louise Winten	
Far North Queensland QLD	Kerry Archer (absent AGM)	Judith Eriksen
	Robyn O'Brien (AGM)	
Flinders Ranges SA	Mijanou Reynolds	Tracey Dewell
Goldfields Eyre WA	Tallaya Wood	Katie Hall

Hay NSW	Carol Huggins	Pip Ryan (1) Tess Blair (2)
Hillston NSW	Laura Stalley	
Julia Creek QLD	Rachel Anderson	Haylee Ruska (1) Megan Burke (2)
Katherine NT	Constance Wood	
Kimberley Air WA	Lisa Leonhardt	
Kindon QLD	Andrew Waugh	Lisa Waugh
Lakes District WA	Megan Dorrell	Arlene Sutherland
Lightning Ridge-Goodooga NSW	Joan Treweeke	
Lord Howe Island NSW	Rachael McFayden	Bronwyn Tofaeono
Louth NSW	Tegan Barton	Annabel Strachan
Midwest WA	Jen Critch	Jasmyn Allen
Monaro NSW	Duncan Taylor	
Moree NSW	Phoebe Watts	
Mt Isa Branch of the Air QLD	Wendy Hick	Margaret Brock
Namoi NSW	Anna Fullerton	
North West SA	Jill Greenfield	Edwina Bowie
Nyngan NSW	David Butler	Kellie Turnbull
Port Augusta SA	Katrina Morris	
Rankin Springs NSW	Kerrie Johnston	
Tambo QLD	Kimberley Rains	
Territory Wide NT	Suzanne Wilson	Annie Hesse
Tibooburra-Milparinka NSW	Bernadette Maxwell	Fiona Hotchin
Walgett NSW	Francesca Collins	Cath Deshon (1) Káren Ricardo (2)
Wentworth NSW	Nerida Healy	Tegan Douglas
Westmar-Inglestone QLD	Annie Hubbard	Claire Walker

#### **LONE MEMBER DELEGATES**

NSW/VIC Lone Member	Nyelva Carnegie
WA Collective Branch	Michelle Abbott

#### **BRANCH OBSERVERS**

Alice Springs NT	Amber Driver (1)	Katy Hayes (2)
Central West Plains NSW	Judith Bryant	
Far North Queensland QLD	Robyn O'Brien (Delegate AGM)	Emmalee Jonsson
	Sandra Ireson	
Goldfields Eyre WA	Karen Forrester	Madeline Wildly
Hay NSW	Tess Blair (1)	Pip Ryan (2)
Julia Creek QLD	Kim Cockram (1)	Haylee Ruska (2)
	Megan Bourke (1)	
Midwest WA	Lachlan Obst	
Mt Isa BOTA QLD	Natalie Gibson	
Nyngan NSW	Heather Whigham-Reid (1 & AGM)	
Walgett NSW	Joshua Walford (1)	Simone Morgan (1)
	Káren Ricardo (1)	Cath Deshon (2)

Wentworth NSW

Bree Wakefield

# STATE COUNCIL OBSERVERS

Queensland State Council

Kate Bradshaw (1)

Amanda Clark (2)

# CONVENING COMMITTEE

Laura Stalley

Káren Ricardo

Bree Wakefield

Georgina Luckraft

Cath Deshon

Libby McPhee

Sandra Ireson

Britt Anderson

Annabel Strachan

# CONFERENCE GUESTS

The Hon Fiona Nash (1)

Regional Education  
Commissioner

Commonwealth Department of Education

The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC (1)

NSW Shadow Minister for  
Education & Early Learning  
Advisor

Parliament of NSW

Millie Burnett (1)

Principal

Parliament of NSW

Kerrie Russell

Principal

Alice Springs School Of The Air

Douglas Melrose-Rae

Associate Chief Executive  
Regulation, Community and  
Member Engagement

Association of Independent Schools of  
NSW

Amelia Keane

Administration Officer,  
Canobie Station, Qld

Australian Agricultural Company

Sarah Acton

Home Tutor

Australian Agricultural Company

Richard Stokes

CEO

Australian Boarding Schools Association

Jordan Swepson

Director of Member Services

Australian Boarding Schools Association

Kim Abrahams

Office Manager

Australian Boarding Schools Association

Carol Bennett

CEO

Australian Communications Consumer  
Action Network

Kelly Lindsay

Stakeholder Engagement  
Manager

Australian Communications Consumer  
Action Network

Dianne Giblin

CEO

Australian Council of State School  
Organisations

Annie Sargood

Managing Director

Australia's Leading In Home Care Agency

Mandy Martin

Office Manager

Australia's Leading In Home Care Agency

Kellie Owens

Recruitment and Placement  
Consultant

Australia's Leading In Home Care Agency

Rosemary White

Assistant Director

Commonwealth Department of Education

William Rocks

Assistant Director

Commonwealth Department of Education

Tracey De Boe

Director

Commonwealth Department of Education  
ECEC Vision and In Home Care

Kerstie Gillis

Assistant Director

Commonwealth Department of Education  
ECEC Vision and In Home Care

Vesna Kitanovic

Departmental Officer

Commonwealth Department of Social  
Services

Natalie Robertson

Departmental Officer

Commonwealth Department of Social  
Services

Jespah Soegeng

Departmental Officer

Commonwealth Department of Social  
Services

Jessica Hacket

Executive Officer

Connellan Airways Trust

Jenny Scepanovic	Executive Officer	Council of Catholic School Parents
Anne Fehon	Chair Congregational School Group	Council of Catholic School Parents
Wendy Mason (1)	CEO	Country Education Foundation
Mark McLay	CEO	Country Education Foundation
Duncan Taylor	Non-Executive Director	Country University Centre
Sara Crowe	Managing Partner	C7EVEN Communications
Ellen McIver	Senior Account Manager	C7EVEN Communications
Patricia Roseman	Executive Officer	Catholic Schools Parents Association
Amy Williams	Program Manager	Dolly's Dream
Geoff Orton	Digital Learning Leader	Haileybury Pangea Online School
Gloria Zafar (1)	Family and Service Facilitator	In Home Care Support Agency NSW & SA
Andy Azariah (2)	Team Leader	In Home Care Support Agency NSW & SA
Sarah Metcalfe (1)	Head of Woodward House	Kincoppal-Rose Bay School
Danielle Fairthorne (2)	Head of Sheldon House	Kincoppal-Rose Bay School
Hannah Whittemore	Head of Girls Boarding	Kinross Wolaroi School
Kate Callahan	Head of New House	Kinross Wolaroi School
Ty Casey	Assistant Head of Boarding	Marist College Ashgrove
Gavin Williams (2)	Chief Development Officer, Regional and Remote	NBN Co
Sam Dimarco (2)	General Manager—Segments and Stakeholders	NBN Co
Elise Petty	Executive Manager-Education and Regional Stakeholder Relations	NBN Co
Bianca Madon (2)	Executive Manager – Satellite Program and Customer Experience	NBN Co
Nicole Fosteris	Regional Development and Engagement Manager	NBN Co
Erin Morley	Education Editor	Newscorp
Bensu Arican	Family and Service Facilitator	NSW Family Day Care Association
Katie White (1)		Pymble Ladies College
Carolyn Burgess	Director of Boarding	Pymble Ladies College
Chris Kwong (1)	Senior Manager, Government and Public Affairs	Qantas
Emma Duffy (1)	Scholarships and Grants Manager	Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Foundation
Dean White (1)	Executive Director	Regional, Rural & Remote Implementation Unit, NSW Department of Education
Helen Parker	Director, Partnerships and Engagement	Regional, Rural & Remote Implementation Unit, NSW Department of Education
Jennifer Medway	General Manager	Regional Tech Hub
Kristen Coggan	Manager, Partnerships and Communications	Regional Tech Hub
Jacqueline Emery (1)	CEO	Royal Far West

Jenny Stevenson (2)	Head of Policy and Government Relations	Royal Far West
Josh Graham	Director	Services Australia
Athena Kanellos	Assistant Director	Services Australia
Anthony Begg (1)	Director of Boarding	St Ignatius College Riverview
Timothy Sedgwick (2)	Assistant Director of Boarding	St Ignatius College Riverview
Nicole Devlin	Deputy Principal - Head of Senior School	St Hilda's School
Amanda Rigby	Head of Boarding	St Hilda's School
Scott Thomson	Principal	St Joseph's Nudgee College
Casey Brealy	Dean of Boarding	St Joseph's Nudgee College
Stuart Delaney	Director of Boarding	St Peters Lutheran College
Jane Morris	Dean of Boarding	Stuartholme School
Patricia Di Carlo	Administration Officer	Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents Council
Lyndall Stoyles (1)	Group Executive for Sustainability, External Affairs and Legal	Telstra
Nick Stacpoole	National Partner Manager	Telstra
Michael Marom	Regional General Manager Northern NSW	Telstra
Amreeta Bhatti (1)	Senior Corporate Relations Specialists	Telstra
Sarah Warmoll		The Careers Department
Ben Chadwick	Director of Boarding	The King's School
Anthony Philips	Director of Boarding, Tudor House	The King's School
Mike Silcock	Director of Boarding	The Rockhampton Grammar School
James Witcombe	Boarding House Master	The Scots College
Tom Giles	Head of Learning in Residence	Wesley College

## CONFERENCE APOLOGIES

### Members

Carmel Elliot  
Raelene Hall  
Lindy Kitto  
Margaret Mitchell  
Wally Mitchell AM  
  
Roxanne Morrissey  
Alana Moller  
John Paine  
Katrina Paine  
Sue Shotton  
Rohan Sullivan  
Sally Sullivan  
Kasie Scott  
Cynthia Walker

### Branch

Branch Life Member, Southern Downs QLD  
State Life Member, Meekatharra Air WA  
State Life Member, NSW/VIC Lone Members NSW  
Bourke NSW  
Branch Life Member, State Life Member, Federal Life Member, Bourke NSW  
Federal Life Member, Yalgoo Branch WA  
Clermont QLD  
Winton QLD  
Winton QLD  
Federal Life Member, Territory Wide NT  
Katherine NT  
Branch Life Member, Katherine NT  
Clermont QLD  
Clermont QLD

## Guests

Hon Anthony Albanese	Prime Minister: Federal Member for Grayndler, NSW
Hon Blair Boyer	SA Minister for Education, Training and Skills. Member for Wright, SA
Donna Bryant	SOTA Katherine NT
Hon John Carey MLA	WA Minister for Planning; Lands; Housing; Homelessness; Member for Perth WA
Dr Andrew Charlton	Federal Member for Parramatta, NSW
Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck	Senator for Tasmania
Mr Pat Conaghan MP	Shadow Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence; Shadow Assistant Minister for Social Services, Federal Member for Cowper, NSW
Senator Perin Davey	Deputy Federal Leader of the Nationals; Deputy Leader of the Nationals in the Senate; Shadow Minister for Water; Emergency Management, Federal Senator for NSW
Hon Stephen Dawson	WA Minister for Emergency Services, Innovation and the digital Economy, Science, Medical Research. Member for the Mining and Pastoral Region
Hon Colin deGrussa	WA Member for Agricultural Region, WA
Marjorie Evans	AISNSW
Hon Paul Fletcher MP	Manager of Opposition Business, Federal Member for Bradfield, NSW
Hon Patrick Gorman MP	Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister, Federal Member for Perth, WA
Jodie Hanns	WA Member for Collie-Preston, WA
Hon Madeline King	Minister for Resources: Northern Australia, Federal Member for Brand, WA
Sue Lancaster	Kincoppal-Rose Bay
Jerome Laxale	Federal Member for Riverina NSW
Mr Shane Love MLA	WA Leader of the Nationals; Member for Moore, WA
Hon Michael McCormack MP	Federal Member for Riverina, NSW
Hon David Michael	WA Minister for Mines and Petroleum; Ports; Road Safety; Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport. Member for Balcatta, WA
Michelle Parker	NT Council of Government School Organisations Inc (NTCOGSO)
Mr Tony Pasin MP	Federal Member for Barker, SA
Mr Gavin Pearce MP	Shadow Assistant Minister for Health, Aged Care and Indigenous Health Services. Federal Member for Braddon, TAS
Hon Rita Saffioti	WA Deputy Premier; Treasurer; Minister for Transport; Tourism. Member for West Swan, WA
Dr Sophie Scamps	Federal Member for MacKellar, NSW
Mandy Smallacombe	RFDS SA/NT
Allegra Spender	Federal Member for Wentworth, NSW
Anne Stanley	Federal Member for Werriwa, NSW
Andrew Wallace	Federal Member for Fisher, QLD
Hon Kate Washington	NSW Minister for Families and Communities; Disability Inclusion. Member for Port Stephens, NSW



**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

Rectangular Snip

# Annual Financial Statements

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia  
Incorporated

ABN 38 908 782 315

For the year ended 31 May 2024

Prepared by Carrick Aland Accountants

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## Statement by Members of the Committee

### Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated For the year ended 31 May 2024

We, Louise Martin, and Nikki Mahony, being members of the committee of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated and on behalf of the Committee, certify that –

1. We have compiled the accompanying special purpose financial statements of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated, which comprise the asset and liabilities statement as at 31 May 2024, income and expenditure statement, the statement of cash flows, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes. The specific purpose for which the special purpose financial statements have been prepared is set out in Note 1.
2. The statements attached to this certificate give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated during and at the end of the financial year of the association ending on 31 May 2024.
3. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the association will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.
4. These financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis which contemplates continuity of normal business activities and the realisation of assets and settlement of liabilities in the ordinary course of business. The ability of the association to continue to operate as a going concern is dependent upon the ability of the association to generate sufficient cashflows from operations to meet its liabilities. The members of the association believe that the going concern assumption is appropriate.

The committee of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated are solely responsible for the information contained in the special purpose financial statements, the reliability, accuracy and completeness of the information and for the determination that the basis of accounting used is appropriate to meet their needs and for the purpose that financial statements were prepared.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Members of the Committee

Signed: Louise Martin

Louise Martin - President

Dated: 08/07/2024

Signed: Nikki Mahony

Nikki Mahony - Treasurer

Dated: 08/07/2024

## Financial declaration for Responsible Person

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated  
For the year ended 31 May 2024

*per section 60.15 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2022*

The Responsible People declare that in the Responsible People's opinion:

1. there are reasonable grounds to believe that the registered entity is able to pay all of its debts, as and when they become due and payable; and
2. the financial statements and notes satisfy the requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

Signed in accordance with subsection 60.15(2) of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Regulation 2022*.

Signed: Louise Martin

Louise Martin - President

Dated: 08/07/2024



#### AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION

To the Responsible People of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated

In relation to the audit of the financial report of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated for the financial year ended 31 May 2024, and in accordance with the requirements of Subdivision 60-C of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

- a. no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of section 60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit;
- b. no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit; and
- c. no non-audit services provided that contravene any applicable code of professional conduct.

**Queensland Audit Services**  
A Member of CPA Australia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Johnston'.

**David Johnston CPA**  
Partner - Audit

Dalby QLD, 8 July 2024

## Statement of Cash Flows

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated  
For the year ended 31 May 2024

2024

### Operating Activities

Receipts From Grants	55,000.00
Interest Received	19,215.34
Cash Receipts From Other Operating Activities	201,378.57
Cash Payments From Other Operating Activities	(308,876.97)
<b>Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities</b>	<b>(33,283.06)</b>

### Other Activities

Other Activities	3,250.00
<b>Net Cash Flows from Other Activities</b>	<b>3,250.00</b>

### Net Cash Flows

(30,033.06)

### Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of period	647,297.75
Cash and cash equivalents at end of period	617,264.69
<b>Net change in cash for period</b>	<b>(30,033.06)</b>

# Income and Expenditure Statement

## Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated For the year ended 31 May 2024

	2024	2023
<b>Revenue</b>		
<b>Donations &amp; Sponsorship</b>		
<b>Donations</b>		
Donations - Branch to ICPA Aust	15,250.00	10,050.00
Donations to ICPA Aust - general	1,020.68	-
<b>Total Donations</b>	<b>16,270.68</b>	<b>10,050.00</b>
<b>Sponsorship</b>		
Sponsorship - Federal Conference	26,000.00	15,000.00
Sponsorship - general	27,491.90	20,386.00
<b>Total Sponsorship</b>	<b>53,491.90</b>	<b>35,386.00</b>
<b>Total Donations &amp; Sponsorship</b>	<b>69,762.58</b>	<b>45,436.00</b>
<b>Grants Received</b>		
Government Grants Received	50,000.00	50,000.00
<b>Total Grants Received</b>	<b>50,000.00</b>	<b>50,000.00</b>
<b>Other Income</b>		
<b>Interest Income</b>		
Suncorp Business Saver #0139	17,997.21	6,301.68
Suncorp Dept of Education Grant #0112	1,114.81	328.94
Suncorp Tasmania State Trust #4629	103.32	83.75
<b>Total Interest Income</b>	<b>19,215.34</b>	<b>6,714.37</b>
<b>Other Revenue</b>		
Accommodation Reimbursements	5,629.56	4,704.55
Badges and Pins receipts	-	394.24
Emails - Additional State Emails	502.44	156.69
Federal Conferences - Profit from Convening Committee	64,282.73	213,652.95
Memberships	57,804.54	50,493.47
Memberships - Tas Online Collected	49.32	139.59
Merchandise Sales	45.45	426.82
Reimbursement of Shared Costs	1,127.26	4,362.76
Sundry Income	21.36	-
<b>Total Other Revenue</b>	<b>129,462.66</b>	<b>274,331.07</b>
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>148,678.00</b>	<b>281,045.44</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>268,440.58</b>	<b>376,481.44</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
<b>Administrative Expenses</b>		
Advertising	454.55	668.18
Bank Charges	130.07	(117.68)
Computer Software	6,303.32	4,808.01

## Income and Expenditure Statement

	2024	2023
Email Expenses	1,791.08	1,845.46
Email Expenses - Mailchimp	1,648.34	1,027.36
Postage	507.68	546.61
Printing & Stationery	1,222.38	711.42
Subscriptions & Memberships	80.00	1,007.27
Web Page Expenses	6,551.22	6,213.00
<b>Total Administrative Expenses</b>	<b>18,688.64</b>	<b>16,709.63</b>
Audit Fees	3,440.00	2,965.00
Bad Debts	550.00	140.00
<b>Insurance Expenses</b>		
Insurance	2,900.72	2,741.33
<b>Total Insurance Expenses</b>	<b>2,900.72</b>	<b>2,741.33</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>		
Badges and Pins Expenses	321.97	404.70
Canberra Delegation Expenses	51,275.60	33,167.66
Consultancy Fees	46,846.25	9,000.00
Corporate Memberships - State Magazine expenses	1,533.62	930.91
Donations	-	50.00
Freight & Cartage	-	438.59
Fuel & Oil	842.88	597.42
Meetings - Face to Face expenses	3,964.72	10,262.31
Meetings - Other Expenses	8,223.48	7,125.71
Membership Expenses	-	68.18
Membership Fees - Tasmania Online Memberships	57.78	77.19
Staff Training & Welfare	405.00	5,600.00
State Conference expenses	11,435.91	16,365.31
Sundry Expenses	264.81	5.47
Travelling Expenses	2,113.38	3,012.88
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>127,285.40</b>	<b>87,106.33</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>		
FC - Branch Sponsorship to Attend	21,058.07	5,214.78
FC - Convening Committee Fwd Fund	42,247.28	22,972.72
FC - Councillor Expenses	1,727.25	345.45
FC - Guest Expenses	9,217.16	5,518.00
FC - Meals, Accommodation & Travel	21,404.34	67,935.14
FC - Presentation & Gifts	2,868.04	1,272.34
FC - Printing & Stationery	-	144.60
FC - Profit Split to Host State	14,958.78	32,048.07
FC - Registration	-	6,222.73
FC - Website Expenses	-	1,782.50
Fees & Permits	39.00	-



## Income and Expenditure Statement

	2024	2023
New Equipment Purchased - Immediate Asset Write Off	14,482.00	-
Total Other Expenses	128,001.92	143,456.33
Total Expenditure	280,866.68	253,118.62
Net Current Year Surplus/(Loss)	(12,426.10)	123,362.82

## Movements in Equity

### Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated For the year ended 31 May 2024

	2024	2023
<b>Members Funds</b>		
Opening Balance	645,577.28	522,214.46
<b>Increases</b>		
Profit for the Period	-	123,362.82
Total Increases	-	123,362.82
<b>Decreases</b>		
Loss for the Period	12,426.10	-
Total Decreases	12,426.10	-
Total Members Funds	633,151.18	645,577.28

# Assets and Liabilities Statement

## Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated As at 31 May 2024

	NOTES	31 MAY 2024	31 MAY 2023
<b>Assets</b>			
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	3	617,264.69	647,297.75
Trade and Other Receivables	4	19,400.00	3,319.80
GST Receivable		863.46	-
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>637,528.15</b>	<b>650,617.55</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>637,528.15</b>	<b>650,617.55</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>			
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
Trade and Other Payables	5	4,376.97	4,515.25
GST Payable		-	525.02
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<b>4,376.97</b>	<b>5,040.27</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<b>4,376.97</b>	<b>5,040.27</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		<b>633,151.18</b>	<b>645,577.28</b>
<b>Member's Funds</b>			
Accumulated Surplus (Deficit)		633,151.18	645,577.28
<b>Total Member's Funds</b>		<b>633,151.18</b>	<b>645,577.28</b>

# Notes to the Financial Statements

## Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated For the year ended 31 May 2024

### 1. Basis of Preparation

#### Compliance with Prescribed Requirements

In the Committee's opinion, the Association is not a reporting entity because there are no users dependent on a general purpose financial report. The financial report is therefore a special purpose financial report that has been prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and the constitution of the entity and Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)*.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the disclosure requirements of AASB 101 Presentation of Financial Statements, ASB 108 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors and AASB 1054 Australian Additional Disclosures and the significant accounting policies as detailed below.

#### Principal Activities

The Association is a not-for-profit entity involved in the advocating and promoting awareness of the need for equitable access to educational opportunities for families in regional and remote areas in Australia.

The Association does not control other entities. The financial statements include the value of all income, expenses, assets, liabilities and equity for the Association as an individual entity.

#### Underlying Measurement Basis

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based on historic costs and do not take into account changing money values or, except where stated specifically, current valuations of non-current assets.

#### Other Presentation Matters

##### Currency

Amounts included in the financial statements are in Australian dollars.

##### Comparative Figures

Comparative information reflects the audited 2024 financial statements.

##### Current / Non-Current Classification

Assets and liabilities are classified as either 'current' or 'non-current' in the Statement of Financial Position and associated notes. Assets are classified as 'current' where their carrying amount is expected to be realised within 12 months after the reporting date.

Liabilities are classified as 'current' when they are due to be settled within 12 months after the reporting date, or the Association does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement to beyond 12 months after the reporting date. All other assets and liabilities are classified as non-current.

### 2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

The following significant accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless stated otherwise, have been adopted in the preparation of these financial statements.

#### Income Tax

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and the organisation has been endorsed by the Australian Tax Office to be income tax exempt.

#### **Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE)**

Leasehold improvements and office equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

The depreciable amount of all PPE is depreciated over the useful lives of the assets to the association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use.

Leasehold improvements are amortised over the shorter of either the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful lives of the improvements.

#### **Impairment of Assets**

At the end of each reporting period, the committee reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible and intangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, an impairment test is carried out on the asset by comparing the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs to sell and value in use, to the asset's carrying amount. Any excess of the asset's carrying amount over its recoverable amount is recognised in the income and expenditure statement.

#### **Provisions**

Provisions are recognised when the association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured. Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period.

#### **Cash and Cash Equivalents**

Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand, deposits held on call with banks, other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts.

#### **Inventories**

Inventories are carried at the lower of cost or net realisable value. Cost is based on the weighted average cost method and includes expenditure incurred in acquiring the inventories and bringing them to the existing condition and location.

#### **Accounts Receivable and Other Debtors**

Accounts receivable and other debtors include amounts due from members as well as amounts receivable from donors. Receivables expected to be collected within 12 months of the end of the reporting period are classified as current assets. All other receivables are classified as non-current assets.

#### **Revenue and Other Income**

Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable after taking into account any trade discounts and volume rebates allowed. For this purpose, deferred consideration is not discounted to present values when recognising revenue.

Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest method, which for floating rate financial assets is the rate inherent in the instrument. Dividend revenue is recognised when the right to receive a dividend has been established.

Grant and donation income is recognised when the entity obtains control over the funds, which is generally at the time of receipt.

If conditions are attached to the grant that must be satisfied before the association is eligible to receive the contribution, recognition of the grant as revenue will be deferred until those conditions are satisfied.

All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax.

### Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the assets and liabilities statement.

### Financial Assets

Investments in financial assets are initially recognised at cost, which includes transaction costs, and are subsequently measured at fair value, which is equivalent to their market bid price at the end of the reporting period. Movements in fair value are recognised through an equity reserve.

### Accounts Payable and Other Payables

Accounts payable and other payables represent the liability outstanding at the end of the reporting period for goods and services received by the association during the reporting period that remain unpaid. The balance is recognised as a current liability with the amounts normally paid within 30 days of recognition of the liability.

	2024	2023
<b>3. Cash and Cash Equivalents</b>		
<b>Bank Accounts</b>		
Business Saver Account	509,893.35	521,896.14
Department of Education Grant	29,617.21	28,502.40
Everyday Account	5,436.09	25,576.65
General Account	57,865.46	60,659.79
Membership Account	9,675.38	5,882.89
Tasmania State Council Trust	4,777.20	4,779.88
<b>Total Bank Accounts</b>	<b>617,264.69</b>	<b>647,297.75</b>
<b>Total Cash and Cash Equivalents</b>	<b>617,264.69</b>	<b>647,297.75</b>
	2024	2023
<b>4. Trade and Other Receivables</b>		
<b>Trade Receivables</b>		

Trade Debtors	19,400.00	3,319.80
<b>Total Trade Receivables</b>	<b>19,400.00</b>	<b>3,319.80</b>
<b>Total Trade and Other Receivables</b>	<b>19,400.00</b>	<b>3,319.80</b>
	2024	2023

#### 5. Trade and Other Payables

<b>Trade Payables</b>		
Trade Creditors	4,376.97	4,515.25
<b>Total Trade Payables</b>	<b>4,376.97</b>	<b>4,515.25</b>
<b>Total Trade and Other Payables</b>	<b>4,376.97</b>	<b>4,515.25</b>

#### 6. Movement in Carrying Values of Depreciating assets

Following is a summary of the Depreciating Assets of the organisation.

Depreciating Assets of a low value and limited life are depreciated at 100% in the year of their purchase.

Where Depreciating Assets have a long useful life or a value that the committee determines to be high shall be depreciated over their useful life.

The committee will determine on a year to year basis the effective depreciation rate to apply to these classes of assets.





## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the members of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated

### Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

#### Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated (the registered entity), which comprises the assets and liabilities statement as at 31 May 2024, the income and expenditure statement for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements including a summary of significant accounting policies, statement by members of the committee and the financial declaration for responsible person.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated is in accordance with the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)* and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (ACNC Act)*, including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the registered entity's financial position as at 31 May 2024 and of its financial performance for the year ended on that date; and
- (ii) complying with the Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Notes 1 & 2, and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2022*.

#### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with *Australian Auditing Standards*. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the Financial Report* section of our report.

We are independent of the registered entity in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the ACNC Act and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110: *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

#### Emphasis of Matter – Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Notes 1 & 2 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist the registered entity to meet the financial reporting requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)* and the ACNC Act. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

#### Responsibilities of the Responsible People and those charged with governance for the Financial Report

The responsible people are responsible for:

- i. Preparing the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Notes 1 & 2, the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)* and the ACNC Act.
- ii. Implementing necessary internal control to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.
- iii. Assessing the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern and whether the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate. This includes disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the responsible people either intend to liquidate the registered entity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the registered entity's financial reporting process.



**Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the Financial Report**

Our objective is:

- i. to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and
- ii. to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the *Australian Auditing Standards* will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error. They are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit.

We also:

- i. Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis of our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusions, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- ii. Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design and audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the registered entity's internal control.
- iii. Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the responsible people.
- iv. Conclude on the appropriateness of the responsible people's use of going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, modify our audit opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the registered entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- v. Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Queensland Audit Services  
A Member of CPA Australia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Johnston'.

David Johnston CPA  
Partner - Audit

Dalby QLD, 8 July 2024

**MEMBERSHIP at 31 May 2024**

<b>Western Australia</b>	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Central Wheatbelt North <i>formerly Kalannie</i>	18	18	7	12	17	16
Eastern Districts <i>formerly Hyden</i>	38	44	40	34	28	19
Esperance	21	22	16	12	12	19
Gascoyne	11	15	8	8	7	4
Goldfields Eyre ( <i>Kalgoorlie Air</i> )	19	19	17	12	17	9
Kimberley Air	9	9	11	9	4	9
Kondinin	closed	closed	closed	closed	Closed	Closed
Lakes District	44	47	46	37	31	52
Meekatharra Air	20	20	16	15	20	16
Midwest	46	52	46	47	43	45
Pilbara	17	20	20	11	20	9
WA Lone Members	24	24	18	17	14	16
Yalgoo	7	7	5	2	5	6
	<b>274</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>220</b>

<b>South Australia</b>	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Eyre	8	8	4	18	16	11
Far West	0	recess	recess	recess	0	Closed
Flinders Ranges	24	24	22	23	41	23
Marla Oodnadatta	10	10	8	10	11	16
Marree Air	10	10	6	9	9	18
North East Districts	16	17	15	17	13	14
North West	11	11	10	11	9	11
Port Augusta	9	10	11	14	9	16
SA Lone Members	7	7	15	97	13	13
	<b>95</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>122</b>

<b>Tasmania</b>	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Central Highlands	closed	closed	closed	closed		
East Coast	7	7				
Midlands ( <i>Oatlands</i> )	9	9				
TAS Lone Members	7	8				
Tasmania Branch <i>merged East Coast, Midlands, Tas Lones</i>			12	10	14	16
	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>

<b>Northern Territory</b>	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Alice Springs	41	43	49	41	46	53
Barkly	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed
Katherine	52	53	80	45	58	61
Territory Wide <i>formerly NT Lone Members</i>	12	13	19	18	21	20
	<b>105</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>134</b>

<b>New South Wales</b>	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Balranald	39	45	41	32	24	29
Boomi	18	18	13	12	11	10
Bourke	29	32	28	35	25	27
Brewarrina	14	16	18	14	14	13
Broken Hill	33	35	32	34	24	35
Bullarah <i>amalgamated with Moree</i>	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed
Central West Plains ( <i>Tottenham</i> )	95	96	71	63	58	50
Collarenebri-Mungindi	15	24	17	15	14	16
Cobar	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess
Condobolin	8	9	8	5	8	11
Corinella	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess	closed
Goolgowi	13	13	15	8	2	5
Hay	57	69	80	77	47	44
Hillston	6	8	11	10	14	15
Lightning Ridge/Goodooga	10	10	7	6	7	9
Lord Howe Island	11	11	10	13	14	16
Louth	23	23	25	27	18	17
Monaro	29	30	21	15	20	18
Moree <i>amalgamated Bullarah</i>	33	39	46	36	34	20
Namoi ( <i>Burren Junction</i> )	42	45	51	36	31	27
North West Slopes	9	11	9	8	7	recess
NSW Lone Member	109	117	136	108	71	64
Nyngan	23	24	21	23	25	25
Paroo	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess	closed
Quambone	40	41	31	30	32	34
Rankins Springs	26	29	28	20	25	27
Tibooburra/Milparinka	18	18	8	9	16	17
Vermont Hill	6	6	6	5	4	5
Walgett	35	39	27	31	37	39
Warrumbungle	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess	closed
Wentworth	26	28	30	20	22	20
West Wyalong	recess	recess	recess	recess	recess	closed
	<b>767</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>593</b>

Queensland	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Alpha	22	28	32	35	28	30
Aramac-Muttaburra	32	32	33	36	30	26
Arcadia Valley	9	12	14	14	12	12
Auburn-Burrandowan-Cardarga	28	28	16	11	10	7
Augathella	17	22	20	16	15	23
Belyando-Mt Coolon	40	42	45	40	46	45
Blackall	29	29	44	31	29	28
Bollon	19	19	19	14	17	12
Boulia-Bedourie-Birdsville	14	15	12	10	12	17
Capricornia (BOTA)	29	33	29	20	17	25
Channel Country	1	1	1	1	3	8
Charleville	24	25	34	31	27	29
Charters Towers	55	67	59	60	72	70
Clarke Creek	23	26	28	26	22	20
Clermont	53	54	49	42	49	55
Cloncurry	16	16	12	14	17	23
Cunnamulla	22	24	31	16	20	20
Dawson Valley	13	15	25	32	32	36
Dirranbandi	32	32	27	26	23	18
Far North QLD ( <i>Cairns Radio</i> )	9	14	25	23	32	28
Hughenden	17	17	23	23	24	25
Julia Creek	27	28	33	34	50	39
Kindon	30	32	32	34	35	38
Longreach	16	28	24	24	24	23
McKinlay	4	5	6	9	8	5
Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld	34	40	30	26	26	23
Moonie	24	26	31	28	21	27
Mt Isa BOTA	30	36	33	46	55	51
Nebo	20	22	15	17	20	12
North Burnett ( <i>Eidsvold-Cracow</i> )	13	13	7	12	12	10
QLD Lone Members	20	22	12	10	10	15
Quilpie	14	14	17	14	17	15
Richmond	19	20	31	33	27	30
Roma	28	33	40	35	41	44
Southern Downs ( <i>Stanthorpe District</i> )	30	32	29	28	30	20
Springsure-Rolleston	17	21	25	24	29	28
St George	46	52	43	28	25	19
Talwood	23	24	23	24	24	19
Tambo	27	41	36	34	44	36
Taroom-Wandoan	43	44	43	38	35	39
Thargomindah	0	5	10	8	7	5
Western Downs ( <i>Condamine-WD</i> )	40	41	40	30	21	13
Westmar-Inglestone	53	55	46	44	39	44
Winton	29	29	32	31	35	30
Yaraka-Isisford	32	34	39	35	29	30
	<b>1123</b>	<b>1248</b>	<b>1255</b>	<b>1167</b>	<b>1201</b>	<b>1172</b>

<b>Australia Wide Membership Totals</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
New South Wales	767	836	790	739	604	593
Northern Territory	105	109	148	124	125	134
Queensland	1123	1248	1255	1265	1201	1172
South Australia	95	97	91	121	121	122
Tasmania	23	24	12	14	14	16
Western Australia	274	297	250	240	218	220
	<b><u>2387</u></b>	<b><u>2611</u></b>	<b><u>2546</u></b>	<b><u>2503</u></b>	<b><u>2283</u></b>	<b><u>2257</u></b>
Corporate	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
School Corporate		<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>

<b>Financial Branches 31/05/2023</b>	
New South Wales	25
Northern Territory	3
Queensland	44
South Australia	8
Tasmania	1
Western Australia	12
	<b>95</b>

**Chair:** Louise Martin

**Secretary:** Kim Hughes

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_