

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



Minutes

of the

54th Annual Conference

'Education for the heart and the mind'

30 & 31 July 2025

Eos by SkyCity
Adelaide, South Australia

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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.

| | |
|---|--|
| BOARDING/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME | M52(A1), M53(A2), M54(A3), M55(A4), M56(A5), M57(A9), M58(A6), M59(A7), M60(A8), M61(S1), M62(S2), M63(S3) |
| COMMUNICATIONS | M17(A10), M18(A11), M19(A12), M20(S4), M21(S5) M22(S6) |
| CURRICULUM | M15(A13) |
| DISTANCE EDUCATION | M1(A14), M2(A15), M3(A16), M4(A17), M5(A18), M6(A19), M7(A20), M8(A21), M9(A22), M10(A23), M11(A24), M99(F1), M100(F2) |
| EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE | M40(A25), M41(A26), M42(A27), M43(A28), M44(A29), M45(A30), M46(A31), M47(A32), M48(A33), M49(A34), M50(A35), M51(A39), M71(A36), M72(A37), M73(A38), M74(A40), M75(S7), M76(S8) |
| RURAL SCHOOLS | M12(A41), M13(A42), M14(S9) |
| SCHOOL TRAVEL | M23(A43), M24(A44), M25(A45), M26(A46), M27(A47), M28(A48), M29(A49) |
| SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS | M64(A50), M65(A51), M66(A52), M67(A53), M68(A54), M69(A55), M70(S10) |
| TERTIARY | M77(A56), M78(S17), M79(A57), M80(A58), M81(A59), M82(A60), M83(S16), M84(S18), M85(A61), M86(A62), M87(A63), M88(A64), M89(A65), M90(A66), M91(A67), M92(A68), M93(S11), M94(S12), M95(S13), M96(S14), M97(S15), M98(S19) |
| TRAINING | M30(A69), M31(A70) |
| MISCELLANEOUS | M16(A71) |
| ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING | M32(AGM1), M33(AGM2), M34(AGM3), M35(AGM4), M36(AGM5), M37(AGM6), M38(AGM7), M39(AGM8) |

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Committee

Tim Fletcher
Nimmo NSW

Committee

Jill Greenfield
Woomera SA

Membership Officer

Louise Winten
Morven QLD

EDUCATION FOR THE HEART AND THE MIND

Conference Program Day 1 – Wednesday 30 July 2025

| | | |
|---------|---|--|
| 9.00am | Welcome National Anthem | Louise Martin Josie Rains |
| | Conference Arrangements Introduction of Delegates and Guests Confirmation of 2024 Federal Conference Minutes | Co-Convenors Edwina Bowie and Mija Reynolds Kelly Ostwald Kelly Ostwald |
| 9.30am | Official Opening of Conference | Jane Gloster, Federal Life Member |
| 9.45am | Address from the Regional Education Commissioner | The Hon Fiona Nash |
| 10.00am | Federal ICPA President’s Report | Louise Martin |
| 10.15am | Federal Council Video | Nikki Mahony |
| 10.20am | South Australia ICPA President’s Report | Belinda Hatcher |
| 10.30am | Morning Tea | |
| 11.00am | Procedural Information | Julia Broad |
| 11.05am | Distance Education Portfolio Report | Jill Greenfield |
| 11.10am | <i>Distance Education Portfolio Agenda Motions</i> | |
| 11.45am | Rural Schools Portfolio Update | Nikki Mahony |
| 11.50am | <i>Portfolio Agenda Motions</i> | |
| 12.00pm | Western Australia ICPA President’s Report | Vice President Jasmyn Allen on behalf of Jane Cunningham |
| 12.10pm | Curriculum Portfolio Report | Julia Broad on behalf of Heather Whigham-Reid |
| 12.15pm | <i>Curriculum Portfolio Agenda Motions</i> Presentation | |
| 12.20pm | <i>Miscellaneous motion</i> | |
| 12.25pm | Video Presentation | Minister for Education the Hon Jason Clare MP |
| 12.30pm | Lunch | |
| 1.30pm | Keynote Speaker | Roger Rasheed, Tennis, Business and Life Performance Coach |
| 2.30pm | Presentation Telstra | Michael Patterson, Regional General Manager for South Australia with Megan McLoughlin Sally Brindal |
| 2.45pm | Communications Portfolio Update | |
| 2.50pm | <i>Communication Portfolio Agenda Motions</i> | |
| 3.10pm | Afternoon Tea | |
| 3.40pm | Presentation nbn | Gavin Williams |
| 3.55pm | School Travel Portfolio Report | Jenn Ruska |
| 4.00pm | <i>School Travel Portfolio Agenda Motions</i> | |
| 4.20pm | Training Portfolio Update | Anna McCorkle |
| 4.25pm | <i>Training Portfolio Agenda Motions</i> | |
| 4.30pm | Connellan Airways Trust | Declan Kelly |
| 4.35pm | Regional Tech Tub | Kristen Coggan |
| 4.40pm | Presentation | |
| 4:45pm | Introduction of Candidates for Federal Council | Jane Gloster, Returning Officer |
| 5.00pm | Close of Business Day 1 | |
| 7.00pm | Conference Dinner-Ian McLachlan Room- Adelaide Oval Theme: Winter Wonderland | |

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Conference Program Day 2 – Thursday 31 July 2025

| | | |
|---------|---|--|
| 8.00am | Annual General Meeting Introduction of Delegates | Kelly Ostwald |
| 9:00am | AGM Closes | |
| 9.10am | Conference Resumes Introduction of Guests | Kelly Ostwald |
| | Announcement of new Federal Council | Louise Martin |
| 9.15am | Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Report | Julia Broad |
| 9.20am | <i>ECEC Portfolio Agenda Motions</i> | |
| 10:15am | Presentation | |
| 10:20am | Northern Territory ICPA President’s Report | Moira Lanzarin |
| 10.30am | Morning Tea | |
| 11:00am | Guest Speaker | The Hon Blair Boyer, MP, South Australian Minister for Education, Training and Skills |
| 11.10am | Boarding Portfolio Report | Amber Driver |
| 11:15am | Australian Boarding Schools Association Update | Richard Stokes, CEO, ABSA |
| 11.20am | <i>Boarding Portfolio Agenda Motions</i> | |
| 11:50am | New South Wales ICPA President’s Report | Annabel Strachan |
| 12.00pm | Specific Education Needs Portfolio Report | Ali Allison |
| 12.05pm | <i>Specific Education Needs Portfolio Agenda Motions</i> | |
| 12.25pm | Presentation | |
| 12.30pm | Lunch | |
| 1.30pm | Presentation eSafety Commission | Kellie Britnell – Senior Education Advisor |
| 2.15pm | Tertiary Portfolio Report | Tim Fletcher |
| 2.20pm | <i>Tertiary Portfolio Agenda Motions</i> | |
| 2.50pm | Queensland ICPA President’s Report | Wendy Henning |
| 3.00pm | Afternoon Tea | |
| 3.30pm | <i>Tertiary Motions Continued</i> | |
| 4.05pm | Motions Continued Floor Motions Presentations Vote of thanks and acknowledgements | |
| 5.00pm | Close of Conference | |
| 6.30pm | Post-Conference Function –Strathmore Hotel | |

DAY ONE Wednesday 30 July 2025

9:00am Conference commences

National Anthem

Josie Rains

Welcome by Federal ICPA President

Louise Martin

Conference Arrangements

Edwina Bowie and Mija Reynolds

Introduction of Delegates and Guests

Kelly Ostwald

Confirmation of the 2024 Federal Conference Minutes

“That the 2024 Federal Conference Minutes as circulated on 15th May 2025 be accepted.”

Moved: Julia Broad ICPA Federal Council

Seconded: Shennah Joiner ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

Official Opening of Conference

Jane Gloster

ICPA Federal Life Member

Conference Address

The Hon Fiona Nash

Regional Education Commissioner

Federal ICPA President’s Report

Louise Martin

Join Federal Council Presentation

Nikki Mahony

Join Federal Council Video

South Australia ICPA President’s Report

Belinda Hatcher

Distance Education Portfolio Presentation

Jill Greenfield

Distance Education Portfolio Motions

M1 (A14) Northern Territory State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to add an additional loading category to the School Resourcing Standard for Geographic Isolated students.”

Moved: Jacinta McInnerney Territory Wide (NT) for Northern Territory State Council

Seconded: Moira Lanzarin Northern Territory State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Education funding from the Federal Government to the States is calculated by the School Resource Standards (SRS).

<https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/schooling-resource-standard>

At present there are 4 SRS loadings. The SRS loadings provide additional funding for student priority cohorts and disadvantaged schools. A school's SRS can include up to 4 student-based loadings and 2 school-based loadings. Loadings are not affected by capacity to contribute.

The 4 student-based loadings are the:

- student with disability loading
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander loading
- socio-educational disadvantage loading
- low-English proficiency loading.

A student may attract funding under more than one loading.

The 2 school-based loadings are for:

- School size
- School location.

The Department calculates the loadings for each school each year. ICPA (Aust) are advocating that there be a 5th student-based loading for Geographically Isolated students. This would then provide additional funding to the states to cover the higher costs of supporting Geographically Isolated students in the Distance Education journey - travel to contact events, appropriate technology, funding towards the compulsory supervisor etc.

If successful, this would mean an increase in funding for NT Distance Education schools.

M2 (A15) South Australia State Council

"That ICPA (AUST) advocate to the Commonwealth Government to formally recognise geographically isolated students as a priority equity cohort by introducing a fifth student-based loading, a Geographically Isolated Student Loading, within the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS)."

Moved: Dani Chapman South Australia State Council
Seconded: Belinda Hatcher South Australia State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Currently, the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) includes four student-based loadings designed to address educational disadvantage: students with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with socio-educational disadvantage, and those with low English proficiency. However, this framework overlooks a significant cohort, students who live in geographically isolated areas.

These students face unique and compounding barriers to accessing equitable education, including lack of face-to-face instruction, unreliable digital connectivity, limited access to qualified supervisors, and the added burden of remote or distance education delivery models.

Introducing a Geographically Isolated Student Loading would formally acknowledge GI students as a priority cohort and direct additional, needs-based Commonwealth funding to support them.

This loading could be calculated based on a student's geographical location and allocated to the school in which the student is enrolled, including Distance Education (DE) schools. DE schools would then have the capacity to use these funds to provide additional resources such as supervised learning

support or allowances for home tutors, helping ensure that GI students receive a level of educational opportunity comparable to their urban peers.

By embedding this support in the national funding model, the government would take a significant step toward addressing the structural inequities that currently impact GI students and their families.

M3 (A16) Northern Territory State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) support the formation of a Distance Education Supervision subsidy (name is not important) to assist geographically isolated families whose only choice for their children is Distance Education.”

Moved: Jacinta McInerney Territory Wide (NT) for Northern Territory State Council
Seconded: Moira Lanzarin Northern Territory State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The ICPA has been advocating for many many years for an allowance or subsidy to support Geographically Isolated families with the ongoing costs of Distance Education. This has been occurring at State and Federal levels of ICPA. Unfortunately, with little traction and being bounced between state and federal governments.

Distance education enrolment – guidelines and procedures (NT Government Publication)

“ All distance education enrolments require children and young people to:

- meet the requirements for enrolment in an NT Government school as detailed in the Enrolment procedures
- be enrolled for a minimum of one semester for preschool to year 9 enrolment, and by negotiation for years 10 to 12
- have access to a telephone, computer and the internet. Provision of information technology equipment may be facilitated by the department
- be provided with an appropriate learning space and environment. This includes a well-lit, ventilated space, absence of unwanted distractions to learning, and access to learning materials and resources
- be suitably supervised and supported by an adult each school day to complete their learning, including any requirement to attend the distance education centre or another place.

Division 2 of the NT Education Act 2015 states:

Cost of Government school education 75 Government school education to be free

(1) This section applies in relation to a student:

- (a) whose usual place of residence is in the Territory; and
- (b) who is an Australian citizen or permanent resident in Australia or a child of such a citizen or resident; and
- (c) who is enrolled in a government school.

(2) The cost of providing the following at the Government school to the student must be met by the Territory:

- (a) instruction that forms part of the program that is prescribed by regulation (the standard curriculum program);
- (b) any materials or administrative or other services or facilities provided as part of the standard curriculum program.”

With this legislation and policy in mind, consider the following. Most mothers are able to return to work when their children start school, but it is mostly the mothers of Geographically Isolated Families are either unable to work, or have an increased workload due to the supervision responsibilities required by the enrolment policies for Distance Education which requires that students undertaking Distance Education have adequate supervision in the classroom and an appropriate space or the child to undertake their learning, free of distractions etc. (see above)

The choices for these DE families are:

- One parent (usually the mother) must either forgo an income or time working in the business to supervise the children in the classroom.
- The family or the employers of the family engage a home tutor – firstly recruiting and then providing a salary or day rate for this employee.

Even when the family or business has employed a home tutor, one parent carries an increased workload by taking on the management of the home tutor and classroom activities. It's never a simple drop and go solution like those familiar to non-GI families.

Furthermore, due to the isolation, the family or the remote businesses who employ these families need to house and feed their home tutors. All of which comes at a cost to the private business and not to the government. The costs vary between families but no matter the circumstance, huge cost or sacrifices are made by our GI families in pursuit of a government funded education, which for all Territorians – is supposed to be “FREE”.

Further to these ongoing costs, there is the cost of the initial setting up of an appropriate study environment for the students, desks, chairs and the installation of the appropriate internet connection being the very bare minimum. Laptops and ICT equipment are available for hire and purchase from the school, still at a further cost to the family. The back-to-school voucher scheme does subsidise the cost but at \$200 per year, this amount doesn't really touch the sides of the initial set up or ongoing replenishment of resources required.

All of these costs do not even take into account the face to face events that are optional but also integral for the children's social and emotional learning, which for those attending Katherine School of the Air comes in at approx. \$2,000 + per term if you factor in the cost of accommodating a family for the time in town, travel, food for the family for the week, the potential loss of income for the week that one caregiver has to be away from the business for. The subsidy for attending an in-school event is approx. \$100 per student per event. Although we are thankful for it, this wouldn't even cover the cost of the fuel to attend these events.

The AIC and NT Student Assistance Scheme does allow some relief but does not even come close to covering the total cost of education for those GI families.

Case Study: Costs of setting up and maintaining a home classroom.
Wood Family, Wave Hill Station

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| Family Outlay | Amount | Assistance Received | Amount |
|--|-----------------|--|----------------|
| Classroom setup Purchase 2 desks \$100 each, 2 chairs \$100, Rugs for the schoolroom - \$50 each x 3 = \$150, Laptop Initial hire: \$400 upfront and \$100 a year thereafter. (\$500); Headsets \$165 each; School uniforms \$30 per shirt x 3 shirts \$90; Storage Drawers \$100 each x 2. \$200; Shelving \$200 | \$1,605 | Back to School Voucher | \$200 |
| Home Tutor Salary \$198 per day (10 school weeks per term, 5 days of school x 4 terms) | \$40,000 | AIC - Distance Ed \$3,741.79 (Preschool not eligible) | 0 |
| In School Accommodation and Food P.A | \$8,000 | NT - Distance Ed (Preschool ineligible in 2022 \$2,080 per student per year) | \$0 |
| Internet (Per Annum) | \$2,160 | Connellan Airways Grant (in-school) | 330 |
| Internet Hardware (Starlink) | \$300 | internet subsidy (\$174 per month) | \$2,088 |
| Total Outlay Preschool 2022 | \$52,065 | Total Subsidies in 2022 | \$2,618 |
| Total Cost to Family for our first year of Distance Education <u>\$49,447</u> | | | |

Note: At the time of setting up the student was in preschool, in 2022 and was ineligible for AIC assistance and NT SAS Distance Ed Grant. Since setting up our classroom in 2022, preschool students are now eligible for the NT Student Assistance Scheme, but still ineligible for AIC until they are in transition.

The family has since incurred more outlay with the inclusion of 3 more early years students, and another home tutor as of 2025.

Stationery such as pencils, whiteboard markers, art supplies, paper for printing, ink have not been included in this estimate, nor have the board and keep or annual leave and superannuation for the home tutor, or the costs of renovating an existing old building to make it fit-for-purpose.

M4 (A17) Alice Springs Branch (NT)

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

Katy Hayes, Alice Springs Branch (NT) requested conference's permission for A17 (M4) to be deemed covered by A16 (M3).

Conference permission granted

DEEMED COVERED by M3 (A16)

Explanation:

The introduction of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) would provide critical financial recognition of the essential work performed by home tutors or supervisors who deliver education to students enrolled in Schools of Distance Education across Australia.

For geographically isolated families, Distance Education is often the only available option for primary and secondary schooling. Under current federal requirements, students enrolled in Distance Education must receive appropriate supervision during their learning. In practice, this responsibility commonly falls to a parent—usually the mother—or a paid home tutor. As the Australian Government's own Distance Education policies note, this supervision may be provided by "an employee or parent," highlighting that direct teaching support is a mandatory component of distance learning.

In many cases, this requirement results in a parent needing to forgo paid employment on the property, in the community, or at an outstation, in order to educate their children. This significantly impacts household income, placing further financial strain on already isolated families. When families do employ a home tutor, the costs are substantial. Home tutors are commonly paid between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per year, depending on experience and location. In addition to wages, families are typically responsible for providing accommodation, meals, internet, and other living expenses, which significantly increases the total outlay.

This means that families who employ a home tutor are effectively paying award wages to access public education—a cost burden not borne by families whose children attend face-to-face schools. This inequity undermines the principle of universal access to free public education in Australia.

To address this, we recommend the establishment of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA). This allowance would recognise and help offset the substantial costs associated with employing or providing supervision for distance education students.

We further propose that DETA be incorporated into the existing Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) framework. Since eligibility for AIC already reflects the educational and geographic disadvantage of the family, it is highly likely that those eligible for AIC would also qualify for DETA. Integrating the two would simplify the application process and ensure that support is targeted efficiently to the families who need it most.

Case Study 1:

Our business requires us to travel and work all throughout remote Australia installing water bores for stock & crops. We also have a fodder farm and tourist attraction. With all our businesses it requires us to work 7 days a week. My husband & I run all these businesses and with living so remote we require the services of a governess. We have employed a governess for the past 8 years now with another 7 years to go. In total for the past 8 years, we have paid out \$432,000 in wages plus super, food, accommodation & Wi-Fi. This has a massive impact on our finances and profits but if we didn't have a governess then we wouldn't be able to work and in turn wouldn't be able to afford to even educate or feed our family or live where we do!

Case Study 2:

In the 9-and-a-half years that I have been teaching my children through our distance education school, I have only been able to complete work on the station outside of the classroom in a part-time capacity, heavily reducing the potential income I have been able to earn, and therefore reducing our entire family income. It is a government requirement that students on distance education schools MUST have appropriate supervision while completing their lessons. Using my time to supervise and educate my children means that I'm receiving only half of the income I could be earning if I was able to work fulltime on the station, costing me personally \$24,000 per year. Once again, this cost is for my children to receive a public education, a supposedly free system in Australia.

If I were to stop educating my children and work fulltime on the station, I would be required by the government's distance education rules to employ a Home Tutor to instead supervise my children. Depending on wage agreements, a Home Tutor can be paid anywhere from \$25,000-\$50,000 per year, as well as usually being offered accommodation, meals, and services such as internet and utilities as part of their wage package. This means that while my personal wage would be \$24,000 higher, our costs as a family to employ someone to educate our children would be at least \$25,000 higher, which makes the possibility of employing a Home Tutor completely unviable for us. I would love to see the Australian Government introduce a Distance Education Teaching Allowance to recognise the vital work that Home Tutors/parents of isolated students do, and to help offset the costs of employing a Home Tutor/the costs of lost wages from parents who fulfil this role.

M5 (A18) Katherine Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) continue 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 rural and remote students via distance education."

Sam Selmes, Katherine Branch (NT) requested conference's permission for A18 (M5) to be deemed covered by A16 (M3).

Conference permission granted

DEEMED COVERED by M3 (A16)

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. This is a historical issue, which still has not been rectified.

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.

M6 (A19) New South Wales State Council

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

Annabel Strachan, New South Wales State Council requested conference's permission for A19 (M6) to be deemed covered by A16 (M3).

Conference permission granted

DEEMED COVERED by M3 (A16)**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 having 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.

M7 (A20) Katherine Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and all other relevant government agencies to recognise and implement a wage system for Home Tutors under the Pastoral Award.”

Moved: Sam Selmes Katherine (NT)

Seconded: Sally Dyer Katherine (NT)

LOST**Explanation:**

The role of the Home Tutor is almost exclusively unique to the pastoral industry, and as it currently stands there is no guidelines or award rates for the Governess / Home Tutor. Many businesses who pay according to the award pay rate system have no clarity as to what award or minimum wage pay rate and conditions a home tutor should receive.

A Home Tutor requires no formal training, and the skill level of the home tutor is dependent on the requirements in the schoolroom. This position plays a crucial role in educating and supporting children in Australia’s geographically isolated areas. Recognising the role under the Pastoral Award ensures equity and consistency, especially compared to similar roles in urban areas or public-school environments.

By including the position of 'Home Tutor' under the pastoral award rather than "Miscellaneous" it will allow for businesses to hire a home tutor under the '88 days' rule. It will give clarity to both employers and job seekers regarding the minimum wage rates of pay and hours. Establishing a step in the right direction to firstly gain recognition of the position, then provide a platform for assistance with funding the role via a Distance Education Teaching Subsidy. Currently, the hours and rates of pay vary greatly between the various businesses.

Case Study

One of our Katherine Branch families who are employed by a pastoral company currently employ home tutors as well as all other station staff under an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. This EBA stipulates the conditions of employment such as leave entitlements, levels of pay and various skills for each level. Home Tutor / Governess are covered under a EBA and may be identified as, but not limited to:

7.3.6 LEVEL 1 – Home Tutor / Governess / Nanny

The home tutor or governess or nanny provides support, tutoring and supervision of children living on stations.

Education

- Coordinate and supervise the daily school lessons and educational program as per curriculum,
- Plan and maintain a structured schoolroom.
- Organise and provide materials and equipment needed prior to commencing lessons.

In this employment circumstance, home tutors are able to be paid a variety of pay rates according to their experience, work performance and qualifications and both employee and employer have a guideline of the minimum work requirements and employment conditions. By having a definition of the role outlined within the pastoral award along with employment conditions, we are hoping that further to giving important recognition for a crucial role in educating Geographically Isolated children, this will be a strong starting point for a Distance Education Teaching Subsidy.

M8 (A21) Meekatharra Air Branch (WA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to introduce immediately per child, a minimum home tutor allowance equivalent to the cost for the State Departments of Education to educate a child in the state systems, or preferably a full wage equivalent to the average teacher's remuneration per annum."

Word Change: Natalie Bevan, Meekatharra Air Branch (WA) requested conference's permission for a word change

Conference permission granted

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to introduce immediately per child, a minimum home tutor allowance equivalent to the cost for the State Departments of Education to educate a child in the state systems."

Moved: Natalie Bevan Meekatharra Air (WA)

Seconded: Jim Quadrio Meekatharra Air (WA)

LOST

Explanation:

For at least the past 60 years isolated and remote mothers and families have been educating children at absolutely no cost or recompense to Government. The personal and financial pressure and stress of this responsibility and task is extremely onerous on mothers and families no matter whether the

schooling is conducted by SOTA, SIDE, Distance Education, or Registered Home schooling. In some instances, this stress has led to mothers having nervous breakdowns and mental health issues, families breaking up, and families relocating to towns or cities. Why should home tutors or parents who are tasked with remote education, and who have at least an 8 hour daily commitment of teaching their children at home along with all of their other daily chores of managing a household or working on property receive absolutely nothing, no recompense or recognition whatsoever. At the peak of COVID it was acknowledged by the then PM of Australia how onerous the task of home educating is, and that was primarily city based.

This is a matter of absolute social equity, and way overdue to be addressed, compensated and the contributions recognised that mothers / families have made to the education of children at home in remote and isolated environments.

M9 (A22) Katherine Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Social Services for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children Distance Education Allowance to reflect and assist with the true cost of educating geographically isolated children where distance education is the only choice.”

Moved: Sam Selmes Katherine (NT)

Seconded: Sally Dyer Katherine (NT)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Currently, the AIC provides an allowance for assistance for families with children who live in an isolated area, have a disability or have special health needs. The AIC Distance Education Allowance is currently approximately \$1,300 per child, per term for a child enrolled in compulsory schooling.

As a condition of enrolment to school of the air, it is a requirement for students to have adequate supervision and environment to undertake their studies. Although the AIC does alleviate a small part of the cost, the current allowance per child does not come close to the actual cost borne by the families of Distance Education students, many families employ a Home Tutor, or one parent must take on the responsibility of supervising children in the Distance Education classroom. The means that the family must forgo an income or one parent must take a step back from their role in the family business.

ICPA (Aust) has been advocating for some time for a Distance Education Teaching Subsidy, without success. It is disappointing that the government have not come to the table with assisting our isolated families who have no other choice than to educate their children via distance education and we applaud and commend the ICPA on all levels for all their diligence in pursuing the ongoing issue.

The fact stands, while the AIC Distance Education Allowance does help, it does not even come close to subsidising the cost of isolated families undertaking compulsory government funded education. In the situation where a family or company employs a home tutor, this needs to be a fulltime role. It is not practical for a home tutor to be employed for the 40 weeks of school, due to the isolated location of many of the families it is incredibly expensive and impractical for a home tutor to be ‘sent away’ during school holidays. To attract and retain a home tutor, continuation of employment is required not only for the hours spent supervising in the school room, but also for preparation and set up of the schoolroom, submission of the students work and keeping the area clean and tidy. Further to this the Home Tutor must be provided with board and keep, annual leave and superannuation entitlements in line with fair work guidelines. Further to the Home Tutors wage,

internet must be installed and maintained, classroom furniture and resources must be provided, which are all out of pocket expenses for the families.

A substantial increase to the AIC needs to be considered and then implemented in order to support these families. Many young families leave remote Australia because they simply cannot afford the huge costs incurred in the pursuit of educating their children via distance education, further to this we run the risk of the businesses potentially overlooking families when considering employment options because it simply costs so much, and there is little relief provided to support these businesses.

Case Study

Family (a) Three children in the classroom and parents employ a full-time Home Tutor. Children are enrolled in Katherine School of the Air. Governess has qualifications is Childcare.

Annual Costs for Family (a)

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Home Tutors (HT) Annual Salary | \$ 66,300 |
| HT Superannuation | <u>\$ 7,624</u> |
| | \$ 73,924 |

| | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------|
| HT Board & Keep (Annually) | cost to the employee | \$ 8,004 |
| School Fees & Laptop Hire | \$100 p/child | \$ 300 |
| Resources & Uniforms p/child | \$300 p/child | \$ 900 |
| Internet plan (annually) | | \$ 1,668 |
| Travel & Accommodation 4 Annual Trips (4 x 5nights) | | <u>\$ 8,500</u> |
| | | \$ 19,372 |

Plus, Enrolment and Start-up costs

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Enrolment | \$700 p /child |
| Internet Hardware | \$599 |
| Table & Chairs | \$300 p/child |
| Schoolrooms Supplies | \$600 |

M10 (A23) Monaro Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education and the Department of Education to further enable Regional University Study Hubs (RUSH’s) to provide support services with appropriate safeguards to local secondary students who are learning by distance.”

Moved: Pam Fletcher Monaro (NSW)
Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Regional University Study Hubs are funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education to provide support to online tertiary students. These hubs have staff, learning spaces, technology and connectivity to wrap around distance learners. and create a community of learning with the students in their localities. These facilities and services can easily be extended by the Hubs and staff to secondary students who are learning by distance, with appropriate safeguards around child protection. The Commonwealth financially supports the infrastructure and staffing in RUSH’s for tertiary studies and extending that support to secondary students will be a low marginal cost with potentially large benefits. This will particularly be the case where there are RUSH facilities in towns with no local secondary schooling, such as is the case in places like Boulia, Bedourie, Birdsville and Jundah. However, it is also the case in larger towns with RUSH’s where local secondary schools only

go to Year 10 or schools with year 11 and 12 only have narrow curriculums leading to a number of students studying single subject distance education which occurs in so many of our local schools.

Further, having secondary students utilise RUSH's will embed these students into a tertiary learning environment in amongst tertiary students, which is a fabulous exercise in widening participation for tertiary pathways and opportunities for these school students.

The Regional Education Commissioner, Hon Fiona Nash stated as an Issue for Consideration in her 2023 Annual Report that action be taken to increase regional students' access to a greater variety of secondary school subjects through in person and distance education measures, such as.....expanding the services of Regional University Study Hubs to include support services for secondary students, including enabling distance learning or opportunities to access specialist subjects. This motion supports that statement of the Regional Education Commissioner.

M11 (A24) Alice Springs Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) expand the publicity campaign for RREd Day to include key messaging, increase awareness, and reach a wider audience whilst boosting the visibility of being a home tutor in rural and remote areas."

Moved: Katy Hayes Alice Springs (NT)

Seconded: Kiya Gill Alice Springs (NT)

CARRIED

Explanation:

It is becoming increasingly difficult for rural and remote families to fill the roles of home tutors across Australia. This is partially due to there being a disconnect between the role of a home tutor and the agricultural industry, along with the significant costs of employment marketplaces such as SEEK. Many families use free platforms such as Facebook to advertise home tutor roles; however, this leads to a large gap in the recruitment process as many young people do not use this platform. A publicity campaign that educates and inspires people to consider being a home tutor would be a great initiative to attract people to this career.

Rural School Portfolio Presentation

Nikki Mahony

Rural School Portfolio Motions

M12 (A41) Marla Oodnadatta Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant ministers to permit the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) for students travel to Canberra to be calculated from their geographical place of learning for rural and remote Students."

Moved: Louise Kohler Marla Oodnadatta (SA)

Seconded: Kirsty Williams Marla Oodnadatta (SA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

The Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) is an Australian Government initiative designed to subsidise travel costs for students in Years 4–12 visiting Canberra for civics and citizenship education. Eligibility requires schools to be located at least 150 kilometres from Canberra, with rebates increasing based on distance. For instance, in 2024, rebates ranged from \$30 per student for distances of 150–499 km, up to \$510 for distances over 4,000 km.

The School of the Air (SOTA) in South Australia, administered through Open Access College, serves geographically remote students across the state. Its school location is in Port Augusta. In 2021, the government allowed SOTA's PACER rebate calculations to be based on Port Augusta rather than Adelaide, acknowledging the school's actual location.

However, this approach does not fully address the realities faced by SOTA families. Many students reside in areas significantly farther from Port Augusta, some over 700 km away. Consequently, the travel expenses from these remote locations to Canberra are substantially higher, and the current rebate structure does not adequately offset these costs. Our travel time can be in excess of 10 hours to get to the airport in Adelaide for our children to go to Canberra, yet schools in Tasmania are automatically classed as Zone 5 because of their air/travel expenses yet this is likely to be less costly. The current PACER rebate method does not consider the additional distances and associated costs incurred by students traveling from their actual residences to the school's administrative base before proceeding to Canberra.

To address this discrepancy, a more pragmatic approach would involve calculating PACER rebates based on the actual distances students travel from their homes to Canberra. This would provide a fairer subsidy, reflecting the unique circumstances of distance education students and place them in a different zone.

M13 (A42) Marla Oodnadatta Branch (SA)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant ministers for the additional loadings for the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) rates for students traveling to Canberra to be permanently implemented.”

Moved: Louise Kohler Marla Oodnadatta (SA)
Seconded: Kirsty Williams Marla Oodnadatta (SA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

The Australian Government should consider making the additional loadings to the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) permanent to address the ongoing financial challenges faced by rural and remote families. While temporary increases have been implemented to alleviate cost-of-living pressures, such as boosting the rebate for students from very remote, disadvantaged schools in the Northern Territory from \$510 to \$2,040, these measures should be made permanently from their current Pilot Program. Families in remote areas often incur significantly higher travel and accommodation expenses when organizing educational trips to Canberra, and these costs are not fully offset by the standard PACER rebates. By permanently incorporating additional loadings based on remoteness and socioeconomic disadvantage, the government would ensure equitable access to vital civics education experiences for all students, regardless of their geographic location. This approach would acknowledge the unique challenges faced by rural and remote communities and support their inclusion in national educational initiatives.

M14 (S9) Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

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

Moved: Ross Wood Goldfields Eyre (WA)
Seconded: Jen Critch Midwest (WA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Students from rural, regional, and remote areas are facing disruptions to their education due to teacher shortages. Teacher retention in rural areas is low and even in those schools where teachers are committed long term their workload is far greater than the metropolitan counterparts due to the lack of colleagues, 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 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 being called in without completing their training which effects the students and teacher alike.

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 targeted at graduates and not experienced 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.
- Clear potential for permanency.
- Increased potential for permanency in the city after completing a set amount of time in a rural, regional or remote schools.

Western Australian ICPA President's Report

Jasmyn Allen on behalf of Jane Cunningham

Curriculum Portfolio Presentation

Julia Broad on behalf of Heather Whigham-Reid

Curriculum Portfolio Motions

M15 (A13) Balranald Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education to ensure that all State and Territories have equitable dates for when National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing is conducted throughout Australia."

Moved: Libby McPhee NSW State Council on behalf of Balranald

Seconded: Annabel Strachan New South Wales State Council

LOST

Explanation:

There needs to be consistent consideration for the timing of NAPLAN testing that takes into account term 1 commencement dates including when public and private schools begin operating. In NSW alone there are two different start dates for when school begins, with Far West Schools starting a week later due to what is traditionally known as "Heat Week". This can dramatically impact the valuable classroom time that children in all levels of education are receiving. Term 1 is generally disrupted by certain events across the board such as swimming carnivals, new staff inductions, principal handovers and other school orientated events.

In NSW in the Western area, there are some schools that operate on a 9 day fortnight for schooling due to the geographical isolation of these schools and in Term 1, before NAPLAN testing, a school on

this time schedule was only able to provide students with 13 days of actual education days. This, in turn, detrimentally affected the students ability to be prepared for NAPLAN testing which results in inconsistent grading as compared to other students of this age.

The early testing method cannot clearly demonstrate a student's progress without taking into account all the time consuming and disrupting factors that have affected their learning progress in Term 1. It is also feasible to consider that a student that starts at least 2 weeks earlier than others in some states, have some slight advantage to their counterparts starting at a later date in other areas and states.

Presentation

Farewell to Federal Councillor Heather Whigham-Reid

Miscellaneous Motions

M16 (A71) Tambo Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Minister for Health and relevant government bodies to review and amend the current restriction of a maximum of two duplicate Medicare cards per family, to better accommodate families with multiple children living away from home for the purposes of education.”

Moved: Stacey Ryrie Tambo (QLD)

Seconded: Christy Bredhauer Tambo (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Currently, Medicare allows for only two duplicate Medicare cards to be issued per family. This restriction poses significant challenges for rural and remote families with multiple children (especially those under the age of fourteen who are unable to apply for their own personal Medicare card) who must live away from home to attend school, such as in boarding school arrangements.

For example, a family residing in Town A may have two parents and two or more children attending different boarding schools in Town B. Each child requires their own Medicare card to independently access medical services. However, due to the current limit of only two duplicate cards, families in this situation are unable to provide each child with an individual card, potentially delaying healthcare access or complicating medical appointments—particularly in emergency or unaccompanied situations.

This issue disproportionately affects families in rural and remote areas, where boarding school is often the only viable educational pathway from a young age. Amending the policy to increase the allowable number of duplicate Medicare cards in these circumstances would help ensure equitable access to healthcare and reduce unnecessary stress and logistical burden on families and health providers alike.

Presentation

Telstra

Michael Patterson, Regional General Manager for South Australia with Megan McLoughlin

Keynote Speaker

Roger Rasheed, Tennis, Business and Life Performance Coach

Communications Portfolio Presentation

Sally Brindal

Communications Portfolio Motions**M17 (A10) Kindon Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA Australia advocate to the Federal government and all stakeholders to address the continuing decline of mobile coverage in rural areas which affects small rural schools and rural school bus services.”

Moved: Daryl Martin Kindon (QLD)

Seconded: Amanda Martin Kindon (QLD)

CARRIED**Explanation:**

Despite ICPA continually lobbying the federal government to provide adequate mobile voice and data services to rural areas, it has generally been noted around our area that since the 3G system has been turned off, coverage has decreased dramatically and data inaccessible despite extra boosters and aerials being purchased. This has created issues with school buses and children being unable to contact parents or emergency services, students unable to access data to complete assignments and teachers having to rely on an ageing landline for communication. Telstra has significantly reduced coverage and data capabilities whilst at the same time increasing plan costs. This has forced families to pay even more money to purchase Starlink which seems to be the only reliable option.

M18 (A11) Katherine Branch (NT)

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

Moved: Sally Dyer Katherine (NT)

Seconded: Sam Selmes Katherine (NT)

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 no internet which affects their attendance and engagement at school.

Case Study:

A family is using NBN and Starlink and rely on generated power (no access to mains power). 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 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.

M19 (A12) Katherine Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Minister of Communication 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: Sally Dyer Katherine (NT)
Seconded: Sam Selmes Katherine (NT)

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.

M20 (S4) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) thank the Federal Government and previous Minister for Communications (the Hon Michelle Rowland), nbn and the Low Income and Digital Inclusion Forum (LIDIF) for the nbn School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI) that benefitted many rural and remote students.”

Moved: Katie Brown Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)
Seconded: Margaret Brock Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

To boost education opportunities and narrow the digital divide, the Australian Government provided around 30,000 qualifying families with school age children a free NBN service through its SSBI. Connected families receive free internet until 30 June 2028. 33% of these families are rural and remote. These families may well be unable to continue funding connectivity services beyond end of June 2028, due to their circumstances, compromising educational accessibility and optimal learning outcomes which in turn leads to the student being unable to fulfill their potential.

That the ICPA Federal thank the Government and those involved with bringing about the SSBI program (free nbn connection to low income families with school age children who did not have a working home internet connection), and now that this program is “full” (reached capacity), they aren’t taken any more applications, we’d like to see it continue and be expanded (more placements, continue to cover costs for those eligible families, and expanded application eligibility).

M21 (S5) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government that the current Regional, Rural and Remote student nbn School Student Broadband Initiative recipients continue to benefit from this initiative beyond the end of June 2028 to ensure that these students, continue to receive free internet for the entirety of their educational journey.”

Moved: Katie Brown Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)
Seconded: Margaret Brock Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

To boost education opportunities and narrow the digital divide, the Australian Government provided around 30,000 qualifying families with school age children a free NBN service through its SSBI. Connected families receive free internet until 30 June 2028. 33% of these families are rural and remote. These families may well be unable to continue funding connectivity services beyond end of June 2028, due to their circumstances, compromising educational accessibility and optimal learning outcomes which in turn leads to the student being unable to fulfill their potential.

That the ICPA Federal thank the Government and those involved with bringing about the SSBI program (free nbn connection to low income families with school age children who did not have a working home internet connection), and now that this program is “full” (reached capacity), they aren’t taken any more applications, we’d like to see it continue and be expanded (more placements, continue to cover costs for those eligible families, and expanded application eligibility).

M22 (S6) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate the Federal Government for an expansion of the NBN School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI) for Regional, Rural and Remote students.”

Moved: Katie Brown Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

Seconded: Margaret Brock Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

To boost education opportunities and narrow the digital divide, the Australian Government provided around 30,000 qualifying families with school age children a free NBN service through its SSBI – a programme that is now fully allocated. Connected families will continue to receive free internet until 30 June 2028 with 33% of these families being rural and remote. Now that this program is “full” (reached capacity) and no further applications are being accepted, we’d like to see it continue and be expanded (more placements, continue to cover costs for those eligible families, and expanded application eligibility) as families may well be unable to either continue or commence funding connectivity services beyond end of June 2028, due to their circumstances, compromising educational accessibility and optimal learning outcomes which in turn leads to the student/s being unable to fulfill their potential.

Presentation

nbn

Gavin Williams

School Travel Portfolio Presentation

Jenn Ruska

School Travel Motions

M23 (A43) Northern Territory State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to work with all Australian airlines to offer capped or discount fares to families of Geographically Isolated students for travel to/from boarding school.”

Moved: Jacinta McInerney Territory Wide (NT) for Northern Territory State Council

Seconded: 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 huge distances to either Darwin or Alice Springs to be able to fly to the school location. There are two/three airlines operating the NT 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.

The high cost of airline travel also inhibits families from travelling during school term to visit their children further, isolating the families from each other and can mean that families often miss key events in the children's school life.

M24 (A44) South Australia State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant bodies to provide a subsidy for rural and remote boarding and tertiary students accessing flights in areas of Australia where no student fare is available."

Moved: Dani Chapman South Australia State Council
Seconded: Belinda Hatcher South Australia State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Attending boarding school or tertiary education away from home presents many challenges for families. Getting students home during term breaks, exeats, or university holidays has become increasingly more difficult and expensive.

Many boarding and tertiary students are faced with the situation where they must travel large distances by long bus journeys or in private vehicles, significantly reducing their time at home. There are locations throughout the state where flights could shorten travel distances considerably; however, the high cost of airfares often prevents families from being able to use them.

Time at home is vital for the well-being of both boarding and tertiary students, especially given the limited opportunities they have to be in their home environment. Reducing travel time through more affordable flight options would ease the stress on families and improve the mental health and well-being of these students.

M25 (A45) South Australia State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to work with regional airlines, including Regional Express (REX), to establish a national fixed-fare scheme for students required to travel to and from rural and remote areas for education purposes, similar to Queensland's 'Bush to Boarding' initiative."

Moved: Dani Chapman South Australia State Council
Seconded: Belinda Hatcher South Australia State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Rural and remote students across Australia, including those in South Australia, deserve equitable access to education, which includes affordable and reliable travel to and from boarding schools. Many families have no option but to send their children away from home for secondary schooling, incurring high and often unpredictable travel costs.

In South Australia, ICPA families rely on Regional Express (REX) flights from towns such as Coober Pedy, Mount Gambier, Port Lincoln, Ceduna, and Broken Hill to Adelaide. A capped, concessional airfare scheme (similar to Queensland's 'Bush to Boarding' program), providing flexible, discounted fares for students, would offer significant financial relief and improve access to education for isolated families.

While REX is currently in voluntary administration, it is anticipated that the situation may stabilise by June 30, 2025, potentially enabling implementation of such an initiative. Federal leadership and coordination would be key in ensuring a nationally consistent, accessible solution in collaboration with relevant airlines and states.

M26 (A46) Port Augusta Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to and work collaboratively with airlines servicing remote and regional areas to develop and implement a dedicated student airfare to support equitable access to education for geographically isolated students."

Moved: Belinda Hatcher SA State Council on behalf of Port Augusta
Seconded: Pamela Cuffe Port Augusta (SA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Families living in remote areas often face high travel costs when students must fly between home and boarding schools or tertiary institutions. A consistent and affordable student fare would help ease the financial burden on families and support equal access to education, regardless of location. This initiative would align with ICPA's commitment to improving education access and affordability for rural and remote families.

M27 (A47) Broken Hill Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for QANTAS, REX and other regional airlines to offer reduced, capped priced fares on available seats to rural and remote secondary, tertiary and TAFE students travelling between their place of education or training and their home at any time on any flight."

Moved: Laura Finch Broken Hill (NSW)
Seconded: Rebecca Pearce Broken Hill (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

In NSW there are currently no fare discounts available to anyone, and the cost of air fares are extremely prohibitive for students.

For many secondary, tertiary and TAFE students living in rural and remote communities, air travel is often the most time efficient and safest form of travel. Our branch members have students travelling vast distances to attend their educational and training facilities. This can result in a whole day or two days' travel by rail or road, when there are time constraints this is not possible, especially if students

are driving with a restricted provisional license. Having reduced, capped prices would enable students to travel between home and the location of their education with greater ease and safety. This would encompass students travelling for leave, practical and theory components of their course requirements and also allow the security of travel to and from their educational institution and their home via the most direct route available when unplanned situations arise.

For this reason, a use of a discount code as put forward by Julia Creek Branch, Motions S9, S10 at the 2024 Federal Conference would be enable students to use air travel to complete their education and training needs to and from their home in a safe and time effective way. Air travel from rural and remote communities for students allows flexibility and greater options when completing their studies which will in turn ensure that students have a greater chance of completing their secondary and further education without having the burden of traveling vast distances with exorbitant costs.

These student capped fares would also encourage city students to consider taking on a rural and remote placement through their training as travel and distance would not be a barrier. This incentive will help promote rural and remote locations as an accessible option for various compulsory practical course requirements which in turn may lead to graduates choosing rural and remote locations being where they start their career.

M28 (A48) Alice Springs Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant bodies for a ‘Capped Student Fare’ for rural and remote students attending educational institutions within Australia who need to travel between their home residence and the educational establishment they attend.”

Katy Hayes, Alice Springs Branch (NT) requested conference’s permission for A48 (M28) to be deemed covered by A43 (M23).

Conference permission granted

DEEMED COVERED by M23 (A43)

Explanation:

Students who fall into this category should be able to book tickets, by air or road, at any time of the year without being subject to fare increases caused by peak tourist seasons, holidays, limited availability, or other factors that cause ticket prices to fluctuate.

Currently, some geographically isolated families, whose children attend schools interstate or intrastate, have their travel costs covered or coordinated. This includes travel from home to the nearest airport and onward to the school. There are existing policy mechanisms, such as ABSTUDY, that demonstrate how such systems can function. However, ABSTUDY does not cover airfares for all eligible students, and its support varies by case.

In Western Australia, capped student airfares are available through a government-supported booking agency. Additionally, the Department of Education provides assistance to Indigenous students with flight and travel arrangements.

We propose that this existing framework, used by agencies like ABSTUDY to book and secure student travel, be expanded to cover all geographically isolated families. At the very least, this should include access to capped student travel fares between a student’s home and the educational institution they attend.

Case Study:

A family has a child at a boarding school in their nearest capital city, over 1000km from their home. Return flights back to this family's nearest town at the end of Term 1 2025 for the school holidays cost the family \$725. This same flight is costing the family \$1,096 for the end of Term 2 2025 for the school holidays, with the flight cost increasing by over \$370 due to Term 2 holidays falling within their region's tourist season.

M29 (A49) North West Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to work with commercial airlines servicing regional and remote areas across Australia to introduce equitable, capped student fares or establish discount codes for rural and remote school-aged children and tertiary students required to travel for educational purposes."

Petie Rankin, North West Branch (SA) requested conference's permission for A49 (M29) to be deemed covered by A43 (M23).

Conference permission granted

DEEMED COVERED by M23 (A43)

Explanation:

For geographically isolated families, air travel is essential, not optional, for accessing education. Many students must travel long distances to attend boarding school or other educational services, and without affordable flights, families are often forced to choose between lengthy and exhausting road travel or incurring prohibitive costs.

We acknowledge Qantas' existing Resident Fare Program and appreciate the support this offers in select regions. However, this program is currently limited to parts of Northern Queensland, the Northern Territory and North-Western Australia, and only applies to a restricted number of seats per flight. Students from other regions such as South Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania are unable to access these discounts and continue to face excessive travel costs.

We request that ICPA (Aust) advocate for a more inclusive solution by working with commercial airlines to develop their own dedicated national student discount code. These could be structured as capped student fares or flexible, concession-based booking options, aimed specifically at school-aged children and tertiary students travelling between home and place of study.

The Queensland 'Bush to Boarding' initiative through REX Airlines demonstrates that such a program is both possible and effective. This model offers capped fares for students travelling from regional centres to major cities and could serve as a blueprint for broader national implementation. While REX is currently in voluntary administration, we note that this is expected to have concluded by 30 June 2025, potentially allowing for renewed partnerships in the near future.

Case Study:

One North West member, who lives 800km one way from Adelaide, tried booking her boarding student on a flight from Adelaide to Coober Pedy 4 weeks before the planned trip. The flights were coming up as completely booked out for the entire month, even that far in advance. Closer to the date, the flights became available but at an inflated cost of \$590 one way, with no return flights. The increase in flight costs when booking a week out compared to 3 weeks is horrendous and often very limited seating.

Training Portfolio Presentation

Anna McCorkle

Training Motions

M30 (A69) Richmond Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) be thanked for its long time advocacy for an increase to the commonwealth Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA), which has been announced recently by the Prime Minister.”

Moved: Kim Hughes Richmond (QLD)
Seconded: Kate Thompson Tasmania Branch (TAS)

CARRIED by acclamation

Conference permission sought for Louise Martin to resume the chair

Permission Granted

M31 (A70) Balranald Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education to extend the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) to include rural and remote students who must live away from home to complete a Trade Apprenticeship.”

Moved: Libby McPhee NSW State Council on behalf of Balranald
Seconded: Annabel Strachan New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The current eligibility for the TAP is restricted to those who are studying Certificate IV or above and therefore excludes Certificate III Trade Apprentices.

Rural and Remote students who do not live near towns or centres must relocate to complete their Apprenticeships, with some also needing to purchase expensive tools.

With a current oversupply of Tertiary Qualifications and a critical undersupply of Trade Qualifications, it is obvious that more support is needed for Apprentices.

The relocation costs to complete an apprenticeship are the same as a Tertiary student and the TAP would be an incentive to encourage rural and remote students to consider an apprenticeship or traineeship as a career path.

Presentation

Connellan Airways Trust
Declan Kelly

Presentation

Regional Tech Hub update
Kristen Coggan

Special Presentation

Certificate of Merit awarded to Nikki MacQueen

Introduction of the Federal Nominations

Jane Gloster

Conference Arrangements

Close of Business Day 1

DAY TWO Thursday 31 July 2025

Conference Resumes 8:00am

Annual General Meeting

AGM declared open

Introduction of Delegates in attendance and apologies

Kelly Ostwald

AGM Motions

Acceptance of the 2024 AGM Minutes

M32 (AGM1) ICPA Federal Council

“That the Minutes of the 2024 AGM as circulated on 16 July 2025 be accepted.”

Moved: Sally Brindal Federal Council

Seconded: Shennah Joiner Federal Council

CARRIED

Federal Treasurer’s Report

Melissa Kerr

Adoption of Financial Statements

M33 (AGM2) ICPA Federal Council

“That the 2024 - 2025 Audited Report be received and accepted.”

Moved: Melissa Kerr Federal Council

Seconded: Shennah Joiner Federal Council

CARRIED

Setting of the 2026 Membership Fees

M34 (AGM3) ICPA Federal Council

“That the Federal membership fee be set at \$25.00 per member family for the 2026 membership year.”

Moved: Melissa Kerr Federal Council

Seconded: Shennah Joiner Federal Council

CARRIED

M35 (AGM4) ICPA Federal Council

“That Corporate Membership be set at \$300.00 per organisation for the 2026 membership year.”

Moved: Melissa Kerr Federal Council

Seconded: Shennah Joiner Federal Council

CARRIED

M36 (AGM5) ICPA Federal Council

“That School Corporate Membership be set at \$300.00 per school or educational institution for the 2026 membership year.”

Moved: Melissa Kerr Federal Council
Seconded: Shannah Joiner Federal Council

CARRIED

Appointment of Auditor

M37 (AGM6) ICPA Federal Council

“That Queensland Audit Services, be appointed as auditor for the 2025 - 2026 financial year.”

Moved: Melissa Kerr Federal Council
Seconded: Shannah Joiner Federal Council

CARRIED

Conference Venue Motions

M38 (AGM7) Queensland State Council

“That ICPA Queensland State Council hosts the 2026 ICPA (Aust) Federal Conference on behalf of ICPA (Aust) on 29 and 30th July 2026 on the Gold Coast.”

Moved: Wendy Henning Queensland State Council
Seconded: Sancia Fegan Queensland State Council

CARRIED by acclamation

M39(AGM8)

“That the Tasmania Branch of The Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association host the 2027 Federal Conference in Tasmania.”

Moved: Kate Thompson Tasmania Branch (TAS)
Seconded: Kim Hughes Richmond Branch (QLD)

CARRIED by acclamation

Election of Federal Council 2025 - 2026

All positions declared vacant and the Returning Officer Jane Gloster took the chair for the election of officers.

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| President | Louise Martin Nominated: Seconded: DULY ELECTED | Tambo (QLD) Stacey Rynie Kimberley Rains Tambo (QLD) Tambo (QLD) |
| Vice President | Nikki Mahony Nominated: Seconded: DULY ELECTED | Dawson Valley (QLD) Sarah Cox Kelly Ostwald Dawson Valley (QLD) Southern Downs (QLD) |
| Vice President | Sally Brindal Nominated: Seconded: DULY ELECTED | Midwest (WA) Kym Ross Louise Martin Lakes District (WA) Tambo (QLD) |

54th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Secretary | Kelly Ostwald Nominated: Seconded: DULY ELECTED | Southern Downs (QLD) Annabel Cleeve Sarah McMeniman | Southern Downs (QLD) Richmond (QLD) |
| Assistant Secretary | Shennah Joiner Nominated: Seconded: DULY ELECTED | Monaro (NSW) Bill Stephens Pam Fletcher | Monaro (NSW) Monaro (NSW) |
| Treasurer | Melissa Kerr Nominated: Seconded: DULY ELECTED | Katherine (NT) Jill Greenfield Nikki Mahony | North West (SA) Dawson Valley (QLD) |
| Publicity Officer | Kym Ross Nominated: Seconded: DULY ELECTED | Lakes District (WA) Sally Brindal Megan Dorrell | Midwest (WA) Lakes District (WA) |
| Ex-Officio Immediate Past President | | | |
| COMMITTEE | Jennifer Ruska Nominated Seconded: DULY ELECTED | Julia Creek (QLD) Prue Vaschina Kerry Morton | Boulia-Bedourie-Birdsville (QLD) Boulia-Bedourie-Birdsville (QLD) |
| | Tim Fletcher Nominated: Seconded: DULY ELECTED | Monaro (NSW) Shennah Joiner Pam Fletcher | Monaro (NSW) Monaro (NSW) |
| | Anne Chater Nominated: Seconded: DULY ELECTED | Dawson Valley (QLD) Elizabeth Shoecraft Sarah Cox | Dawson Valley (QLD) Dawson Valley (QLD) |
| | Anna McCorkle Nominated: Seconded: DULY ELECTED | Bourke (NSW) Wally Mitchell Shennah Joiner | LM Bourke (NSW) Monaro (NSW) |
| | Jill Greenfield Nominated: Seconded: DULY ELECTED | North West (SA) Shennah Joiner Melissa Kerr | Monaro (NSW) Katherine (NT) |

| | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| COMMITTEE | Amber Driver | Alice Springs (NT) | |
| | Nominated: | Nikki Mahony | Dawson Valley (QLD) |
| | Seconded: | Julia Broad | Charters Towers (QLD) |
| | DULY ELECTED | | |
| | Prue Vaschina | Boulia-Bedourie- Birdsville (QLD) | |
| | Nominated: | Jennifer Ruska | Julia Creek (QLD) |
| | Seconded: | Shennah Joiner | Monaro (NSW) |
| | DULY ELECTED | | |

Vote of thanks to Jane Gloster as Returning Officer

Call for any other AGM business: nil.

Close of AGM at 8.37am

Conference Resumes

Welcome by Federal ICPA President Louise Martin
Introduction and badge presentation of New Federal Council

Conference Arrangements Edwina Bowie and Mija Reynolds

Introduction of Delegates and Guests Kelly Ostwald

Early Childhood Education and Care Presentation Julia Broad

Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio Motions

M40 (A25) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate 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 4-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 NSEA proficient accreditation and elect to work in the Public School System, at a Connected Community 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 \$148,671p.a. and includes:

| | Childcare | School |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|
| Base Salary | 94,478.80 | 157,842 |
| Directors Allowance | 7,745.92 | |

54th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

| | | |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|
| 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 | | 5,000 |
| Experienced Teacher Benefit | | 10,000 |
| Climatic Allowance | | 3,000 (approx.) |
| Additional Personal leave days | | |
| Additional Annual leave value in \$ terms | | 26,307 |
| | | |
| TOTAL | 106,477.24 | 255,149 |

- 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.

M41 (A26) Louth Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to 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 in rural and remote areas.”

Moved: Annabel Strachan NSW State Council on behalf of Louth

Seconded: Libby McPhee, NSW State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

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

M42 (A27) Tambo Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to develop and implement targeted incentives to attract and retain early childhood educators in rural and remote areas, to ensure the sustainability and reliability of early childhood and care services in these regions.”

Moved: Stacey Ryrie Tambo (QLD)

Seconded: Christy Bredhauer Charleville (QLD)

CARRIED**Explanation:**

Access to consistent, high-quality early childhood education and care is vital for rural and remote families, both for children’s development and to enable workforce participation by parents. However, communities such as Tambo, Queensland, are experiencing significant challenges in attracting and retaining qualified early childhood educators.

The Tambo Childcare Centre currently operates only four days per week and is often forced to reduce hours or close entirely on short notice due to staff shortages. This unpredictability has a cascading impact on working families. In small communities, where every service and business plays a critical role, this affects local economies, limits job creation, and places stress on families who are trying to balance childcare with employment.

To address these challenges, there is an urgent need for federal-level incentives such as:

- Relocation allowances and housing support for early years educators
- Rural placement bonuses
- Student debt forgiveness or subsidised training for those committing to rural service
- Professional development and mentoring tailored to remote contexts

Such incentives would help build a stable workforce and enable isolated daycare centres to deliver consistent, full-time services, supporting not just children and their families, but broader communities.

M43 (A28) Katherine Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Minister for Social Services to urgently commit to increasing the In-Home Care (IHC) Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Hourly Rate Cap, to ensure that families with no alternative child care options are not forced to shoulder inequitable financial burdens.”

Moved: Sam Selmes Katherine (NT)

Seconded: Sally Dyer Katherine (NT)

CARRIED**Explanation:**

The current IHC Hourly Rate Cap is not only outdate, but also unjust. It is calculated using a base wage model suitable for standard centre-based care: full-time educators, working 38 hours a week, during standard business hours. This completely ignores the realities of In Home Care delivery, where educators regularly work up to 50 hours per week, across varied days and nonstandard hours, supporting children with complex needs in often isolated, high risk, or hard to staff environments.

Families who rely on In Home Care do so because there is no other option. These families include shift workers, sole carers, rural and remote households, and parents of children with additional needs. Yet they are being punished for their circumstances, paying up to four times the out of pocket costs of families in urban areas who can access standard childcare.

The IHC Hourly Rate Cap does not account for:

- The award wages required for a diploma qualified educator delivering care in sole charge, often high needs settings.
- Essential on costs such as penalty rates, superannuation, Workcover, payroll tax, and insurances.
- The cost of accommodation and board often required for remote placements.
- Nor the administrative, compliance and governance burden borne by IHC services themselves.

Worse still, families using IHC must self-fund all materials, excursions, incursions, and learning resources, costs that are included in centre-based care but are entirely out of pocket under the current IHC model.

National reviews, by the ACCC, PwC, the Productivity Commission and most recently ACECQA and Dandolo, have repeatedly acknowledged the structural and financial shortcomings of the IHC funding model. No further reviews are required. What is needed now is urgent action.

Every Australian child has the right to access high quality, affordable early education and care. This right should not be determined by their postcode, their parents' work hours, or the complexity of their needs.

We therefore call upon the Minister for Social Services to immediately commit to increasing the IHC CCS Hourly Rate Cap to a level that reflects the true cost of delivering this essential program, before more families are forced to exit the workforce, educators leave the sector, and children are left behind.

| 2 Parent Family Earning \$115,000 per annum | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| CHILDCARE CENTRE 50 hours a week (Access to a variety of skilled Educators) | | | | |
| | Full Weekly Cost | Subsidy Paid for Week | Gap Fee Per child | TOTAL GAP |
| Child 1 | \$ 750.00 | \$ 597.50 | \$ 152.50 | |
| Child 2 | \$ 750.00 | \$ 679.00 | \$ 71.00 | \$ 294.50 |
| Child 3 | \$ 750.00 | \$ 679.00 | \$ 71.00 | |
| | | | | \$ 2,250.00 |
| In Home Care 50 hours a week (Basic Educator, minimal skills) | | | | |
| | Full Weekly Cost | Subsidy Paid for Week | Gap Fee Per child | TOTAL GAP |
| Child 1 | \$ 2,370.00 | \$ 1,626.00 | \$ 744.00 | |
| Child 2 | \$ 5.00 | \$ 4.00 | \$ 1.00 | \$ 746.00 |
| Child 3 | \$ 5.00 | \$ 4.00 | \$ 1.00 | |
| | | | | \$ 2,380.00 |
| In Home Care 50 hours a week (Diploma Educator, higher skills) | | | | |
| | Full Weekly Cost | Subsidy Paid for Week | Gap Fee Per child | TOTAL GAP |
| Child 1 | \$ 2,635.00 | \$ 1,626.00 | \$ 1,009.00 | |
| Child 2 | \$ 5.00 | \$ 4.00 | \$ 1.00 | \$ 1,011.00 |
| Child 3 | \$ 5.00 | \$ 4.00 | \$ 1.00 | |
| | | | | \$ 2,645.00 |

M44 (A29) Cunnamulla (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education to act on recommendations from the 2023 In Home Care (IHC) review, The Parenthood’s Choiceless report, and the ACCC 2023 Childcare Inquiry, and develop a tailored In Home Care (IHC) system for geographically isolated families that effectively delivers fit for purpose, financially sustainable, quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) to rural and remote families.”

Moved: Christy Bredhauer Charleville (QLD) for Cunnamulla Branch (QLD)
Seconded: Louise Winten Charleville (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

The 2023 IHC review highlights that the current system fails to address the unique needs of geographically isolated families. This cohort, predominantly farmers, faces higher costs and logistical challenges. A more tailored system can lower costs, improve care, and ease the administrative burden for families and providers.

This matter is urgent as the Childcare Inquiry 2023 identified that IHC daily fees increased by twice as much as childcare centres (approximately \$25 per day increase compared to \$13) and out of pockets remain approximately 25% higher for IHC families, not including additional expenses like travel, board, and food, between 2022-2023.

Key Challenges:

- **High Provider Fees:**

Geographically isolated families face out-of-pocket costs that are exacerbated by high provider fees. The Childcare Inquiry 2023 found that IHC fees rose significantly more than those of childcare centres, leaving families with higher out-of-pocket expenses. Despite high fees, the Childcare Inquiry 2023 also found profitability of IHC providers and earnings of educators are low.

Case Study: Families are required to use a third-party provider to utilise their Child Care Subsidy (CCS). These providers charge fees to families and these fees are not covered by the CCS. A 2025 quote from a provider included over \$10,000 in annual fees. In this case study, the CCS was 26.66% of eligible costs (excludes the \$10,000 in fees). For a 37.5 hr working week on the lowest pay rate for an educator, the cost would total approximately \$1530 per week. \$408 of this would be covered by the subsidy but an additional \$193 per week in fees would also be charged, negating almost half the subsidy. This fee structure effectively reduces the subsidy, effectively creating a base gap fee of \$5.15/hour.

- **Administrative Burden:**

The IHC system is overly rigid and requires frequent administrative updates, which are inefficient for families with stable, long-term care needs. The 2023 IHC review found that streamlining processes could improve efficiency, reduce family stress, and ensure better oversight. The system is unnecessarily inflexible, with example issues including limitations on family members providing care or caring for children from multiple families at the same time.

- **Labour Shortages:**

The geographically isolated cohort for IHC struggles with recruitment. The typical demographic of educators for these placements are young and inexperienced, and they face complex and unattractive employment conditions. Addressing these challenges is vital to reducing workforce shortages and improving care quality.

Case Study:

A private recruitment service was utilised by a family to help recruit an educator. The family discussed needs with the recruiter and identified the educator would need to be eligible and employed through an IHC provider so the family could claim their CCS. The recruiter expressed reluctance to recruit for IHC positions due to the unfavourable employment structure – noting the typical demographic of educators was a young, female school leaver and the responsibility of setting themselves as a contractor (the model of employment used by many providers) was a large deterrent. A farm business faced a similar issue when a worker with relevant experience, but not qualifications (having cared for children for several years and demonstrating to the farm business a high level of care and shared values with the

family), could not be employed through the IHC program. Due to lacking qualifications, the educator would have needed to enrol in a program to progress an appropriate qualification to meet the eligibility requirements for educators. This was not possible as study VISAs do not allow foreign students to study remotely, which would be inherently required of someone studying and working as an IHC educator for a family accessing the system due to geographic isolation.

- **Income Prediction**

For farming families, predicting income for subsidy eligibility is challenging due to fluctuations in farm income. This unpredictability can result in families paying back significant amounts, while still facing high provider fees.

Case Study:

A farming family weighed the risk of losing subsidy eligibility after a good financial year, having difficulty estimating the next year's income. They decided not to access the CCS. If they chose to go through the IHC system and found by the EOFY they were ineligible, they would have been required to pay back whatever subsidy they had claimed (likely a minimum of \$20,000) and would have also expended \$10,000 of non-recoupable provider fees to have accessed the IHC system. The family instead elected to pay the educator at their own expense (approximately \$60,000 per year). At the EOFY, tax planning allowed the family to average their income over 5 years and used other strategies designed to accommodate for the variable income agricultural businesses are known for. This meant they would have been eligible for highest level of the CCS, rather than the lowest or being completely ineligible as they had considered possible when they chose not to use the system.

Proposed Solutions:

A tailored IHC system for geographically isolated families can directly address the challenges of cost, administration, workforce suitability, and financial predictability by aligning program design with the realities of rural and remote life. Such a system would enable:

- **Cost Reduction by Recognising Family and Business Capabilities:**

Many farming families operate sophisticated businesses and are well-equipped to manage the employment of educators. A tailored system could enable these families to take on employer responsibilities—such as recruitment, risk management, and onboarding—eliminating the need for costly provider-managed employment services. This would significantly reduce fees while possibly retaining provider involvement in areas such as quality assurance and regulatory oversight, where they can offer the greatest value.

- **Streamline Administration for Long-Term, Stable Users:**

Customised administrative processes would reflect the stable and ongoing care arrangements typical in remote settings. Reducing the frequency and complexity of reviews, allowing shared educator models, and offering more flexible care options (e.g., support for part-family care or multi-family arrangements) would make the system more accessible and sustainable.

- **Address Workforce Suitability and Retention:**

A tailored approach would recognise that the IHC workforce in remote areas is often young, annual (gap-year), or from overseas. The system could support these workers through simplified employment pathways (e.g. employer-based roles rather than contractor models), flexible qualification options, and coordination with immigration and training departments to better align regulation with workforce realities.

- **Improve Financial Certainty Through Income Flexibility:**

By basing subsidy eligibility on prior-year income, a tailored system could protect families from subsidy clawbacks due to income volatility—an inherent part of farming life. This would provide greater financial security and make IHC a more viable long-term option.

Costs and Benefits:

- **Government:** While there will be costs to restructuring the system, the government will save by reducing the cost of IHC services, which are currently the most expensive childcare option. This can also reduce the need for proposals such as higher IHC hourly rate caps.
- **Providers:** Providers may see a reduction in business for the geographically isolated cohort, but they could focus more on quality assurance and other large cohorts, potentially improving profitability.
- **Families:** Tailored systems would reduce administrative burdens and provider fees, saving families time and money.
- **Educators:** More attractive employment options, including better support for meeting eligibility requirements, would help retain staff and address workforce shortages.
- **Children:** Tailored systems have the greatest potential to deliver what matters most: safe, nurturing, and consistent early education and care for children—no matter where they live. By designing a system that responds to the realities of rural family life, we can remove the barriers that currently limit access and quality. This means children in remote communities will not only have equal opportunity to learn and thrive, but will benefit from care environments that are stable, community-connected, and developmentally enriching. At its core, a tailored IHC system is not just a policy reform, it is a commitment to equity, wellbeing, and the future of Australia’s youngest rural citizens.

M45 (A30) Katherine Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education to 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: Sally Dyer Katherine (NT)
Seconded: Sam Selmes 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 is 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 wouldn’t have access to childcare. By potentially increasing the number of children living at a location, all children will benefit from the 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 be 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.

M46 (A31) Marree Air Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Early Childhood and the relevant departments for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services, to consider the unique needs of rural and remote families when it comes to the eligibility criteria for funding and benefits such as the Child Care Subsidy (CCS)."

Moved: Ellen Litchfield Marree Air (SA)

Seconded: Jessica Bell Marree Air (SA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

In South Australia, the Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise (RICE) provides an Outback Childcare program that enables families to receive short-term childcare in the family home when they are in need of childcare during busy times or if they need respite or emergency care. Currently, this program does not attract any government support or funding, resulting in RICE having to rely on community donations or asking families to pay an unsubsidised full-rate hourly fee for the service.

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) can only be received when a child is enrolled through a centre-based childcare facility or through the In Home Care (IHC) scheme. However, these schemes do not meet the needs of all remote families, as many are unable to support full-time in-home care. The temporary nature of the RICE Outback Childcare program is appealing to many families, as it allows them to plan care during the times of the year, they need it most, without the burden of housing a full-time carer.

The cost of accessing childcare without the CCS is an unaffordable option, leaving families to try to find other ways to manage childcare needs. Families living in rural and remote areas have no real option of childcare like community creches, nearby centres, or extended informal support networks. Living on a remote cattle station 1,000 km from Adelaide makes relying on informal support networks for childcare impractical and often impossible.

A recent report indicated that the Federal Electorate of Grey (which encompasses 90% of South Australia, including all its rural and remote areas) has the worst access to childcare in the country. The Outback Childcare service needs to be made affordable for families, as well as viable for RICE to manage and administer.

If the eligibility criteria for the CCS were to consider the needs of rural and remote families, allowing them to access childcare through the Outback Childcare program or similar.

M47 (A32) Balranald Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Education for continued funding and ongoing commitment into the early childhood sector in rural and remote Australia.”

Moved: Annabel Strachan NSW State Council on behalf of Balranald

Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

All children should have access to universal early childhood education; we ask that children in rural and remote areas be included and that geographical location be included as a disadvantage to the access to education. It is vital that in the first 5 years of a child’s life that access to early education provides the best possible opportunity for a child to thrive later in their primary education access. This access should not be hindered by where they live or access to services that can provide this service but can’t access the reasonable funding needed to provide service in these areas, also known as “childcare deserts.”

- That there is support paid for further education of staff in facilities as an incentive to continue teaching/carer qualifications to ensure places at centres are supported and best fulfilled
- Some centres can’t cater for the enrolled children because of the minimum requirements of qualifications for staff, leaving centres that can cater for up to 60 children only being able to care for 24
- Utilising already established centres/ mobile care units and allowing them to access better/ more funding to enable them to employ more staff which in turn provides more care facilitation and places they can provide this care to
- Funding streams such as the child care subsidy scheme be made available to services that provide rural and remote early childhood education to allow them to meet operational costs

M48 (A33) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to relevant Ministers 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 are able to 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 & very remote services have to meet significantly higher staffing & 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.

M49 (A34) New South Wales State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate for legislative change to section 5(1) of the Children (Education and Care Services) National Law to enable the provision of Early Childhood Preschool Programs on rural and remote school sites, available to both three- and four-year-olds, not governed by the school itself.”

Moved: Annabel Strachan New South Wales State Council
Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The b4-Kindy program operates exempt from the definition of an education and care service under section 5(1) of the Children (Education and Care Services) National Law. As per the Law, an education and care service is any service providing or intending to provide education and care on a regular basis to children under 13 years of age other than *a school providing full-time education to children, including children attending in the year before kindergarten but not including a preschool program delivered in a school or a preschool that is registered as a school.*

The b4-Kindy program:

- Is provided by a school.
- The school provides full-time education to children, including children in the year before kindergarten.
- The children attending are in the year before kindergarten, but not two years before kindergarten or earlier.
- The program is an integrated early learning program delivered by a School Learning Support Officer (SLSO) under the direction of a teacher. It is not a preschool program. The National Law defines a preschool program as an early childhood educational program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher to children in the year that is two years before kindergarten.

Operating with the above the limitations, three-year-olds are not able to access early childhood education in their rural and remote communities, making it more challenging to reach the recommended 600 hours of early childhood education prior to commencing school.

In addition to this, the b4-Kindy program must also ensure compliance under the Crown Employees (School Administrative and Support Staff) Award. SLSOs employed to deliver the program must work under the direction and supervision of a teacher to support the achievement of educational outcomes. SLSOs are not to supervise students on their own. Regardless of the activity, a teacher must be in sight and/or hearing distance at all times. ICPA NSW is advocating for state Legislative change to allow SLSO’s the responsibility of sole supervision, allowing for those three and four-year-olds the opportunity to be located in a purpose specific room separate from primary students.

M50 (A35) Cunnamulla Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education and relevant early childhood organisations to deliver regular and reliable appropriate early childhood programs for highly vulnerable and remote locations across Australia.”

Moved: Christy Bredhauer Charleville (QLD) on behalf of Cunnamulla
Seconded: Louise Winten Charleville (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Cunnamulla is a remote and rural community in southwest Queensland. This community has continued to struggle to achieve high quality early childhood programs for many years despite the efforts from supportive groups and organisations.

The community has seen small and short investments into the early childhood space that has provided no reliable or regular programs.

In Queensland, the RAFS (Remote Area Families Service) have visited the area in late 2024, hosting 2-3 property-based playgroups. However, this has not continued, Cunnamulla ICPA has reached out multiple times to RAFS and have had no response.

The KEYS (Keeping Early Years in the Spotlight), an initiative by the Schools Plus Program was unable to continue its goals with the loss of key personal and the dramatic impacts of COVID. The KEYS group felt unsupported by the local early childhood and education and care office, with promises of support and no follow up. The current remainder of funding is being used for a playgroup that is operating once a week for families however there is significant uncertainty as to what happens when the pool of funding for this group is complete. Estimated to be some time in Semester 2, 2025.

The Queensland's first five forever program that was run at the Cunnamulla Library for families is no longer running and has been missed by many in town and remote families. The Gidgee Kids Daycare centre in Cunnamulla has noted some improvements in staffing and the organisation of children's rooms, however, continues to fight for appropriately trained staff, as current operations limit the spaces available to families. This impacting not just children's early childhood experiences but the ability for families to enter the local workforce. This in turn creates a decline in the community's population, with families leaving town to access care for their children. The centre has had incredible difficulties in the establishment of a consistent kindergarten program having severe impacts on children's preparation for transition to school.

Cunnamulla Aboriginal Corporation for Health provides ongoing health services weekly to families with the support of Bush Kids; however, parents and families are not receiving regular communications and feel their health concerns are not being recognised or addressed until their child is reaching school.

Conversations around Kath Dickson toy library have begun but Cunnamulla ICPA local members and other key community stakeholders have not been included in these conversations and are unsure what this means for Cunnamulla and surrounding families.

In previous years we have seen the closure of mobile playgroups that have supported isolated families on properties. Again, a small investment saw a mobile playgroup return in 2019, with only a commitment of funding for 12 months, this included an injection of educational resources that were later inaccessible when the project came to its conclusion.

The AEDC 2024 data continues to be unavailable for community to use in conversations for strategic planning for early childhood programs that influence successful transitions to school. Our community in 2021 had the highest birth rate per capita in the country yet we have no consistent or sustainable early childhood programs.

Our community needs regular and reliable programs where early childhood and families are at the forefront of their organisations mission.

Presentation

Farewell to Federal Councillor Julia Broad

Northern Territory ICPA President's Report

Moira Lanzarin

Presentation

The Hon Blair Boyer MP
South Australian Minister for Education, Training and Skills

M51 (A39) North West Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate for the extension of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance to include geographically isolated children enrolled in eligible pre-compulsory early childhood programs."

Moved: Petie Rankin North West (SA)

Seconded: Candice Brown North West (SA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Extending the AIC to cover pre-compulsory early childhood education would assist families in geographically isolated areas to create rich, engaging, and well-resourced home learning environments for their young children, helping reduce the early learning gap between remote and urban peers.

This support is especially critical with the introduction of three-year-old kindergarten in South Australia. Without adequate financial backing, this initiative risks unintentionally widening the educational divide for the most remote children.

ICPA (Aust)'s ongoing advocacy in this space has gained traction, with interest shown by federal election candidates in the seat of Grey. Our branch fully endorses Federal Council's continued lobbying for this much needed and equitable reform.

Boarding School/Hostel/Second Home Portfolio Presentation

Amber Driver

Presentation

Richard Stokes
Australian Boarding School Association Update

Boarding Education Motions

M52 (A1) Walgett Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant federal government departments to continue and expand the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program pilot."

Moved: Annabel Strachan NSW State Council on behalf of Walgett

Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

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

This scholarship has been greatly received by our members, and we will be an incredible help to assist the receipts 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 local alternatives don't exist and send their children to a school that offers boarding.

We acknowledge that the number of scholarships were 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.

M53 (A2) South Australia State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant government departments to reestablish the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program (CRSP)."

Moved: Dani Chapman South Australia State Council
Seconded: Belinda Hatcher South Australia State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program was introduced in 2024 as a pilot initiative and was warmly welcomed by ICPA members. It provided successful applicants with the opportunity to attend boarding school at a subsidised financial cost.

For many families living in regional and remote areas of Australia, boarding school is the only viable option for their children to access compulsory secondary education. The CRSP offered substantial financial relief to these families and was a meaningful step toward addressing the significant educational disadvantage faced by geographically isolated students.

Furthermore, the program was viewed as a positive acknowledgement by the Federal Government of the urgent financial pressures faced by rural and remote families in securing equitable educational opportunities for their children. Its reinstatement would continue to support students who, through no fault of their own, are denied local access to quality secondary schooling.

M54 (A3) Queensland State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government and all relevant departments for the permanent establishment of a Rural Hardship Education Fund (RHEF), to support rural and remote families eligible for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance to meet educational costs during times of unforeseen and unprecedented natural disasters."

Moved: Wendy Henning Queensland State Council
Seconded: Sancia Fegan Queensland State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

This year alone, Queensland has experienced devastating and widespread flooding in locations across the state. Whole towns in remote areas have been evacuated and experienced catastrophic outcomes due to unforeseen weather events. Queensland is not the only state affected by these unforeseen events, as South Australia is simultaneously experiencing one of the worst droughts on record, Western Australia has experienced cyclones and bush fires, and other states have experienced weather and industry events outside of their control.

In the wake of catastrophic flooding and other natural disasters, families lose their livelihoods, homes and school rooms where distance education takes place. Geographically isolated families are suddenly faced with the unenviable task of cleaning up and rebuilding in complete isolation while still needing to support their children’s education, often with no warning or safety net.

Rural businesses that experience widespread damage to infrastructure, plant and livestock losses stand to be affected long-term which places enormous financial pressure on many families. Employing a governess to relieve the pressure of educating via Schools of Distance Education (SDE’s) is often impossible due to financial costs falling back on families as no financial subsidy currently exists to assist with the cost of supplying a distance education home supervisor.

Additionally, in rural and remote locations, gaining an education often requires students to leave their homes and communities to attend boarding school and/or to undertake tertiary or training pathways. These natural disaster events are unexpected and impact on the affordability of boarding school fees or assisting their children into further studies. Without financial assistance, the education of disaster affected students is significantly disrupted.

The development of a permanent RHEF would provide emergency relief to families eligible for the AIC allowance in disaster-stricken regions, ensuring their children have access to schooling, tertiary and trade opportunities and provide relief to parents who are educating their children via SDE when their families are struggling to recover. Unforeseen disasters and industry crises are not something that can be planned for. Overnight, family income and abilities to meet educational payments can be taken away.

It is crucial that a permanent Rural Hardship Education Fund is established to provide financial assistance to rural and remote families, ensuring their children can continue their education during and after periods of natural disasters and to reduce educational disadvantage.

M55 (A4) Tambo Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and relevant ministers to ensure that the Commonwealth’s recurrent school funding model includes provisions for boarding schools to receive a Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemption on accommodation provided to essential boarding staff, where the school accommodates students from remote and very remote areas as defined by the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) score.”

Moved: Stacey Ryrie Tambo (QLD)
Seconded: Christy Bredhauer Charleville (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

In the past year, ICPA Federal Council identified the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) on boarding school staff accommodation as a Federal Focus issue. As part of this advocacy, during face-to-face delegations in Canberra, all relevant Senators and Ministers were extensively briefed on the matter, with comprehensive supporting documentation provided. This issue is therefore not new to the current government.

The nature of boarding schools is that they are primarily located in metropolitan areas. However, these schools enroll students from across Australia—predominantly from geographically isolated, remote, and very remote regions, as defined by the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) score. For these students, boarding is not a choice but a necessity due to the absence of accessible local schooling options.

Under the current policy, schools that provide on-site residential accommodation to essential supervisory staff are subject to FBT on that housing. This taxation imposes unnecessary and disproportionate financial pressure on schools that are already working to support some of Australia's most educationally disadvantaged students.

These increased operational costs are often passed directly onto families in the form of higher boarding fees, further compounding the financial burden on rural and remote families who already face significant expenses to access education.

ICPA calls for an exemption from FBT on residential accommodation provided to essential boarding staff, specifically for schools that serve students from rural, remote and very remote areas, as determined by ARIA.

Removing this tax would:

- Reduce operational costs for boarding schools
- Enable schools to pass savings onto families through lower boarding fees
- Assist in attracting and retaining qualified, committed staff in a demanding residential setting
- Help ensure equitable access to education for isolated students

Accommodation provided to essential supervisory staff at boarding schools is not a luxury or optional benefit—it is a core component of student care and safety. Therefore, boarding schools should not be penalised through FBT for providing this essential service.

M56 (A5) ICPA Federal Council

“That ICPA(Aust) advocate that the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) continue discussions with the Federal Government to lobby for a Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemption for schools/boarding facilities providing on site living facilities for essential supervising staff who must live on site.”

Moved: Melissa Kerr ICPA Federal Treasurer

Seconded: Amber Driver ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

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

The removal of the FBT on residential accommodation for essential supervisory staff employed by boarding schools will significantly reduce the costs incurred by some boarding schools. Staff accommodation is a fundamental necessity of a boarding school. Boarding school staff must live on site to supervise the boarders in their care.

During the ICPA(Aust) Federal Conference, held in Sydney in July 2024, a motion was presented and carried therefore providing the policy enabling ICPA (Aust) to pursue this issue at the highest level. (Motion S2, 2024)

In early October 2024, ICPA(Aust) Federal Councillors attended face to face delegations at Parliament House in Canberra where we met with several Senators and Ministers to discuss this particular issue and the best action to take moving forward.

On the 4th February 2025, a follow-up letter was sent to The Hon Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister of Australia (and included many other members of the Australian Government) to outline our findings on the impost the FBT places on Boarding Facilities and in turn, Families. ICPA (Aust) has been supported with data collection by Members, Australian Boarding Schools & Members of the Australian Government.

ICPA (Aust) believe that ABSA is best placed to continue the advocacy and lobby for a Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemption for schools/boarding facilities providing on site living facilities for essential supervising staff who must live on site. ICPA(Aust) will support ABSA with their ongoing lobby by sharing data and support letters that have been collected to date.

Recommendations:

1. The Federal Government support and advise the Treasury to change the policy on Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) to provide an exemption for schools with boarding facilities for essential boarding school staff required to live *on site* to perform their duty of care for residential students in metropolitan boarding institutions.
2. The Treasury enable all Boarding Facilities who have students enrolled from rural and remote areas (identified through the Assistance for Isolated Children, AIC) to require that they are exempt from FBT under the existing guidelines: 58ZC Exempt Benefits – Remote Area Housing Benefits (on campus accommodation)

| Cost of FBT on Boarding Facilities 2025 | | | |
|---|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| | Per Year | Per Boarder | No. Boarders |
| | \$95,493.00 | \$682.00 | 140 |
| | \$390,000.00 | \$1,234.18 | 316 |
| | \$103,000.00 | \$792.00 | 130 |
| | \$240,200.00 | \$750.63 | 320 |
| Snapshot of Data | \$17,000.00 | \$425.00 | 40 |
| from: | \$60,000.00 | \$650.00 | 92 |
| Australian | \$96,500.00 | \$740.00 | 130 |
| Boarding Schools | \$175,935.00 | \$1,047.23 | 168 |
| | \$109,786.00 | \$1,035.00 | 106 |
| | \$85,600.00 | \$317.00 | 270 |
| | \$82,852.00 | \$1,726.00 | 48 |
| | \$524,000.00 | \$903.00 | 580 |
| | \$473,680.00 | \$3,017.00 | 157 |
| Sub-Total | \$2,454,046.00 | \$13,319.03 | 2497 |
| Average | \$188,772.77 | \$1,024.54 | 192 |

** the dataset in the above table is *subject to change* when a full list outlining the cost of FBT on boarding facilities is collected and compiled.

M57 (A9) Broken Hill Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate for changes within the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) criteria to address the inequity of assistance provided to Geographically Isolated students.”

Moved: Laura Finch Broken Hill (NSW)
Seconded: Rebecca Pearce Broken Hill (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

The Broken Hill Branch recognises and thanks the government for the support they provide for isolated students accessing education, however the resources of the government are being stretched, as the impact of increasing numbers of students being eligible under the current eligibility criteria for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC).

We believe that families that live in Significantly Geographically Isolated areas and the challenges they face in educating their children are vastly different to families who live closer to educational facilities or transport who may still receive the AIC. Our branch would like the government to recognise the greater challenges and barriers Significantly geographically isolated families face and because of where they live and work, their ability to access equitable education opportunities is greatly affected. We believe that adding an extra eligibility criterion to the AIC Boarding, Second Home and Distance Education Allowances would help identify the families who live in these areas. This may assist in future advocacy efforts with the government recognising the unique and extenuating challenges these families face accessing education for their children.

In its current format, the eligibility criteria for the assistance available to families does not recognise the significant and unique challenges therefore we strongly believe that a more equitable approach would be to have an additional criterion for Significantly Geographically Isolated students within the AIC. An additional significantly geographically Isolated category would only be applicable to those a certain distance from their nearest education facility and where there is NO option for transport to any educational facility.

We know that all rural and remote families face challenges when educating their children, but the vast distances and additional costs that families in Significantly Geographically Isolated areas face, clearly demonstrates that equal assistance does not ensure equity of access.

Case Study 1:

I live a 250km round trip from my closest primary school, on unsealed roads which are poorly maintained and greatly affected by seasonal conditions. Therefore, attending that primary school was not a viable option for my children. For that reason, I have educated my 4 children via distance education, via Broken Hill School of The Air. The school campus is a 570km round trip away (200 km unsealed as above), a 7 hour round trip.

The nearest high school is a 570km round trip away (200 km unsealed as above) in completely the opposite direction of the primary school. There is no bus service that leaves either of the townships that the schools are located in.

The closet boarding facility for high school education is 1440km round trip away, (250km unsealed as above).

My children attend a boarding school that is a 2000km (250km unsealed roads as above) round trip away. We chose that school for many reasons, but most importantly that I have family support in the town where they board.

This is not an uncommon example of members in my branch, 46% of our members are more than 100kms from their closest primary and high school. 50% of our members have over 50kms of unsealed roads.

ALL of our members are at least a 600km round trip to their nearest boarding school.

Case Study 2:

In 2021 I had to make the extremely difficult decision to move myself and our two high school age twins to Broken Hill, 420km from our home, to allow them to finish their secondary education in a face-to-face school. My twins had already completed all their primary education and first 2 years of their secondary education through Distance Education. Our nearest high school is a 150km round trip away on unsealed roads. My eldest daughter did travel, often driving herself, into that school every day to complete Year 12, but I was unwilling to repeat that experience. Especially considering my daughter was the only senior student in her school.

So, as the twins were becoming less engaged, unmotivated and having challenges with unreliable, inadequate technology and lack of practical learning experiences, I decided that we had to move into Broken Hill to offer them more. For me, the most worrying thing was, they were socially isolated, missing out on vital teenager experiences which are fundamental for their development, such as the opportunity for mixing with friends, team sports and other extra-curricular activities, crucial for a teenagers, physical, mental and social well-being. Even though they are twins and had each other, they were extremely lonely.

It was extremely hard to divide the family unit, not only financially, with the burden of setting up and running two households, the additional costs of travelling back and forth to the family home at least every second weekend, with an 840km round trip to and from Broken Hill. But the emotional toll this has taken on my husband, being alone on the station for weeks at a time, has been a big concern for me. If we had better support through the AIC, we would have had other options available to us, which would have allowed me to stay at home and work in the family business and still enabling the twins to receive a quality education.

M58 (A6) Louth Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the 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 NSW State Council on behalf of Louth
Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

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.

M59 (A7) South Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to significantly increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance so that it more accurately reflects the real and rising cost of boarding school education for geographically isolated students.”

Moved: Dani Chapman South Australia State Council
Seconded: Belinda Hatcher South Australia State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The AIC Basic Boarding Allowance is a vital support for families who, due to geographic isolation, must send their children away from home to access secondary schooling. However, the current rate of the allowance has not kept pace with the actual cost of boarding, which has consistently increased at a rate far exceeding the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Boarding school fees continue to rise due to increasing operational costs, including staffing, accommodation, transport, and pastoral care. Meanwhile, the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance has seen only minimal adjustments over the years, resulting in a growing gap between the financial support provided and the actual expenses families face. This widening gap places an unsustainable burden on isolated families and erodes their educational choices.

As an equity measure, the AIC must be sufficient to ensure that students living in remote and rural areas can access quality education on a level playing field with their urban peers. Without adequate support, families are forced to make difficult decisions that may compromise their children's educational opportunities, well-being, and stability.

If the Federal Government is serious about delivering equitable access to education for all Australian children, regardless of postcode, it must commit to a meaningful increase in the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance and index it appropriately to reflect ongoing cost increases.

M60 (A8) South Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to Services Australia and the Federal Government for a review of the eligibility criteria for the Additional Boarding Allowance under the Geographically Isolated (GI) category of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) scheme, so that entitlement is determined solely on the basis of actual boarding costs incurred as a family, without being subject to parental income testing.”

Moved: Dani Chapman South Australia State Council
Seconded: Belinda Hatcher South Australia State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The Additional Boarding Allowance, currently capped at \$2,965 per student annually, is designed to support families whose boarding school expenses exceed the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance. However, access to this component is currently means-tested based on parental income, regardless of the actual financial burden incurred.

Boarding school fees for rural and remote students continue to rise significantly and often far exceed what the Basic Boarding Allowance covers. Many families who do not meet the income threshold for the Additional Boarding Allowance still struggle to meet the genuine and increasing cost of boarding.

This income test unfairly penalises families who may appear ineligible on paper but are experiencing substantial financial stress due to high boarding costs and additional educational expenses.

The purpose of the AIC scheme is to provide equitable access to education for geographically isolated students. To uphold this principle, the Additional Boarding Allowance should be based on demonstrated boarding costs, not on parental income. Removing the means test would better reflect the true cost of accessing education for isolated families and ensure that the support provided meets their actual need.

M61 (S1) Far North Queensland Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA Australia lobbies *Services Australia* to assess the payment times for the AIC applications for Year 12 students, to coincide with the beginning of Term Four so parents are able to budget for the balance owing at the completion of the senior school year.”

Moved: Sharryn Gilmour Far North Queensland (QLD)
Seconded: Robyn O’Brien Far North Queensland (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Queensland families appreciate the valuable subsidy that *Services Australia* provides in the way of AIC and thank ICPA Australia for continuing to lobby for a much-needed payment increase. Receiving the final AIC payment earlier for Year 12 students would allow Parents/Caregivers to have their accounts finalized prior to Week Three Term Four when a lot of non-ATAR school leavers are graduating and schools require accounts to be settled; it would alleviate overpayments and assist with more accurate budgeting for families.

M62 (S2) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobby the Minister for Social Services and *Services Australia* to reduce the claim processing times for ABSTUDY.”

Moved: Katie Brown Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)
Seconded: Margaret Brock Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

In addition to our branches motion in 2024 regarding the slow claim processing period of 12-13 weeks for remote students to access the Tertiary Access payments it has come to our attention that this is also occurring to remote students when applying for ABSTUDY.

In Queensland children who receive ABSTUDY are ineligible to receive their State Living Away From Home Allowance and the Federal Assistance For Isolated Children Basic Boarding Allowance which means they receive no assistance for Term 1 School Fees, uniforms, or the costs with travelling long distances to put their children in to start the school year until their ABSTUDY claim is processed.

A distance education student transitioning to Boarding School in 2025 applied in November 2024 and was not approved until 12th March 2025 (Week 7 of Term 1) and the first payment wasn’t processed until 15th May in Term 2.

This geographically isolated family had to bear the full cost of putting their child into Boarding School and flights home for Easter school holidays without a single cent in assistance.

M63 (S3) ICPA Federal Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to all levels of government for increased and sustainable funding to ensure the viability and accessibility of boarding facilities for students from rural and remote areas.”

Moved: Amber Driver ICPA Federal Council
Seconded: Melissa Kerr ICPA Federal Treasurer

CARRIED

Explanation:

For families living in remote and very remote parts of Australia, boarding is often the only pathway for their children to access a full secondary education. This necessity places a significant emotional, logistical, and financial burden on families, who are often separated for long periods and face high out-of-pocket costs, even with some government assistance.

The recent closure of the St John’s Catholic College boarding facility in Darwin starkly illustrates the national under-funding crisis affecting boarding schools. This closure, and others like it, forces families to make impossible decisions: to relocate entirely, to separate siblings, or to forgo consistent education altogether.

Families already juggling the challenges of geographic isolation are now facing even fewer viable education options for their children. In some cases, the lack of affordable and accessible boarding options results in students being withdrawn from school prematurely, further entrenching rural disadvantage.

While boarding schools receive some funding to operate, it is increasingly clear this support is insufficient. The current model is unsustainable and unfair. Governments continue to rely on boarding facilities as the default solution to regional education provision yet fail to match that reliance with appropriate investment.

ICPA (Aust) calls on governments to:

- Acknowledge boarding facilities as essential education infrastructure for rural and remote students.
- Increase and secure long-term operational funding, particularly for facilities supporting First Nations and geographically isolated students.
- Reduce the financial burden on families by increasing boarding-related allowances and subsidies.
- Support culturally appropriate pastoral care and well-being programs for boarders, to ensure students thrive while living away from home.

If Australia is committed to improving outcomes and closing the gap for rural and remote students, it must begin with fully funding the services that make education possible – starting with boarding.

New South Wales ICPA President’s Report

Annabel Strachan

Specific Education Needs Presentation

Ali Allison

Specific Education Needs Portfolio Motions

M64 (A50) Julia Creek Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to allow National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants from rural and remote areas, who are required to

attend boarding schools for their secondary education, to utilise their NDIS funding for the employment of individual support workers within boarding facilities.”

Moved: Katie Brown Mt Isa BOTA (QLD) on behalf of Julia Creek
Seconded: Margaret Brock Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Students with disabilities living in rural and remote areas often have no choice but to attend boarding schools to access secondary education. These students require support similar to what they would receive at home; however, current NDIS restrictions often do not allow funding to be used for support within boarding environments.

Without access to appropriate support workers funded through NDIS plans, some schools are left with no option but to employ additional boarding staff to assist these students. The cost of this staffing is then distributed across all boarding families, significantly increasing already substantial boarding fees and creating an inequitable burden.

Allowing NDIS recipients to direct their individual funding towards necessary support within boarding houses would provide equitable access to care and reduce the financial strain on schools and other families.

M65 (A51) South Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government, through the Ministers for Education and Health, to make targeted funding available for the provision of speech pathologists in rural and remote schools, particularly where students are enrolled through distance education.”

Moved: Dani Chapman South Australia State Council
Seconded: Belinda Hatcher South Australia State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

There is a widespread shortage of speech pathologists servicing rural and remote areas across Australia, in both the education and health sectors. Early intervention and access to ongoing therapies are critical to ensuring students do not fall behind in their educational development.

It is well established that remoteness amplifies the challenges faced by students with speech and language needs, particularly those studying via distance education. Targeted federal funding to improve access to speech pathology services in these areas would help close this gap and support better educational outcomes for rural and remote students nationwide.

Presentation

Kellie Britnell
eSafety Commission

M66 (A52) Alice Springs Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Minister for Health and other relevant Ministers and agencies to ensure that federally funded health clinics and health physicians across Australia are easily accessible to all Australians, so all geographically isolated children can receive a diagnosis and ongoing treatment of medical issues that impede their ability to learn and thrive.”

Moved: Katy Hayes Alice Springs (NT)
Seconded: Kiya Gill Alice Springs (NT)

CARRIED

Explanation:

We appreciate that there is ongoing work in progress for this motion. We thank ICPA Federal Council for your efforts thus far and wish to advise that the issue is still relevant and ongoing. Northern Territory ICPA members and families are unable to access public service providers without frequently being turned away from their local public, albeit remote, health clinics because they 'do not meet the criteria' (to access the public health clinic). Remote families have no other 'local' health clinic alternative, but if they 'don't meet the criteria' and are refused treatment, they necessarily must travel vast distances including interstate to access treatment for what could have otherwise been dealt with closer to where they live, at their closest remote health clinic, serviced by rostered doctors, specialists and allied health providers. Some families are facing months, even years to try and access services in remote Australia being put on a waiting list that never actually runs in order either. It is not acceptable that publicly funded health facilities discriminate on race, demographic, or on any other basis, let alone in a situation where there are no other local alternatives for rural and remote families to 'conveniently' access.

Case Study 1:

Mum of seven year old child that has finally been diagnosed with ADHD through their SOA in the public system after years of waiting for said child to be assessed has now been told that they have been placed on a 12-18 month wait list to be seen by paediatrician doctors and allied health providers in the public system but if they were to pay or travel interstate they may be seen within a year. Said child has just turned 9 and still hasn't been seen by a paediatric doctor nor an OT or allied health provider. This child is still struggling on a daily basis to complete basic school activities, basic daily tasks, form friendships and socially interact on a 9-year-old level. This child is now mentally suffering and receiving private counselling and psychology with the parent out of pocket hundreds of dollars a month. A paediatric doctor and Occupational Therapist visit this family's local clinic only an hour away on a monthly to 6 weekly basis and this family has been told that because they do not fit the criteria they cannot be seen by these specialists!

Case Study 2:

Mum of four-year-old enrolled through SOA with a stutter and some speech problems, went to local remote clinic wanting to book an appointment with a speech therapist that travels to the local clinic on occasion, during the year. Mum was told, "I'm sorry, you do not fit the criteria, you will have to make an appointment in Darwin". Mum gets hold of the same speech therapist that travels to the local clinic, still told "No, I can't see you in XXXX (971km from Darwin), but I can see you in Darwin anytime". The speech therapist tells Mum that the first thing she must do is get a hearing test for her child, "Most local clinics are able to do a simple hearing test". Back to XXXX clinic and told yet again, sorry, you don't fit the criteria. Mum has had to travel 971km to Darwin for hearing tests and an initial consultation with a therapist; the rest of the appointments were done over Zoom. Mum reports "Zoom is ok but certainly made it harder with the delay to be able to fully show the mouth positioning and sounds. It would be helpful to see the therapist at our local clinic once in a while, to make sure we are doing the right thing."

M67 (A53) Hughenden Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) work with the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA), to help develop an information pack, which will build a knowledge base to assist parents of a child with specific education needs with the decision making process during the transition to boarding school."

Moved: Kim Hughes Richmond (QLD) on behalf of Hughenden
Seconded: Kate Thompson Tasmania (TAS)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Parents of students with specific needs often struggle to find clear guidance on navigating the enrolment process and what's required to transition their children successfully into a boarding school environment.

A dedicated resource outlining essential steps and support options would provide families with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions throughout the application process, including the accommodations that can be put in place during the transition process and throughout their high school boarding experience.

There is a lack of awareness around the resources available to all families of students with specific needs through state and independent stakeholders. We thank the current organisations for their support in helping transition boarding students with specific needs and believe that with a dedicated resource that creates greater awareness of these resources it would ensure a smoother transition for families and students.

At the recent state conference in St George, delegates were provided with a 'Let's talk about boarding – for parents thinking about sending their children to boarding school's pamphlet published by the Australian Boarding School Association (ABSA). This resource already provides excellent guidance for parents considering boarding school. It would be a meaningful step towards inclusivity if we could expand this resource and other like materials & support practices, to include specific guidance for students with additional needs.

Case Study:

Navigating the boarding school selection process for our neurodiverse son, was an isolating and overwhelming experience. Despite his enthusiasm for boarding life, we faced multiple roadblocks—schools hesitant to provide adequate support, rejections due to initial adjustment difficulties, and even the inability to secure an interview at some institutions. As parents, we were left feeling lost, unsure of the next steps, and without a clear path forward. Distance Education, while an option, did not provide the social and cognitive stimulation he needed, reinforcing our commitment to finding a suitable school. However, we lacked the necessary guidance—there was no central resource to explain available supports, recommended preparations, or reasonable accommodations schools could make to aid in the transition. This caused severe stress and anxiety for our child and also ourselves. Had there been awareness of the current resources available and there been a dedicated resource outlining the steps for transitioning a neurodiverse student to boarding school, including available supports, necessary adjustments, and key professionals to engage, our experience would have been far less traumatizing. Parents of neurodiverse children should not have to navigate this journey alone, uncertain of what accommodations they can request or how best to advocate for their child's success.

M68 (A54) Bourke Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) work with the various bodies to improve isolated children's access to specialist Paediatrician services, including the Royal Australian College of Physicians to look at the barriers to accessibility of these specialists."

Moved: Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)

Seconded: Prue Ritchie Bourke (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Across Australia children and families are struggling to access appointments with Paediatricians within reasonable timeframes. The public waitlist for children seeking a Paediatrician appointment for Behavioural concerns is now at 7 years. In terms of a child's ability to socialise with their peers,

learn effectively within educational settings and be engaged with their family this wait time is unacceptable, and often leads to children in our remote communities having earlier interactions with the youth justice system. The subsequent negative impact for remote communities and isolated families is devastating, and can feed into cycles of violence, crime and entrenched disadvantage. Changes to the NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention program mean that children now require a formal paediatrician assessment and diagnosis prior to their 6th birthday if they require ongoing assistance under the NDIS.

M69 (A55) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant Ministers for improved access and utilisation of Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) funding, currently managed through the NDIS scheme.”

Moved: Amanda Bell Bourke (NSW)

Seconded: Prue Ritchie Bourke (NSW)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Many remote & geographically isolated children are missing out on essential allied health supports 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 7 staff supporting Western NSW. McKillop Family Services has withdrawn, and the workload has been transferred to 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.

M70 (S10) New South Wales State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate against the changes to travel allowances for allied health providers under the 2025–26 NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits, as these cuts pose a significant risk to the delivery of essential support services for students with disabilities in rural, regional, and remote communities.”

Moved: Annabel Strachan New South Wales State Council

Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

With these changes, providers will face limits on the travel they can claim when supporting students in harder-to-reach areas. This poses a major threat to clinicians working in rural Australia assisting students with a disability, where long-distance travel is a necessity, not a choice and public transport is often non-existent. The long-distance travel can become a barrier to the student receiving the much-needed allied health care to assist with their education.

Rural students should not be penalised because of where they live when it comes to gaining allied health care. Every effort needs to be made to ensure appropriate care is available without any barriers.

Presentation

Farewell to Federal Councillor Ali Allison

M71 (A36) Alice Springs Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant Minister to establish funding to deliver mobile early learning programs to geographically isolated children, aged 0-5 year, who are currently without access to any such service because of where they live.”

Moved: Katy Hayes Alice Springs (NT)
Seconded: Kiya Gill Alice Springs (NT)

CARRIED

Explanation:

The Australian Government’s Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) highlights the importance of early childhood education in shaping lifelong learning outcomes. It aims to “extend and enrich children's learning from birth to five years and through the transition to school,” ensuring that “all children experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life” (Department of Education, 2023).

Despite this national commitment, many geographically isolated children aged 0–5 years in Central Australia continue to miss out on access to any early childhood learning opportunities due to where they live. While the Katherine Isolated Children’s Service (KICS) provides federally funded mobile playgroups to children in the Top End of the Northern Territory—including communities like Mataranka, Timber Creek, and Elliott—these services do not extend to Central Australia.

According to the 2021 Census, there are approximately 16,224 children aged 0–4 in the Northern Territory. While population density is significantly lower in Central Australia, many children are spread across vast remote areas without access to preschools, early learning centres, or supported playgroups. This creates a substantial equity gap in early childhood education.

Early education is not solely about preparing for school. It plays a critical role in a child's emotional, social, and cognitive development. It helps children build confidence, learn to interact with others, and develop foundational skills that support future learning and wellbeing.

Additionally, mobile playgroups offer crucial opportunities for parental engagement, particularly for caregivers in isolated areas who may experience limited social contact. These services help parents connect, share experiences, and access guidance, which strengthens parenting capacity and community wellbeing.

This long-standing service gap represents not just an educational issue but a broader health and equity concern. By investing in mobile remote playgroups for Central Australian families, the federal government would be fulfilling its obligation under the EYLF to ensure all children—regardless of geographic location—can access meaningful early learning experiences.

For these reasons, we propose that ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Minister to establish targeted funding for mobile remote playgroups for children aged 0–5 in Central Australia who are currently without access to such services.

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’s how they build confidence, interact with others, and learn important social and emotional skills. It’s 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.

The Commonwealth-funded Families as First Teachers (FaFT) program is currently under review. Initially, FaFT was delivered in Central Australia as a mobile service, supporting all children under the age of five and providing remote families—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—with the opportunity to participate. This flexible, inclusive model was designed to meet the diverse needs of families living in geographically isolated areas, covering over 30 sites across the region. The program employed five educators and numerous local stakeholders, allowing for a collaborative approach to supporting families as their needs arose.

In several instances, these services began to make a tangible impact, improving outcomes for children and families. However, as these programs gained momentum and built strong community engagement, funding was withdrawn, resulting in the discontinuation of key services. This stop-start approach has proved discouraging for families, disrupting progress and undermining trust in the stability of essential early childhood services.

As a result of funding cuts, FaFT now relies heavily on government schools to deliver the program, with a particular focus on Indigenous communities and families. While this school-based model continues to provide valuable support, it has significantly limited access for families in remote areas who are either not within proximity to these sites or do not meet the program’s eligibility criteria.

Currently, Central Australia offers eight FaFT programs, with three located in Alice Springs:

- Larrapinta – Alice Springs
- Sadadeen – Alice Springs
- Gillen – Alice Springs
- Ntaria (Hermannsburg)
- Papunya (240 km northwest)
- Yuendumu (293 km northwest)
- Harts Range (220 km northeast)
- Kintore (530 km west)

While FaFT offers many benefits, it is not reaching its full potential for geographically isolated children aged 0–5 due to the limitations of the current delivery model.

M72 (A37) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to relevant Ministers 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.

M73 (A38) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant Ministers for universal access to early childhood education and care 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.

M74 (A40) Katherine Branch (NT)

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

Moved: Sam Selmes Katherine (NT)

Seconded: Sally Dyer Katherine (NT)

CARRIED

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

“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 1st of January to the 30th 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 2025) has 24 enrolments. On average KSA enrolments have been around 20-25 each year. The NT Government already recognises this cohort of students by making available half of the “NT Correspondence Site Allowance – Preschool” to assist all four-year-old children that are enrolled in pre-school with the Alice Springs and Katherine Schools of the Air.

Extending the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) distance education allowance to include these students will ensure greater and more equitable participation in Early Childhood Education by rural and remote students. Distance education students could benefit enormously from a minute portion of the 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.

Case Study:

I have three children enrolled in Katherine School of the Air. All three children were not eligible to receive the AIC until they were in Year 1. Meaning the costs of setting up the schoolroom, accommodation and travel to contact events and early intervention appointments have been met with no assistance from federal government. The early years learning program facilitated by Katherine School of the Air has played a pivotal part in my children’s ability to learn, socialise and their general wellbeing. If I had waited until the age of 6 years to enrol them into a Distance Education facility, their ability to participate and interact with their peers would have been greatly affected. There is no other option other than Distance Education for where we live. Our access to playgroups, library programs and other learning platforms are extremely minimal. It is nationally recognised that children need educational learning programs from the age of three and 6 months. Geographically Isolated children enrolled in Preschool and Transition are at a pivotal time in their learning pathway for teachers to assist with learning difficulties and to offer early intervention as early as possible. If my children had waited to start from the age of 6 and go straight into Year 1 without teachers having prior knowledge of their learning capabilities, they would have fallen further behind and not be at the level they are today.

M75 (S7) ICPA Federal Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education and the Commonwealth Department of Education for future Preschool Reform Agreements to include funding for, and the condition to provide an access payment to enhance funding equity for geographically isolated (GI) distance education preschool students.”

Word Change: Julia Broad, ICPA Federal Council requested conference’s permission for a word change

Conference permission granted

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education and the Commonwealth Department of Education for future Preschool Reform Agreements and National Partnership Agreements to include funding for, and the condition to provide an access payment to enhance funding equity for geographically isolated (GI) distance education preschool students.”

Moved: Julia Broad ICPA Federal Council
Seconded: Ali Alison ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

For many years, members have called for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance to be extended to geographically isolated children enrolled in a fulltime, approved early childhood distance education program to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to access the 600 hours of preschool per year as per the Preschool Reform Agreement 2022 – 2025 and previous agreements.

Excluding these geographically isolated students from receiving the AIC, severely limits their opportunity to benefit fully from the Preschool Reform Agreement of 600 hours for all children in the year before they start school and places substantial financial burden on their parents who are doing their absolute best to provide a quality education for their children in trying circumstances.

This issue has continued to be on the agenda for this portfolio for many years however the responses received are that 'state and territory governments have the responsibility for supporting the participation of all children in quality early childhood education programs.' Currently all states and territories do provide distance education early learning programs however, families who need to undertake these programs due to being geographically isolated incur expenses associated with accessing these programs, like those incurred by families with students studying primary or secondary distance education programs.

The purpose of the AIC as outlined in *The Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme Guidelines, last updated Feb 2025, section 5.4.1* reads as - The Distance Education Allowance contributes towards incidental costs incurred by geographically isolated families whose student children are undertaking their education by distance education methods.

Given that families undertaking early childhood distance education programs incur the same incidental costs and attend a State or Territory primary school, ICPA (Aust) believes that it is incongruous that they are not eligible for the same assistance.

It is clear geographically isolated children need further support, evidenced by the most recent Australian Early Development Census (AECD) data showing on 41.3% of remote and very remote children are developmentally on track in all domains before starting school.

The Commonwealth Department of Education continually denies these children eligibility for AIC DE allowance, therefore funding with specific conditions for financial assistance for geographically isolated children enrolled in a fulltime, approved early childhood distance education program through a School of Distance Education needs to be delivered to each State Department of Education via the Preschool Reform Agreement.

M76 (S8) ICPA Federal Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education and the Commonwealth Department of Education for a separate Geographically Isolated In Home Care (IHC) Early Education Service Delivery Price Project to accurately represent the actual cost of delivering IHC in geographically isolated homes."

Moved: Julia Broad ICPA Federal Council

Seconded: Ali Alison ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The Australian Government's Early Education Service Delivery Price (SDP) project will provide a data-driven understanding of the reasonable costs of quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

service delivery. This is a key part of the Government's commitment to ensuring Australian families can access universal, affordable ECEC no matter their background or postcode.

The findings from this project will be used to inform future funding reforms. The project will ensure the Government can understand the reasonable cost for providers to deliver quality ECEC services throughout Australia – including where costs vary by cohort or location.

This will be a critical enabling piece as the Government works towards a universal ECEC system and will inform future reforms.

ICPA(Aust) are concerned that IHC data collected during this project will not be presented in the broader project due to small number of families using IHC similar to how data regarding IHC has been left out of previous research completed by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission) ACCC and the Productivity Commission therefore request that specific geographically isolated In Home Care data be collated in a separately funded project.

Queensland ICPA President's Report

Wendy Henning

Tertiary Presentation

Tim Fletcher

Tertiary Portfolio Motions

M77 (A56) Tambo Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Social Services to remedy the Youth Allowance application process as the current one-time pass code is not user friendly, especially in poor internet areas."

Moved: Stacey Ryrie Tambo (QLD)

Seconded: Christy Bredhauer Charleville (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Whilst we understand that security is paramount when filling in forms online that contain personal information, we still believe that there must be a more efficient way to complete a Youth Allowance application. Reliability of internet connection continues to be an ongoing issue for Rural and remote families and dropouts are common.

The One Time Passcode (OTP) means exactly as it says and if there is a failure of the website or the internet connection during the application process, it requires a full restart of the application process, which is lengthy and can take up to 50 minutes to complete. The manual application process still requires uploading to the website and is fraught with perils as well. As per the below case study the application process ultimately took several weeks to complete and an extraordinary amount of frustration in the meantime.

Case Study:

Step 1 – My child fills in the YA application form online which takes about 50 minutes. Sends me the OTP to complete my bit

Step 2 – Halfway through me providing the information required to advise of Parental income the website crashes and I can no longer use the OTP

Step 3 – Ring Centrelink to find out what to do next – 50 minutes

Step 4 – Complete the MOD JY form manually and upload the document along with the Assessments of Income

Step 5 – This information has not linked with Student’s Application

Step 6 – Ring Centrelink – on hold for 1 hour. Centrelink advises me to get student to upload the correct parental documents in her profile – this is not acceptable

WE GIVE UP AND START AGAIN

Step 7 – Student deletes that application, and we start again – 50 minutes again – provides me with a new OTP

Step 8 – Student accidentally requests for parent/guardian to access/upload documents on her behalf – this requires more documents to be filled

Step 9 – Student decides that she wanted to change this answer, however, this required her to redo the entire youth allowance again

Step 10 – I attempt to go through the process, and it says the OTP just provided is INVALID!!

Step 11 – We redo the form – AGAIN – and Isobel attempts to upload the documents on my behalf and finally we are successful.

M78 (S17) Kindon Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobby relevant Minister to review the Dependent Youth Allowance so that rural and remote students have a higher parental threshold.”

Moved: Amanda Martin Kindon (QLD)

Seconded: Daryl Martin Kindon (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Rural and remote students face unique and significant challenges when pursuing tertiary education compared to their metropolitan peers. One of the key barriers is finance. Unlike students living in cities, rural students are often required to relocate far from home to attend university, incurring high costs for accommodation, transport, and living expenses. These additional burdens make access to higher education significantly more expensive for rural families.

The current combined parental income threshold for the Dependent Youth Allowance is \$62 634 per annum while in contrast the Independent Youth Allowance has a combined parental income of \$160,000 per annum plus an additional \$10,000 added for each dependent child. To qualify for Independent Youth Allowance a student must work for a 14-month period after leaving school. This break from studies often leads to students not returning to their tertiary study.

Raising the parental income threshold for rural and remote students would acknowledge these inequities and better support families who are already at a disadvantage due to geography. It would also encourage higher education participation among rural youth, promote regional equity, and contribute to breaking cycles of educational disadvantage.

M79 (A57) Louth Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate for the Minister for Social Services to increase Centrelink rent assistance payments to assist with’ or ‘to reflect the rising costs of rent for geographically isolated students who have to live away from home to access a tertiary education.”

Moved: Annabel Strachan NSW State Council on behalf of Louth

Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

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.

M80 (A58) Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education and the Federal Treasurer to change the timing of debt indexation for study and training support loans."

Moved: Annabel Strachan NSW State Council on behalf of Rankin Springs

Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The indexation of Higher Education Loans Program (HELP or also known as HECS) and other study and training support loan debts has long been an issue for graduates. Although these loans have been promoted in the past as 'interest free', the loan has always had indexation applied at the rate of the current CPI (Consumer Price Index) or WPI (Wages Price Index) (whichever is lower) at the time of indexation, 1 June.

A recommendation from the Australian Universities Accord (2024) is to change the timing of indexation. Once a graduate earns above the compulsory repayment threshold (currently \$54,435 in 2024-25), repayments are deducted from wages through the tax system and held by the government until the graduate lodges their tax return when the funds are 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. Not like a bank loan which applies the repayments immediately.

We understand that this is a complex system for the tax office to administer, but we feel that the timing of the indexation of the debt is unfair. Applying indexation after the lump sum repayment has been applied to 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 student support loan debt before indexation is calculated and applied.

We are aware that the recently elected Labor Government is proposing a 20% reduction to all study and training support loans that exist on 1 June 2025, before indexation is applied. This will be retrospectively calculated and applied after the proposed legislation passes Parliament in July. The Government has also proposed raising the minimum repayment threshold to \$67,000 in 2025-26, with compulsory repayments only being calculated on the income above the new \$67,000 threshold instead of the total annual income. While these modifications are welcome, they do not change the fact that the timing of indexation is inherently unfair. We would argue that the cost of some of these measures would have been better spent by changing the indexation date.

M81 (A59) Balranald Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to Services Australia to streamline the application process for geographically isolated Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) applicants by having dedicated call centre staff similar to that of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC)."

Moved: Annabel Strachan NSW State Council on behalf of Balranald Branch (NSW)
Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

Two of the most remote members of Balranald Branch have recently been “rejected” for Tertiary Access Payment via the Services Australia Online Application system. This has now required them to give further information when they are already in the “system” due to having been AIC recipients the year prior to applying for TAP.

It appears that the online TAP application asks many questions and then, after being looked at by a person, puts the application “on hold” and asks further questions relating to proof of the new address. Despite providing those new address details (after very vague questioning online) the system then rejects the application!

This is a serious flaw, when in contrast, the AIC is so simplified to apply for and has a direct line to talk to an officer who understands the needs of remote students.

How many rural and remote students apply for TAP and after such a rejection don’t pursue their legitimate right to this allowance?

M82 (A60) Julia Creek Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate the relevant government departments, ministers, and the tertiary sector to extend the Commonwealth Prac payments to include those studying medicine, veterinary and allied health degrees who undertake mandatory practicum placements in/from rural and remote areas.”

Moved: Katie Brown Mt Isa BOTA (QLD) on behalf of Julia Creek
Seconded: Margaret Brock Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Julia Creek ICPA would like to thank 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. We ask ICPA Federal Council to lobby the Federal Government to extend eligibility to include other areas of study, to acknowledge the huge cost that undertaking these mandatory practicums holds, especially in rural and remote locations.

Many tertiary degrees in fields such as teaching, nursing, medicine, veterinary science, and allied health have substantial practicum or placement requirements. For instance:

- The Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery at James Cook University (JCU) requires over 4,000 hours of practicum over six years, with a strong emphasis on rural and remote placements.
- Veterinary Science at JCU requires approximately 40 weeks of practicum over five years and longer depending on which University attended.
- Nursing and Midwifery students complete 46 weeks of practicum over four years.

M83 (S16) Lakes District Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Education to extend eligibility for the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) to students undertaking a Graduate Diploma in Education.”

Moved: Megan Dorrell WA State Council on behalf of Lakes District
Seconded: Fiona Hobley Lakes District (WA))

CARRIED

Explanation:

Addressing Workforce Shortages: Students enrolled in a Graduate Diploma in Education are pursuing a postgraduate qualification specifically aimed at tackling the urgent shortage of qualified teachers across Australia, especially in rural and remote areas. These students are a vital part of the future teaching workforce and are responding directly to national and state workforce needs. **Parity with Other Teaching Pathways:** The current eligibility criteria for the CPP include Bachelor of Education and Master of Teaching students, but do not explicitly include Graduate Diploma in Education students. This creates an inequity, as all these pathways lead to teacher registration and require mandatory professional placements. **Financial Barriers:** Graduate Diploma in Education students face the same financial challenges as their Bachelor's and Master's counterparts during mandatory placements, including travel, accommodation, and living expenses. Excluding them from the CPP increases the financial burden and may deter capable individuals from entering the teaching profession. **University Support and Application Process:** Universities have recognised the need for financial support and have provided Graduate Diploma in Education students with application details for the CPP, indicating institutional support and the importance of including these students in the scheme. **Maximising Teacher Supply:** Including Graduate Diploma in Education students in the CPP will help attract and retain more individuals into teaching, ensuring a steady supply of qualified teachers to meet Australia's educational needs.

Supporting Points:

- The Graduate Diploma in Education is a recognised postgraduate pathway to teacher registration. Students in these programs undertake the same mandatory placements as those in Bachelor and Master teaching degrees.
- Excluding these students is inconsistent with the CPP's aim to support those entering critical workforce areas.
- Universities have already prepared and provided application processes for these students, demonstrating the demand and readiness for inclusion.

M84 (S18) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

"That ICPA Australia lobby the Minister for Education to include students from regional, remote and very remote areas and also students wishing to travel to regional and remote areas as being eligible for exceptional circumstances for the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP)."

Moved: Katie Brown Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)
Seconded: Margaret Brock Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

CARRIED**Explanation:**

Currently the CPP will only be given to students who are already receiving a commonwealth support payment (for example Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY or Austudy) or satisfy a 'need to work test' where students show that they need to work during their normal studies (on average 15 hours a week) in a 4 week period prior to placement or when applying for CPP.

There is no consideration or exceptional circumstances offered to students from regional, remote and very remote areas as well as the additional costs for students associated with travelling to regional or remote parts of the country to undertake placement. We don't want students choosing to not complete regional, rural and remote placements due not being eligible for CPP and experiencing placement poverty.

M85 (A61) Kindon Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) lobby residential colleges to prioritise rural and remote tertiary students who seek on campus accommodation to pursue their tertiary education."

Moved: Amanda Martin Kindon (QLD)
Seconded: Daryl Martin Kindon (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Rural and remote tertiary students often lack the luxury of choice when it comes to accommodation after relocating to metropolitan areas to pursue their studies. While some universities offer guaranteed accommodation for first-year students, providing much-needed security, not all institutions extend this support. In many cases, residential college places are occupied by city-based students who choose to move out of home, making these colleges a convenient option. Unfortunately, this limits availability for rural and remote students, who are then left to navigate the challenging and often costly process of securing off-campus housing.

Case study:

UQ/QUT College Applications – College beds going to City kids as an easy and safe way to move them out of home thus depriving country kids of accommodation for their first year out of senior schooling.

Our experience with getting our son into a college at UQ for the 2024 cohort was a frustrating experience. He applied promptly to the college applications once their opening dates came around and in particular, to two of the main colleges in the hope of joining either of his cousins in their chosen Colleges. His great-Grandfather was one of the first students at one of these colleges. He did everything asked to gain an interview which he eventually gained and thought went well. Both Colleges advised us they were full in in September 2023 and that he had not gained a position.

We do understand thatATAR results are a big factor as well in gaining access to a college however, our son gained a very good result, both predicted and the final figure.

We were then left with trying to find somewhere for our son to live, for the first time independently of a structured environment. Although at boarding for the whole of his senior years, they are not use/unaware to the everyday needs to live in a rental accommodation i.e. food, power, rent etc and we struggled to find somewhere suitable for a first year as a UQ student. We were very lucky that a friend of a friend was looking for someone to live with their daughter in a house late December and offered us the position and it has worked out very well.

Upon talking to a few friends who live in Brisbane, they mentioned that they had heard from friends that some had sons/daughters that were moving out of home and into college accommodation as it was a safe and easy transition to moving them out of home and to teach them independence.

M86 (A62) Blackall Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Department of Education (FDoE), Department Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and other relevant Departments to recognise that the experience gained by a Home Tutor who delivers the curriculum (which is an essential requirement for the Department) as Recognition of Prior Learning (RLP) evidence and goes toward the Home Tutor’s qualifications and skill to be a qualified teacher’s aide/teacher.”

Moved: Stacey Ryrie Tambo (QLD) on behalf of Blackall
Seconded: Christy Bredhauer Charleville (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Home Tutors provide an essential role in the delivering of school-based education. The Department requires a home tutor to deliver this. A home tutor should get credits for recognition of prior learning/experience. This would encourage Home Tutors to continue in the Education Industry either as a Teacher Aide or to pursue Teaching as a career with less time to complete a university degree.

It is in the FDoE interest to attract and incentivise more people to become Teacher's and Teacher's Aides. We have a wealth of knowledge available that should be recognised.

M87 (A63) Port Augusta Branch (SA)

"The ICPA (Aust) advocate for an Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance to support rural and remote university students studying from home in establishing a dedicated study space equipped with the necessary classroom-style resources."

Moved: Pamela Cuffe Port Augusta (SA)

Seconded: Katrina Morris Port Augusta (SA)

LOST

Explanation:

"Rural and remote students starting university from home require a dedicated study space, just as school students do, equipped with up-to-date technology to support effective learning. The costs of essential items such as laptops, printers, and reliable internet access quickly add up, making it challenging for families to create a positive and productive home learning environment. An AIC allowance would help ease this financial burden and ensure these students are set up for success from the start of their tertiary studies."

M88 (A64) Port Augusta Branch (SA)

"ICPA (Aust) advocate for the Federal Government to establish a rural and remote rent assistance program for university students that is independent of parental income and supports them while they study full-time."

Moved: Pamela Cuffe Port Augusta (SA)

Seconded: Katrina Morris Port Augusta (SA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Currently, university students in Australia can access rent assistance through Centrelink, but eligibility often depends on age and parental income. Students under 22 are typically considered dependent and must meet specific criteria to qualify for rent assistance. For instance, to be deemed independent, a student must be 22 years or older, or under 22 and meet certain conditions such as living away from home due to study requirements or extreme circumstances.

The maximum fortnightly Youth Allowance for a single student living away from home is \$663.30, with an additional \$149.00 per fortnight available through Rent Assistance, provided the student pays more than the minimum rent threshold. However, these amounts often fall short of covering the full cost of living away from home, especially moving from rural and remote areas where housing costs can be higher.

Many students, particularly those from rural and remote areas, face challenges in establishing independent living arrangements due to financial constraints. The current system's reliance on parental income for students under 22 can be a barrier, as it may not accurately reflect the student's financial independence or the cost of living in their specific circumstances.

Given these challenges, there is a strong case for the establishment of a dedicated rent assistance program for rural and remote university students. Such a program would provide financial support independent of parental income, helping students establish themselves independently and pursue their studies without the added stress of financial insecurity.

M89 (A65) Port Augusta Branch (SA)

"ICPA (Aust) advocate for the Federal Government to provide a placement and travel allowance to support rural and remote students attending mandatory university placements."

Moved: Pamela Cuffe Port Augusta (SA)

Seconded: Katrina Morris Port Augusta (SA)

Amendment to the Motion Proposed by Ellen Litchfield Marree Air Branch (SA)

Add " and/or residential schools." to the end of the motion.

Foreshadowed Amendment to the Motion proposed by Kate Thompson, Tasmania Branch,
Add "that is not contingent on receipt of other commonwealth student payments." To the end of the amended motion.

Conference permission granted to accept the amendments, the foreshadowed amendment becomes the motion and voted upon.

Tasmania Branch (TAS)

"ICPA (Aust) advocate for the Federal Government to provide a placement and travel allowance to support rural and remote students attending mandatory university placements and/or residential schools that is not contingent on receipt of other commonwealth student payments."

Moved: Kate Thompson Tasmania (TAS)

Seconded: Kim Hughes Richmond (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

We ask for the establishment of a dedicated placement and travel allowance to support rural and remote university students undertaking mandatory placements. While some financial assistance exists, current provisions are limited and often insufficient to cover the full costs associated with these placements.

We ask that financial support to all rural and remote university students, irrespective of their field of study or institution, to ensure equitable access to mandatory placements. A dedicated placement and travel allowance would alleviate the financial burden on these students and enable them to gain essential practical experience without the added stress of financial constraints.

By establishing a comprehensive placement and travel allowance, the government can support rural and remote university students in accessing and completing mandatory placements, thereby promoting equity and enhancing the quality of education in our communities.

M90 (A66) Winton Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Department of Education (DoE) to ensure time spent working under the Permission to Teach program or equivalent programs, counts towards the time required to access the Higher Education Loan Program, (HELP) in very remote areas."

Word Change: Kim Hughes, Richmond Branch (QLD) requested conference's permission for a word change

Conference permission granted

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Education (DoE) to ensure time spent working under the Permission to Teach program or equivalent programs, counts towards the time required to access the reduction of Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) in very remote areas."

Moved: Kim Hughes Richmond (QLD) on behalf of Winton
Seconded: Kate Thompson Tasmania (TAS)

CARRIED

Explanation:

In Queensland, a range of rural teacher incentives currently exist to attract teachers to rural placements and are made available to Permission to Teach staff. One key incentive for teachers to go rural is to access the HELP after completing four years of rural employment. At present, the time spent working under the Permission to Teach program does not count towards this four-year period meaning that those teaching staff would have to complete five years or more in a rural setting before being able to access the HELP.

M91 (A67) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to 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.

M99 (A68) Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) seek 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:

A final year Radiography student has to undertake a 12-month full time **unpaid** placement to complete her degree. This student has to relocate to where she has been sent for the placement, to work full time without payment, find and pay for accommodation, transport and support herself for the year with a second job, after being a student for three years.

M93 (S11) 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, by reviewing and simplifying criteria for assistance.”

Moved: Ross Woods Goldfields Eyre (WA)
Seconded: Trin Suckling Midwest (WA)

CARRIED

Explanation:

Geographically isolated students have already typically endured 6 years boarding away from home. They are expected to live independently to attend higher educational institutions – and this should be recognised.

We suggest the following changes to criteria.

- Allowing geographically isolated students to automatically access Youth Allowance & 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.
- Increase the amount that they can save for going to university. - The current limits are discouraging students from saving.
- Eligibility for Assistance for Isolated Children and 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.

M94 (S12) St George Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies universities to offer secondary teaching students Agricultural subjects as a pathway.”

Moved: Wendy Henning QLD State Council on behalf of St George
Seconded: Sancia Fegan Queensland State Council

Explanation:

Schools are struggling to offer Agricultural subjects as there are limited Agricultural teachers. If Universities offered Agricultural subjects as a pathway there is the opportunity for more teachers to be trained in Agricultural subjects.

M95 (S13) Nyngan Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Agricultural Minister, Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry and the Commonwealth Government to financially support the National Farmers Federation AgCareerStart program, which helps teachers and students who are considering careers in Food and Fibre production in Australia.”

Moved: Annabel Strachan NSW State Council on behalf of Nyngan
Seconded: Libby McPhee New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The AgCareerStart program offers school leavers a structured, paid gap year in agriculture, including accredited training and personal development opportunities. It enables young Australians to explore career paths in the food and fibre sector that match their interests and capabilities.

The program also benefits host farmers by giving them access to a new labour market and the opportunity to mentor the next generation of agricultural professionals. Bursaries are available for gap year students, and participating farmers receive grants to support their involvement. A recent monitoring and evaluation review cited by Project Manager Tim Bradley found that AgCareerStart delivers a return of \$5.56 for every \$1 invested, demonstrating exceptional economic and social value.

For families educating children through distance education (DE), securing on-farm labour is a significant challenge. When parents are the DE supervisors and are required to assist with farm work, it limits the time they can dedicate to their child’s education. By providing additional farm labour, AgCareerStart can relieve this pressure and support better educational outcomes for geographically isolated students. ICPA (Aust) has been advocating for an allowance for home supervisors and maybe this could be a viable option to help support families.

With full government funding, the program has the potential to expand beyond agriculture to include placements in remote teaching, DE supervision, and rural tutoring, further strengthening the rural education workforce and community capacity.

M96 (S14) Tambo Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Commonwealth Minister of Education, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and any other relevant stakeholders to ensure that Universities promote teaching students to study elective subjects to gain an Agricultural Teacher specialisation.”

Moved: Stacey Ryrie Tambo (QLD)
Seconded: Christy Bredhauer Charleville (QLD)

CARRIED

Explanation:

There is a significant shortage of teachers who have an agriculture based teaching degree. It has become apparent that many teachers who are teaching ag at schools have no speciality training in the area, however, may have an interest so end up in these positions. There are very few institutions that encourage agriculture based electives in the teacher training degrees. Agriculture is one of Australia’s key industries and needs to be supported in the education sector by teachers who are suitably trained.

M97 (S15) Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA Australia lobby the Minister for Education to attract more students with an agricultural degree into the High Achieving Teachers (HAT) Program.”

Moved: Katie Brown Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)
Seconded: Margaret Brock Mt Isa BOTA (QLD))

CARRIED

Explanation:

The HAT program focuses on attracting new teachers, including those with a STEM background, First Nations peoples, people with disability, teacher aides and people based in remote locations. We would like to see a focus on more teachers with an agricultural degree being added to the program as we strive to educate more students in the agricultural industries, the demand for qualified agricultural educators will continue to grow. These teachers play a vital role in shaping the agricultural pathways and education for our rural children.

M98 (S19) Hay Branch (NSW)

“Hay Branch ICPA would like to thank ICPA Australia, the Department of Education and the relevant Ministers for the changes made to the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP).”

Moved: Michelle Crossley Hay (NSW)
Seconded: Kristina Crawford North East (SA)

CARRIED by acclamation

Explanation:

These changes enable first-year students who have taken one or more gap years following Year 12 (or equivalent) and are aged up to 22, to apply for the TAP.

More details here <https://www.education.gov.au/tertiary-access-payment>

Floor Motions

M99 (F1) Katherine Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Employment, Workplace relations and all other relevant government agencies to recognize and implement a wage system for Home Tutors under suitable awards that reflect living and working in a remote and rural location, regardless of industry.”

Conference permission to debate the motion granted

Moved: Sally Dyer Katherine (NT)
Seconded: Wendy Henning Queensland State Council

CARRIED

M100(F2) ICPA Federal Council

“That ICPA (Aust) Federal Council adopt the term ‘Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor’ (RICS) when advocating for recognition of home tutors / supervisors within the distance education classroom.”

Conference permission to debate the motion granted

Moved: Jill Greenfield ICPA Federal Council
Seconded: Shennah Joiner ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

Explanation:

The Regional Education Commissioner recommended that ICPA (Aust) have a universal term that includes the words remuneration and supervisor when advocating on this issue.

Under the proposed RICS scheme we will be advocating for financial remuneration to individuals undertaking the role of supervising students in geographically isolated settings. The scheme would recognise the critical contribution that classroom supervisors undertake ensuring equitable access to education for students in remote locations.

Presentation

Thank You to the Convening Committee

CARRIED by acclamation

Closing of Conference

Conference arrangements

Conference Closed

CONFERENCE REPORTS

FEDERAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Louise Martin

Federal Life members, Mrs Jane Gloster and Mrs Sue Shotten, State and Branch Life Members, Distinguished Guests, fellow ICPA members and friends, it is with great pleasure that I present my Federal Presidents Report. The year has gone shockingly quickly yet again exacerbated by Federal Councils usual routine for delegations and the like being disrupted by the Federal Election taking place. However, we continue to be flexible and adaptive in our endeavours to get the best outcomes for our kids.

A massive shout out to the Federal Council team for the mammoth number of tasks we have completed, and outcomes achieved since conference. With a team of many newcomers and many near newcomers, I have really valued the input of our more experienced team members, Julia, Nikki, Anna and Ali, all of whom have contributed ably to keep us all on track and to find documents in Teams! Thank you. The enthusiasm of the new team members knows no bounds, so it has been an exciting year with fresh ideas at every turn.

To name a few of the completed tasks post conference, we updated all policies, updated the portfolio briefing documents, wrote all our letters to the Ministers and other stakeholders, and determined the current key issues and in preparation for the October delegations. Whilst we acknowledge there has been a heavy focus on the current key issues, the ongoing AIC campaign, pay parity for early childhood teachers and the removal of Fringe Benefits Tax from essential staff accommodation at boarding schools, federal council continues to work behind the scenes to progress the remaining issues that we are faced with.

October delegations were successful as always. We had many meetings with politicians, and it was a privilege as always to meet with the Minister for Education the Hon Jason Clare MP and the Assistant Minister for Education, Senator Anthony Chisholm. Disappointingly the Shadow Minister for Education at the time, Senator Sarah Henderson failed to keep her appointment with us for the third consecutive visit to Canberra. We thank the Department of Education, Department of Social Services and Services Australia for meeting with Federal Council to discuss ongoing operational issues. We also took the opportunity to meet with the National Farmers Federation seeking their support for ICPA and our current issues.

Federal Council hit the ground running early in 2025 knowing that the Federal Election is looming. We kicked off the year with a trip to Canberra in early February. Parliament House day was successful with over 35 meetings throughout the day. We spent the meeting reinforcing our request for election commitments, we keep ensuring the wheel is squeaky. The mood in Parliament House was very election focused and there was much speculation about the potential date at that time. During that week, we were thrilled with the news that a few of our long-standing advocacy issues have been addressed. It was an amazing feeling for all of us, and the portfolio leaders are excited to share the news in their reports over the coming days.

Whilst the Federal Government was in caretaker mode, the Federal Council team continued working away behind the scenes, sending out 2024 motion feedback to branches and compiling progress reports to send to members. Post election we note that the Hon Jason Clare continues as Minister for Education and the Hon Andrew Giles continues with Skills and Training. Other key portfolios have announced new ministers, Social Services now sits with the Hon Tanya Plibersek and Early Childhood

also has a new Minister, Senator the Hon Dr Jess Walsh. Federal Council has taken the initiative to resend the letter requesting that the AIC portfolio is transferred from Social Services back to Education where it belongs at this time when Ministers will be reviewing the portfolios. Key Shadow ministers include Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam, Shadow Minister for Education and Early learning, Senator Kerryne Liddle, Shadow Minister for Social Services, and Sam Birrell MP, Shadow Minister for Regional Education. Due to changes in sitting dates Federal Council will not be visiting Canberra again until November.

Also in February, Secretary Kelly Ostwald and I travelled to Perth for the Joint Council Meeting. This year the meeting was hosted and facilitated by the Western Australia State Council. Yet again it proved to be such a worthwhile exercise to have all the State and Federal Presidents and Secretaries from across the country come together to discuss all things relevant to ICPA. The knowledge sharing is invaluable especially for those new to their roles. I find it very inspiring.

As stated previously, the number of new and nearly new members of the Federal Council team are many so we committed to undertaking a two-part governance workshop on the roles and responsibilities of a not-for-profit board. ICPA(Aust) Federal Council is a board and as such must meet the ongoing and increasing compliance standards as any other board. The workshop was delivered by Kerry Newton of Directors Australia in person at the Canberra delegations and the second component was undertaken online. It has been a worthwhile undertaking and really sharpened our focus on governance issues.

I would like to acknowledge the ICPA TECH Team. The Tech Team is a subcommittee of Federal Council, which was endorsed at the Post Conference meeting. The team consists of five incredibly passionate and dedicated members of our ICPA family. Since conference there has been a necessary huge upgrade and overhaul of the website and database. The Tech Team worked tirelessly to ensure that the transition went smoothly. There were a few hiccups along the way, and the stress levels were intense at times. These times have now past and hopefully it will be smoother sailing from here on. On behalf of all members, I extend the greatest of thanks to the Tech Team for the commitment and dedication in seeing these changes through. As we continue to rely on technology more and more the Tech Team has been an invaluable addition to ICPA to ensure the smooth operation of the organisation. Thank you, Judy Newton, Nikki McQueen, Tammie Irons, Kym Ross, and Kate Thompson, you are all super stars.

It is also noteworthy that this year the 175th Edition of Pedals was published, and what an impressive milestone it is! The Pedals Magazine has been such a constant in ICPA members' lives over the years. Many forms of communication have evolved over the last 50 years; however, Pedals continues to remain relevant after all this time as I feel our members still enjoy reading the written word on paper, and to see all the wonderful photos of member activities across the country. My mother, for example, has a complete set of Pedals magazines and considers it to be a wonderful historic documentation of ICPA and it is a reminder of how far we have come, yet there is still so much to achieve. If anyone wants the collection it is in my shed at home!!

Thank you to Hannah and Tracey, current custodians of Pedals, who always put together an amazing magazine. Your endeavours do not go unnoticed, and all members appreciate the time and effort you devote to Pedals.

Federal Council continues to engage C7even, an integrated specialist regional and rural Marketing and Communications Agency based in Tamworth, to support Federal Council in continuing to build the profile of the organisation and assist with strategic planning.

Federal Council worked closely with C7even to build our campaign for the inaugural Rural and Remote Education (RREd) Day. The day was launched on the 9th October to coincide with Federal Council's delegation day at Parliament House. Many thanks must go to our ICPA family, stakeholders, and friends for embracing the day. The exposure the day received in the media was excellent and Federal Council hopes to build on that going forward. The next RREd day will be held on the 15th of October 2025, and with support of you all I am sure it will be bigger and better.

Work continues to implement the operational plan that has evolved from the strategic plan which was developed to support the work of ICPA's processes and procedures to ensure the ongoing longevity of the organisation. As we reflect on the last 12 months we have achieved so much in ticking of the one-year operational plan goals. We have successfully reintroduced the second VP role, which is already yielding positive results. We have commenced updating councillor role descriptions. We have completed a decision matrix, which is invaluable as it provides clear guidelines for all of council to understand who is responsible for council decision making and in what capacity. The biggest change that we have recently undertaken is moving the Federal Council communication system from Dropbox to Teams. This has increased efficiencies and enabled Federal Council to outsource tech support from an external provider decreasing the necessity to have a councillor responsible for this. It has taken some time to adjust to the new system; however we undertook a couple of training sessions to ensure a smooth transition.

We have now completed our year one objectives and Council will work again with C7even to review the operational plan and set the next objectives following conference. The Federal Council team is very invested in assuring the future of the organisation is robustly structured going forward and will continue to ensure our strategic goals are being met.

In other news, former long term ICPA Qld State Councillor Kylie Camp, from Burketown, has been appointed in an off-council position as a Portfolio Support Officer. The team is looking forward to working with Kylie to write submissions, do research and provide stats for us.

Another massive undertaking for ICPA (Aust) is to ensure our financial viability long-term and as such Federal Council has engaged Julian Moore, Director of Strategic Membership Solutions, to guide and assist us with engaging long term financial partners, which will assist in ensuring our financial security. This process is in its infancy and we will keep you updated with the progress.

The South Australian Federal Conference convening committee have done an epic job in organising conference and we thank them for all their hard work leading up to today. Thank you!! The partner tours look amazing, and I wouldn't mind ducking out myself for the day!

As always for the next council year we will be looking for new councillors. As always, no experience is required, and it is a learn on the job process. Please feel free to reach out to any past or present federal councillor to chat about what it means to be on federal council. A full council ensures the spread of the workload making is easier for all the team.

If we are looking for new councillors, it obviously means we are farewelling valued members of the current team. This year sees the departure of Julia Broad, Ali Allison and Heather Whigham-Reid and we all need to thank them for their valuable contribution. And Julia I need to see real evidence of a house being built to convince me that it was a valid reason to depart Federal Council!!

As always, 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 Adelaide with any thoughts left unspoken.

Thank you

FEDERAL TREASURER'S REPORT

Melissa Kerr

As I complete my first year as Federal Treasurer, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my predecessor, Nikki Mahony, for her invaluable guidance, patience, and support over the past twelve months. It has truly been a year of learning—navigating the complexities of Canberra, understanding the role, and meeting challenges head-on. Nikki once compared the experience to water skiing: keep going until you find your balance, and then it becomes easier. That analogy resonated deeply with me. Living in the Top End and having recently taken up water skiing again, I felt that same thrill, occasional wipeout, and eventual confidence in the role these past twelve months! My personal goal this year is to ski around the entire dam without falling off, hopefully something I can tick off!

Financial Overview

This year, ICPA focused on increasing social media presence, improving governance structures, updating IT systems and policies, and strengthening our organisational framework. These strategic developments came with associated costs, reflected in our financials. Key one-off expenses included:

- **\$75,000** in consultancy fees, including:
 - *C7even*: Public relations support, board evaluation, and media engagement
 - *Strategic Membership Solutions*: Sponsorship and partnership strategy
 - *Governology*: Constitution review
 - *Directors Australia*: Governance training
- **\$11,000** for new laptops
- **\$9,000** for governance training

These investments were made to ensure ICPA was well-positioned leading into the federal election cycle, with a strong, informed council and improved organisational efficiency.

Income & Expenditure Summary (2024–25)

- **Budgeted Income:** \$187,000
- **Actual Income:** \$235,000
- **Budgeted Expenditure:** \$300,000
- **Actual Expenditure:** \$304,000
- **Budgeted Loss:** \$93,000
- **Actual Loss:** \$69,000

The improved outcome was largely due to generous support from The McDonald family and Four Seasons Co. through proceeds from Zanda McDonald ZM lick blocks, along with contributions from our members, branches, and our ongoing Department of Education grant.

Branch & Donor Support

We are grateful for continued donations from various branches and supporters. Special thanks go to Rossco Foulkes-Taylor and the following branches for their contributions during the 2024–25 financial year: Alpha (QLD), Clermont (QLD), Kindon (QLD), Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD), Richmond (QLD), and Louth (NSW). Every donation—large or small—helps us continue our advocacy work.

Membership & IT Transition

This year brought the successful transition to a recurring online membership system. My thanks go to our Membership Officer Louise Winten, Judy Newton, and the Tech Team for navigating this complex project. Despite its challenges, we've emerged with a stronger, more resilient system and a membership of 2,112 members, over 93 branches.

Key Partnerships & Sponsorships

Long-standing partnerships with the Department of Education, ABSA, Telstra, and NBN Co remain integral to our advocacy and annual conference efforts. We are also forging new sponsorship strategies with support from Strategic Membership Solutions, ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

Governance & Training

Federal Council undertook structured governance training, both online and in person, with Directors Australia. This training ensures our board is well-equipped to meet current standards of good governance. We also continued our PR consultancy retainer with C7even to assist with strategic planning and maintaining a strong online presence.

Website & IT

Website expenses remained stable, and we achieved improved collaboration and communication across Federal Council, State Councils, branches, and our database/website teams. State Treasurers have now agreed to share website costs, further unifying our operations.

ICPA (Aust) remains insured through Community Underwriting, and our policy now includes cyber security coverage—an important step in today's digital landscape.

Tasmanian Administration

Tasmanian State Council funds continue to be held in trust by Federal Council, and Tasmanian membership fees are now directed to the state branch. Federal Council maintains the online administration of these memberships.

Joint Treasurers' Meeting

In April, we hosted a joint meeting of Treasurers from across Australia. The discussions were robust and informative, covering membership management, software solutions, and time commitments across states. We look forward to reconnecting at the Federal Conference.

Federal Conference Coordination

This year saw increased collaboration between convenors and treasurers to refine the process of hosting the Federal Conference. We hope that the Adelaide conference will mark progress towards streamlining this process and finding sustainable long-term solutions.

A heartfelt thank you to the Federal Conference Convening Committee for your tireless work and successful events over the past few days. Your efforts have created meaningful opportunities for conversation and connection for our members.

In Closing

This first year has been a wild ride—much like water skiing in the NT, with the possibility of crocs always in the back of your mind! I may have taken a few tumbles, but with unwavering support from Nikki Mahony, Louise Martin, and Kelly Ostwald, I've found my footing. The experience has been incredibly rewarding, and I am inspired by the dedication of those who came before us in advocating for rural and remote education.

The delegations to Canberra were a highlight, an intense and insightful learning curve that reaffirmed the importance of our work. To my fellow Federal Councillors: your commitment, energy, and generosity of spirit are the heart of this organisation. Thank you.

To those stepping down: Julia and Ali, thank you for your service. And to those joining welcome, we're excited to have you on board.

Signed, sealed and reconciled!

SOUTH AUSTRALIA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Belinda Hatcher

Federal President Louise Martin, Federal Life Members, State Life Members, Branch Life Members, ICPA members and guests it is with great pleasure (and quite a few nerves) that I present my fourth and final SA ICPA President's report and even in person this time! It is exciting to welcome everyone here to Adelaide and to showcase our wonderful state and its members.

As usual a large part of state council's focus in the first half of the year is always State Conference planning and then following through with the process of actioning motions with letters, delegations and advocacy. The 2025 State Conference was held in Port Augusta on the 21st of March and was hosted by the Flinders Ranges branch. We were very fortunate to hear from Dr Isabella Slade and Jessica Stenson as our inspiring guest speakers and were witness to 29 motions being presented, the most we have had for more than 15 years, which were debated in a passionate and respectful manner. It was also very exciting to have the Minister for Education, Training and Skills, Blair Boyer attend for a portion of the day and for him to get the opportunity to see the way ICPA supports and advocates for its member's needs. We haven't had an education minister attend and participate in a State Conference in over 10 years and we were so grateful that he was able to make the time to attend. A big thank you to convenors Michelle Hilder and Lisa Slade and all of the helpers from the Flinders Ranges branch for organising what was an excellent State Conference.

At this year's AGM we said thank you and farewell to our outgoing state councillor Candice Brown who has been a North West representative for several years now. We also farewellled Jodie Keogh, State Treasurer who after many years on State Council decided to step down from her role and off State Council. We will miss her input and wish her all the best as she spends her time with both feet in one state and supporting her young family's educational path. We also acknowledged Hollie Williams, who didn't leave state council but finished up her tenure as State Secretary and who we are glad to have sticking around for a bit longer. We also welcomed Dani Chapman into the role of Secretary, who with the support of the executive, has found her feet and is settling in well. Finally, a big thank you to all of this year's State Council for all their hard work. Like a lot of us, they not only volunteer their time for SA ICPA, but are also juggling family life, work and commitments to other organisations in their community.

The 2025/26 SA ICPA State Council:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| President | Belinda Hatcher |
| Vice President | Hollie Williams |
| Secretary | Dani Chapman |
| Treasurer | Kirsty Williams |
| Publicity Officer | Ellen Litchfield |
| Councillors | Di Thomas, Mija Reynolds, Michelle Hilder, Jo Williams, Kristina Crawford, Petie Rankin, Edwina Bowie, Louise Kohler, Pamela Cuffe and Katrina Morris |

Since conference state councillors have been working on drafting motion letters and gathering case studies ready to send to the appropriate parties. The process of sending letters was completed in May and we are already started to see some responses to those letters trickle in, which contain positive indications that SA ICPA and its members tireless advocacy is paying off.

The key areas of focus for 2024/25 have been:

- Increasing the State Education Allowance.
- Supporting preschool age students and families access financial support for setting

up kindy classrooms.

- Advocating for better access to child and family health services for members.
- Creating and deepening relationships with boarding schools from across the state.
- Supporting Federal Council with their advocacy campaigns throughout the year.
- Continuing to advocate for financial support for distance education supervisors at both a state and federal level.
- Creating access to affordable air travel for students across the state.
- Updating the constitution as well as all policy documents.

We have had the opportunity to head to Adelaide twice in the last 12 month for delegation meetings with Minister's, departmental personnel and other interested organisations. Back in December 2024 a small group of SA ICPA members met with Blair Boyer, Minister for Education, Training and Skills, Claire Scriven, Minister for Primary Industries and Luke Fraser, External Relations Director from the Department for Education. Along with some attending face to face, we were able to zoom in other members from state council who could not make the trip to Adelaide. All our meetings we well received and productive, but the meeting with Minister Boyer was particularly successful due to the casual nature of where it took place. We met at a cafe in Port Adelaide and it was the perfect opportunity for us to have a more open and frank conversation with him and for us both to be able to be more candid. I am certain that this was the turning point that has seen us foster a supportive relationship with the Minister and his office.

Our most recent delegation to Adelaide was held at the end of June. The timing coincided with the end of term for boarding school kids as well as the SOTA school camp being a few days later. This allowed for several members to attend which not only meant that we had a great range of portfolio knowledge, but also that more meetings could be arranged and attended. Councillors met with Member for Stuart Geoff Brock, Education Minister Blair Boyer, the Child and Family Health Service, RFDS, Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise, Uni Hub SA, ABSA (via Zoom) and several Department for Education executives in education, early childhood and allied health. From all reports, the meetings were successful and we are excited about the positive outcomes that are developing from our persistent advocacy, motions and members supporting case studies. We look forward to being able to update our members and the ICPA community of these developments very soon.

Unfortunately, due to station commitments I was unable to attend the 53rd Federal Conference in Sydney and I know I missed an excellent few days. Thanks to everyone who went from SA, especially to Hollie and Jodie for representing our state council. Congratulations to Louise, Federal Council, and the NSW State Council for putting on such a successful conference and a big congrats to all the councillors elected at the AGM. We are excited to have SA representation back on Federal Council again and are proud of Jill Greenfield on her election. There is no doubt her dedication and wealth of knowledge, especially with Distance Education has been a valuable tool for Federal Council.

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 not only myself but the whole SA ICPA State Council. The ease at which we can communicate make the organisation even stronger and the outcomes for members that much better for it. I would also like to thank the ICPA Tech Team for all their hard work in continuing to navigate their way through the challenges they have faced as they supported branches and councils with membership and website queries. It has also been exciting to witness the role out of Brevo, a platform which will most certainly strengthen the communication between ICPA and its members.

Our membership numbers continue to remain static and with the gentle reminders over the last couple of months, we have seen them almost return to the high they were this time last year. Many thanks to Louise and the Tech Team who have continued to iron out any kinks in the membership process and who are behind the drive to 'remind' those who haven't quite gotten around to renewing on time.

In February Dani and I attended the joint councils meeting in Perth. 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 Louise and Kelly 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 Jane and Kym 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 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 Edwina Bowie for stepping into the role of State Webmaster and keeping the ever-changing landscape of news and information up to date.

SA ICPA were pleased to present Lisa Slade with South Australian State Life Membership at this year's pre conference function. Lisa has been an active member of SA ICPA at all levels since the early 2000's and has served on the executive for the Flinders Ranges Branch as well as on state and federal councils. She has been the State President, Vice President, Immediate Past President and State Webmaster. She started her journey as State President in 2015 and has been involved in the SA ICPA State Council ever since. Lisa was also Federal Treasurer for a four-year term starting in 2017 and then went on to be Federal Vice President immediately after this for 12 months. A very deserving new SA State Life member.

Over the past 12 years that I have been involved with SA ICPA, I have witnessed the ebb and flow of membership numbers, the evolution of branches, and the growth of children and families within our community. Despite these changes, the core mission of helping members access the most equitable educational opportunities has remained steadfast. Branches that were once full of SOTA kids are now supporting kids away at boarding school or just starting out at kindy and others who only had boarding school kids are now full of kids at uni or starting SOTA. This diversity and range within ICPA's membership is a testament to the ever-changing landscape of rural and remote education, and it's one that we need to navigate together. Local branches, as well as state and federal council, are always available to assist with anything, whether it's a small question or a larger issue. Being here at the Federal Conference is such an informative and empowering experience and one that often ends up being the reason for someone jumping in the 'deep' end and becoming more involved in their branch or even at a state or federal level.

For our family, this is our very last year of dropping children off at boarding school as our youngest, Lily, nears the end of her final year of secondary school. It marks the end of 10 years of boarding and 18 years as a rural and remote education family. It has been the most amazing community to be a part of and the experiences, opportunities and friends that our family has made along the way are irreplaceable and something we will cherish forever. There has been lots of highs, a few lows and many fun times in between and I will always be grateful for the ICPA family for the support,

knowledge and skills they provided us as we guided our kids through all of it. There is no question that I have gained far more from being part of ICPA than I have given.

Many congratulations to Louise Martin, Federal Council, Edwina, Mija and the SA State Council for putting on what I can cheekily say is going to be a pretty amazing couple of days. Cheers and thank you.

NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Annabel Strachan

Madam President, Distinguished Guests, Members, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a privilege to be representing ICPA NSW in our contribution towards establishing equitable access to education for rural, regional, remote, and very remote families. We all passionately believe that an educated and forward-thinking rural population is vital for Australia and now more than ever before.

Our annual NSW State Conference was held in Euston and hosted by Balranald Branch in March with 134 registrations. The discussion was vigorous, and I was delighted to note the enthusiasm and confidence of our members as evidenced by a larger than normal number of floor motions.

I would like to acknowledge past president Tanya Mitchell's steering of the ICPA-NSW ship as president. She has led with compassion and diligence and would personally like to thank her for her invaluable support of me in the role. ICPA-NSW thanks leaving councillors, Claire Butler, Robin Beckwith, MiFi Kellahan and our merchandise manager David Shrimpton. We are grateful for their huge dedication and time supporting the effort to achieve an equitable education for NSW isolated families. ICPA-NSW honours the incredible contribution Kerrie Johnston has made to ICPA-NSW through her many years of editing of Top Wire.

ICPA-NSW has decided that we will be taking our Top Wire to an online platform and council is pleased with our first edition. Thank you to our new editor Elizabeth Rosser, and publisher and designer Tracey Dewell for putting together a great online magazine.

Numerous new motions were passed at conference but unfortunately, we have many older motions still unresolved. Regional, rural and remote life is complex and ever changing. ICPA-NSW wishes to assist our partners in the Department of Education (DoE) to tailor ways to address these changes with bespoke fit-for-purpose methods.

ICPANSW recognises these shifts in the challenges to obtaining education, through conference motions and we are determined to advocate for a better 'liveability score' for rural families. Equitable education is obviously as important as ever in achieving that score. ICPA-NSW works hard to offer flexible and sustainable solutions to the barriers faced by geographically isolated families. DoE and other authorities have often applauded these solutions. Therefore, we look forward to continuing to collaborate with the relevant authorities to implement innovative methods to ensure an excellent rural education is accessible, as speedily as possible.

Details of all regions are different. ICPA-NSW recognises the country and city divide and that therefore often decision makers do not have access to the realities of living in isolation.

Following is an example of the complexity of creating sustainable staff retention illustrating how urgent constant and positive dialogue is between NSW DoE and ICPA-NSW.

A decade ago, in far western NSW the DEL (Director Education Leadership) lived in the communities that they serviced and understood the vagaries of life in regional, rural and remote NSW. The Release from Face-to-Face Teaching (RFF) position supports Teaching Principal 1 (TP1) positions in remote schools, it was permanent and had a DoE car attached to it. In far western NSW the RFF position was shared between two schools serviced by dirt roads and without overnight accommodation. A departmental decision without consultation, to reallocate the car and the permanency position made the RFF position thereafter, impossible to fill. Subsequently constant RFF relief became unavailable to the TP1 schools. Currently the DELs generally do not live as locally to the remote schools. It is now extremely important that genuine community consultation to thoroughly understand the implications of departmental decisions, is undergone with local communities.

ICPA-NSW and the DoE wish to achieve the best possible outcomes for rural students.

Considering the decade 2013-2023 Education, Management and Administration, Project Management reported that students in remote areas of NSW face greater challenges compared to their metropolitan peers and that there remain considerable gaps in access and outcomes between rural and metropolitan students. In approximate terms only about half of regional, rural and remote NSW students are tracking on or above the minimum standards in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains & retention into final years of schooling. www.audit.nsw.gov.au

That being the case, coupled with the knowledge and willingness of ICPA-NSW, to work in tandem with the NSW DoE, ICPA-NSW wishes to ensure that our solutions to motions which the DoE agrees upon are introduced as swiftly as possible.

ICPA-NSW met with relevant Ministers and DoE staff at our June deputation, including the Secretary of NSW Department of Education, Murat Dizdar PSM and warmly invite any representatives to visit isolated NSW and experience through seeing the challenges in accessing an equitable education.

Following are some of the issues taken to deputation:

That NSW remote and very remote TP1 and TP2 DoE primary schools be reclassified to dually host enrolled distance education preschoolers from age 3 and secondary students. Both cohorts would be supported by a SLSO (School Learning Support Officer). The primary schools obviously would retain their TP1/2 teaching principal. The public school would host the above students a “pop-up pop-down” model similar to the B4Kindy model, thus becoming education hubs for their remote locality.

Preschool School Drive Subsidy (SDS) the trial commenced Term 1 2022 and extended until the end of 2023. When we met TfNSW (Transport for NSW) in September 2024 the trial should have been evaluated by the end of 2024. Here we are 18 months since it was completed, and ICPA-NSW is still waiting for an answer as to whether it will be implemented.

Broken Hill School of the Air (SOTA) playground - The P & C committed funding over 5 years ago to support the purchase of outdoor furniture and play equipment. Currently, approximately one hundred students are limited to uneven concrete carpark with no shade or playground equipment.

We would like the NSW DoE/School Infrastructure to prioritise and expediate the construction of a playground area.

The Living Away from Home allowance (LAFHA) needs to be increased to support the higher cost associated with rural and remote living and remove the adjusted income test as it is an access issue not relevant to the family income.

ICPA-NSW was pleased with the following positives from the deputation:

- Cement slabs are being poured ready for the new generators at Louth and Wanaaring Public Schools.
- TfNSW have agreed to run buses to Broken Hill from Yanco and include Victorian students in their route to the State border.

Since March we have appeared before the Select Committee on Foundational and Disability Supports available for Children and Young People in NSW. ICPA-NSW had contributed to the committee's work via a submission compiled by Gabie Le Lievre.

ICPA-NSW welcomes the news that Alison House Broken Hill will reopen in 2027. We acknowledge the challenging work of the committee to make this happen.

NORTHERN TERRITORY PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Moira Lanzarin

I proudly stand before you to deliver my fourth and final speech as NT President. The Conference theme, "Education for the Heart and Mind" is especially relevant for us all. Just as we are all about growing our children and their education – ICPA provides a personal growth journey for parents and teaching staff as well. 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.

I would like to shout out two stellar examples of this: Katy Hayes and Sally Dyer. Both here today. Both daughters of ICPA. Both School of the Air kids, Boarders, Home tutors, and Bush Mums. Now Secretaries of their respective ICPA NT Branches. Working hand in hand with their Branch President's and committees, they keep their members connected and us all on track. Both beautiful and amazing individuals. I don't think either realise just how special they are and what a stellar job they do. Thank you and well done. Keep on doing and being you.

ICPA has also helped me grow and develop. Not just in my time as NT President but from a much earlier time too. I consider myself a child of ICPA. My school of the air and boarding school days in North Queensland were all the better because of the advocacy and actions of my Mum and others busy working at a Branch, State and Federal level of ICPA.

I see my task as NT State President is to lead the State Council in our advocacy to relevant stakeholders about state related issues. I also see my task as a conduit and connecting mechanism between Federal Council, our Branches and our stakeholders.

For those who are unaware, ICPA NT Executive are all limited to a maximum of 4 consecutive years in one role. At every AGM, all positions are declared vacant and can be contested. This good governance keeps the organisation fresh, with real lived experience and helps to elevate potential burnout. The workload is large and to fit it in, other things must give and flex.

The task of ICPA NT President was not one that I actively sought. I was already on the NT State Council as Treasurer and thoroughly enjoying and becoming comfortable with that role. But the President position needed to be filled, and nobody was putting up their hand. I was capable, able and felt a sense of responsibility. In truth, I felt that I needed to take it on, like I needed a hole in my head. My father - my mentor, close friend and business partner - had just passed away from Cancer; both my sons - had just left home to start boarding school. Why would I need or want this extra responsibility and workload? But, in reality, ICPA was exactly what I needed. I didn't hold it up - it held me. It gave me purpose and clear direction on those difficult days where my motivation was low, where I struggled to get out of bed or put one foot in front of the other. I have enjoyed every bit of my time, but I am also ready to pass the baton on. Jobs like decluttering the shed and Big House at Coodardie and catching up on maintenance and office work need more of my attention and effort than I have given them of late.

In the NT we have had a very stable State Council with a lovely balance of fresh insight and solid experience. They are an amazing and special group whose support and assistance means so much. I am so proud of all of them and thank you does not seem enough. Bec Osmotherly -Treasurer; Catherine Atkins - Secretary; Amanda Murphy - Vice President; Julianne Vlach - Assistant Secretary; Kiya Gill - Publicity Officer; Katherine Branch President & Councillor - Connie Woods; Alice Springs Branch President & Councillor - Danyelle Haigh; Territory Wide Mentor & Councillor – Jacinta *McInnerney* and Councillors Mel Kerr and Amanda Brown.

The thorough and democratic process of our motions is a key attribute of ICPA. Taking this through to the next step of updating our actual Portfolio Policies is something that had not been occurring. Our Policy Document was last ratified at Conference in 2002. Many had attempted its update. In 2024 Constitutional amendments were made to give clarity and efficiency to this process and we then sought and contracted interstate expertise from ICPA Qld Life Member and past federal Secretary, Kim Hughes to work with us and fully update these documents. It was with great satisfaction that these were presented and approved at our 2025 State Conference.

This year's NT State Conference was held in Katherine hosted by the amazing and energetic Katherine Branch, convened by Jess Coronas - ably supported by her mother, ICPA and northern legend, Bernadette Burke and a large committee. Our theme was Country Kids Count. I don't need to explain to anyone here today why this is true, but I will anyway! Not only are country kids, our kids and therefore our heart and soul, but country kids are important and valuable everywhere. Strong values, solid work ethic, responsibility, independence, resilience and ability to positively interact with individuals from a variety of backgrounds, social classes and age groups are regularly sighted as important differentiating features of country children. This makes them sought after employees and natural leaders of business and community.

We once again flew the ICPA flag at the NT Cattlemen's Annual Conference in Darwin, with an information booth. This exposure and interaction creates such an important connection and link between our combined membership base and it was great to have NTCA President Henry Burke speak and participate at our State Conference.

November 2024 saw me in Alice Springs, strengthening relationships and speaking at the Local Government of Northern Territory annual conference. There and 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 healthcare, communications and safe roads.

During Delegation and in between, progress is being made on some long-standing issues. We have a positive and productive relationship with both the NT Education Minister and the Education Department.

I was unable to attend Joint Council this year in Perth, but the NT was most ably represented by our Treasurer and Secretary - thank you to WA for hosting. This cross collaboration and sharing of knowledge is so valuable. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the invaluable work of the Tech Team and the leadership and general support of Federal Council over and above their Federal advocacy roles.

It is for all these reasons and so much more, why the work of ICPA is so important. Why we strive every day to ensure all children have equitable access to education, regardless of their geographic location. Why we work so hard to ensure that NO child falls through the cracks, because of where their family lives.

Please take a moment to reflect and consider why we volunteer? It is not because we are rich and wealthy or have heaps of spare time on our hands. In many cases this is so far from reality it is laughable. We volunteer because we care. We volunteer because some things are just so important that handing the task to a paid employee would not give it the justice it deserves. Our volunteers are priceless and I most sincerely thank each and every one of you for your contribution. But volunteering is not a one-way street. By giving, we are also receiving in so many ways.

Regional Australia is filled with the most amazing, generous and truly beautiful people. It is an absolute pleasure and a privilege to work and stand beside you all. To my NT members and State Councillors - you are next level. Thank you everyone.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Jane Cunningham

The past year has been both busy and productive year for ICPA WA. The WA State Election in March brought significant changes, including the appointment of a new Minister for Education, Sabine Winton, and a new Shadow Minister for Education, Liam Staltari. ICPA WA met with both Ministers in June and was encouraged by their willingness to engage with the ongoing challenges raised by our members.

While we feel that education-related issues are being heard and considered by the new Minister, our efforts to address longstanding concerns with the orange school bus service remain largely unaddressed. Despite holding regular meetings with the Manager of School Bus Services (SBS), efforts to secure a meeting with the Minister for Transport have been unsuccessful.

This is disappointing, as ICPA WA approaches these matters with a solutions-focused mindset, aiming to improve the system and pre-empt issues for families. We continue to strongly advocate for SBS to engage more effectively with communities, particularly through local School Bus Advisory Committees (SBACs), as outlined in the Student Transport Assistance Policy and Operational Guidelines.

State Council continues to receive numerous requests for support from members regarding route changes and bus cancellations. These disputes often take considerable time for SBS to manage. Our

goal is to improve communication and outcomes for both families and contractors, ultimately reducing the workload for SBS as well.

To assist members, we are currently developing a step-by-step flow chart to help branches and individuals navigate school bus service processes more effectively. This resource will soon be available and is intended to provide clear guidance on the process and how to escalate concerns when required.

Following the March State Election and our 2025 State Conference, ICPA WA developed a concise and accessible document outlining our key advocacy focus areas for the year ahead, ICPA WA: Policy Priorities 2025. This document has been distributed to all WA Members of Parliament including the Legislative Assembly, Department of Education representatives, and key stakeholders across the education sector.

It highlights the most pressing issues affecting rural and remote families and clearly articulates the policy changes we are advocating for. We've been encouraged to see this document in the hands of stakeholders during meetings, and we've received positive feedback from several government and education leaders. It is heartening to know that the priorities of our members are being seen, acknowledged, and considered at the decision-making table.

Policy Priorities 2025 is proving to be a powerful advocacy tool, helping to keep the needs of rural and remote students front of mind in education policy discussions. The document is available on our website: www.icpa.com.au/wa

ICPA WA member numbers continue to trend upward, reflecting growing awareness of and engagement with our advocacy. In regions where branches are strong, they remain exceptionally active with string numbers. However, several branches continue to face challenges in remaining constitutional—particularly in maintaining sufficient membership numbers or securing office bearers able to carry out the necessary duties.

In October 2024, four State Councillors travelled to Esperance to support the branch that has seen a challenging couple of years. We met with current and prospective members, as well as local education stakeholders. The visit included outreach to small communities and schools in the region and proved to be both positive and productive. We extend our thanks to Esperance Branch President, Jane Wandel, for her support and leadership during this initiative.

ICPA WA hopes to continue this targeted support model in 2025 by visiting and working alongside another branch in need of support. Strengthening our grassroots network remains essential to ensuring our collective voice continues to grow and reach decision-makers across the state.

The 53rd Annual ICPA WA State Conference was held on March 28, 2025, at the Swan River Hotel. Hosted by the Goldfields Eyre Branch, it was a fantastic and well-supported event that brought together ICPA members and stakeholders passionate about regional, rural, and remote education. Over 30 members made the trip to Perth to attend the conference to consider the 40 agenda and supplementary motions presented along with one floor motion. We were pleased to welcome ICPA Australia President Louise Martin and Councillor Jen Ruska, who both travelled from Queensland for the event. As always, we also warmly welcomed REVISE representatives Denise Hilsz and Sue Potter. Many representatives from the Department of Education attended, including Ester Kerr, Network Principal of the School of the Air (SOTA), along with four SOTA Principals. Also in attendance were Doug Cook, Director of Agricultural Education; Vick McKeown, Executive Director of Schooling

Operations and Initiatives; and Steve Watson, Deputy Director of Schools, who officially opened and addressed the conference.

Representatives from the Department of Transport, John Bailly and Anthony Cattai, were present and provided valuable input on the many travel-related motions raised by our members. We were also fortunate to have a range of other organisations and schools take the time to attend and contribute to the conference. These included Peter Rundle MLA, Kirralee Warr MLA, Sandra Carr MLC, The Country Women's Association of WA (CWA), Western Australian Council of State Schools Organisations (WACSSO), Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA), Telstra, NBN Co, Regional Tech Hub, Wesley College, St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls, Presbyterian Ladies' College, Geraldton Grammar School, Perth College, Rotary Residential College, Great Southern Grammar, St Mary's Anglican Girls' School, and Australian Christian College.

Andrew Whitehouse, the Angela Wright Bennett Professor of Autism Research and the Director of CliniKids at The Kids Institute Australia was our guest speaker. Andrew shared insights into how the diagnosis of autism in children has evolved over the years, highlighting the significant rise in diagnosis rates. He spoke passionately about the importance of supporting children with autism to thrive—not just survive. His message resonated deeply with everyone in the room, from parents to educators, who listened with great interest.

Our second speaker was Alex Jenkins, Director of the WA Data Science Innovation Hub and Chair and founder of the Curtin AI in Research Group. Alex gave a fascinating presentation on the evolution of artificial intelligence and how it is being developed to support the future of education. His insights offered a glimpse into the potential of AI to enhance learning experiences and educational outcomes.

Another highlight of the day was Fiona Mann from the Mid West Branch, who shared her family's experience with accessing basic school bus services to their nearest appropriate schools. Hearing this story firsthand was deeply impactful for both our members and the representatives from various organisations in attendance.

As always as soon as one Conference finishes, plans are underway for the next! We are very thankful to have the Meekatharra Air Branch hosting in 2026 on Friday the 27th of March.

At the ICPA WA AGM, we farewelled three long-standing ICPA WA State Councillors Sally Brindal, Kym Ross and Chandra Ridley. Their hard work, passion and commitment have significantly contributed to the growth and development of the organisation. At the same time, we welcomed two new State Councillors, Megan Dorrell, Lakes District and Lauren Lewis, Meekatharra Air Branch. ICPA WA State Council is still three councillors below capacity which does have a significant impact on workload and restricts the impact we can have.

Megan and Lauren have jumped straight into their new roles on State Council with recent face-to-face meetings in Perth in June. Our first two days face-to-face post-conference were filled with productive advocacy meetings, strategic planning sessions, and even a chance to enjoy the rain-soaked beauty of Lightscape at King's Park. Of course, no ICPA gathering is complete without a memorable moment, this time it was a surprise 1am fire alarm that saw us all briefly evacuate onto the street in our pyjamas!

During our time together, we were pleased to welcome Caroline Robinson from 150Square, who facilitated a valuable session on governance and strategic planning. We look forward to

continuing this important work and building on the foundations established during her session to strengthen ICPA WA's direction and impact.

So far, we have started the ICPA WA year with the following meetings:

- Minister for Education, Sabine Winton
- Shadow Minister for Education, Liam Staltari
- Director General Jay Peckitt, Deputy Director General of Schools Steve Watson, Deputy Director General of People and Student Achievement Melesha Sands, Peter Lillywhite, Principal of the School of Swimming and Water Safety.
- Anthony Cattai, Manager of School Bus Services (SBS)
- Stephen Gneil, CEO of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) alongside Western Australian Council of State School Organisations (WACSSO) and Catholic Schools Parents WA
- Paul Mathews, Principal of the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE)
- Elise Petty, nbn Executive Manager for Education and Regional Stakeholder Relations.
- Systems Alliance Meeting with Director General Jay Peckitt and key associations
- Telstra Regional Forum Amelia Radke, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN)
- Sandra Carr MLC, Member for Agricultural Region
- Telstra WA Regional Connectivity Policy Workshop (thanks Sally for attending!)
- Telstra Regional Workshop

ICPA WA played a key role in the development of a pilot program designed to support small schools with multi-age classrooms through SIDE (School of Isolated and Distance Education). As part of this trial, 19 small schools are currently delivering mathematics and/or science to specific year levels via distance education, directly into the classroom. For example, in a composite class of Years 2 to 6, students in Years 4, 5, and 6 now receive maths lessons via SIDE, allowing the classroom teacher to focus solely on Years 2 and 3 during maths instruction. This model has significantly reduced the burden on classroom teachers and enhanced learning outcomes for students. The trial has been highly successful, and we understand there are plans to expand it in 2026 to include more schools and additional subjects.

Notably, the concept for this program originated from informal discussions at the Federal Conference in Darwin—highlighting the real influence and impact of ICPA advocacy, even in casual conversations. This initiative is a testament to the value of member-led dialogue and the strength of our collective voice.

We continue to work towards many longstanding advocacy priorities including the development of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) and significantly increasing the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA). These priorities sit alongside a broader agenda of addressing the many ongoing inequities across our portfolio areas — from early childhood through to tertiary education and training. As we look to 2026 and beyond, our commitment remains steadfast: to ensure that the educational opportunities available to rural and remote families are not limited by where they live.

QUEENSLAND PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Wendy Henning

Federal President, State Presidents, Life Members, distinguished guests, fellow ICPA members, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pride and gratitude that I present to you the 2025 ICPA Qld President's Report. It's been twelve months since we last gathered and, in that time, Qld has continued its strong, steady, and deeply committed advocacy for the education of children living in rural and remote areas.

The 54th State Conference, held in June in the welcoming town of St George, brought together members, stakeholders and guests in an atmosphere of energy and purpose. The conference was proudly hosted by the St George, Dirranbandi and Bollon Branches under the thoughtful coordination of Mrs Lisa Southern. The efforts of these branches gave us not only a smooth and warm conference experience but also a powerful reminder of the strength that lies in collaboration. Over 260 attendees from 37 branches were present, joined by key voices from across education sectors, including government representatives, boarding schools, early childhood experts, tertiary education providers, and many more.

The motions brought forward and debated this year reflected the ever-evolving needs of our members. Topics included access to early childhood services, school dental services equitable support for teachers in rural and remote locations, and the importance of learning support and pathways into tertiary education and training. Members again reaffirmed their strong commitment to ensuring viable and accessible boarding options, including the pursuit of an immersive agricultural high school model with boarding—an initiative our state believes is long overdue in Queensland.

In reflecting on the year that's passed, I want to acknowledge the commitment and dedication of our State Council, both those in on-council and off-council roles. We have welcomed new councillors Jayne Cuddihy from Dawson Valley, Natalie Pampling from Augathella, Catherine Baker from Moonie, and Stacey Gall from Southern Downs. We also welcomed Kimberley Wilson from Julia Creek as the new *News & Views* editor. Our team continues to grow and evolve, with each new member bringing fresh energy, experience, and insights. The role of Fundraising Officer remains unfilled as council work to redefine the role to ensure relevance and a defined need and plan.

This past year, State Council engaged in important training and capacity-building initiatives. We undertook governance training with Directors Australia and media training delivered by Independent Schools Queensland. These sessions not only strengthened our individual and collective understanding of best practice but also pushed us out of our comfort zones, growing our capacity to lead effectively and advocate confidently. While a third training, Low Stress Speaking, was postponed due to Cyclone Alfred, we look forward to delivering this for the new Council in August.

State Council participated in governance training from Directors Australia and media training delivered by Independent Schools Qld. These two courses not only upskilled but also challenged every member of council and have ultimately helped grow the council's skills and capabilities. A third course, "Low Stress Speaking," was postponed due to Cyclone Alfred in March and will now benefit the new council in August. All of council will also further upskill with training from Directors Australia.

October saw a change of government following the state election. The election brought a new Director-General of Education and a new Minister. We welcomed Sharon Schimming into the DG role, a familiar face who has worked with us during her previous role in early childhood, and Hon.

John-Paul Langbroek as Minister for Education, with whom we've already had two productive meetings. We thank former Minister Di Farmer for the respect and value she placed on ICPA Qld during her tenure and look forward to working with her in her new capacity as Shadow Minister for Education.

ICPA Qld has been actively engaged in numerous stakeholder sessions and reference groups, including representation on the Queensland Virtual Academy Stakeholder Reference Group, UniSQ School of Education Advisory Board, James Cook University Education Advisory Group, and NSSAFRI Working Groups on Boarding Standards and Wellness Standard. Being part of these groups is vitally important to council, ensuring that the perspective of rural and remote families and communities is always present in discussions that shape education policy and practice. Continued representation on the Hospital Schools Board also, highlighting the vital importance of ensuring access to education for children receiving medical treatment. The hospital school provides to children when they are at their most vulnerable.

Under the watchful eye of a new Publicity Officer, ICPA Qld branding and presence was adjusted and strategized. Council engaged with our members in a light-hearted way through the Pyjama Olympics, coinciding with the start of the Paris Olympics, to highlight the incredible talent on our team. This became a social media highlight for the year, though the children of the "showcased athletes" are still recovering from the fun and a video that went "viral". With feedback from members and stakeholders, we know the importance of demonstrating that we are approachable and real is essential for our members but also professional and credible for our stakeholders – fortunately State Council are finding their many hidden talents along the way.

This year saw the creation of branch logos, giving branches their own identity within local communities, and in May we held our first webinar for branch executives to help with meeting processes and to support stronger local engagement. Moving forward, we will continue these efforts to ensure branches are connecting with their communities and building membership, as our advocacy strength relies on robust membership numbers. A "Branch Best Practice" presentation at conference proved to be not only invaluable but very much appreciated by branch representatives. Delegations were held in August, December, March, and April in Brisbane, and we extend our thanks to St Peter's School and Catholic Schools Parents Qld for hosting State Council's face-to-face meetings. These meetings are critical for planning, preparing for stakeholder engagements, ensuring motions are progressing, updating policies, and strategising for the best outcomes. There is no greater motivation than having the entire council together in the one room.

Each delegation involved a packed timetable, combining meetings with the Department of Education and numerous other key stakeholders, including Qld Catholic Education Commission, Independent Schools Qld, the Qld Curriculum and Assessment Authority, QTAC, DTET, C&K, Play Matters, the College of Teachers, TAFE Qld, Queensland Farmers' Federation, AgForce, LGAQ, Autism Qld, Telstra, and NBN, to name a few. These meetings ensure that the voices of rural and remote families are heard and considered across all areas of education and support.

Following the retirement of Dr Grant Webb, the Rural and Remote Team within the Department of Education saw new leadership within the department. Working with this team led to a first-of-its-kind webinar, hosted by the department, for members to provide feedback on the Small School's Plan. This was particularly important, given the accumulation of motions over the years raising concerns about small schools, especially the overburdening of teaching principals and staff. With the new government's focus on red tape reduction, ICPA Qld is hopeful that the benefits and impact of this work will soon be felt in all schools across the state. Working closely with the Department of

Education is based on respect, honest representation and a mutual desire to understand and create solutions for rural and remote education.

The Tertiary, Trade and Training portfolio had an equally busy year, advocating across many fronts, from school-based vocational education and training to post-schooling. One key focus has been the push for an accredited course with recognition of prior learning for home tutors, who play a vital role in delivering distance education across Queensland. Continuing a 51-year tradition, the Financial Assistance portfolio has also advocated for recognising home tutors as integral to the delivery of education to geographically isolated students. These home tutors, whether they are mothers, tutors, or governesses, deserve financial recognition for their work, which is both essential and legislatively required for the delivery of education. ICPA Qld calls on the Queensland Government and the Federal Government to ensure that this recognition is finally achieved.

Council also continued work on the motion calling for an immersive agricultural high school, with boarding in Queensland, seeking equity with other states such as NSW and WA, where immersive secondary agricultural schools operate from Year 7 to 12. Council has worked hard to unite government, industry, and stakeholders on this issue to ensure the agricultural industry, so vital to the economy, is supported through education and workforce pathways.

Our partnership with Digital Child remained strong, with representation at the Digital Childhood Summit in Canberra helping us stay connected to national discussions around technology and young people. Similarly, our involvement in the Joint Parent Network led to the delivery of two highly successful webinars: “Unpacking NAPLAN” and “Unpacking VET,” with over 750 registrations and more watching on replay. These collaborations continue to add significant value for families.

In October, the Executive met with the Winchester Foundation’s Mr John Formosa, seeking advice to ensure that the constitution is the most up-to-date and relevant guiding document for the organisation. Also, Macrossan and Amiet Solicitors for their guidance in preparing the constitution for Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, which council will continue working towards over the next twelve months, with the goal of passing relevant motions at the 2026 conference.

It was a personal privilege to represent ICPA Qld at Government House for International Rural Women’s Day, surrounded by women whose work continues to shape our communities and organisations. I also extend my deepest thanks to the Tim Fairfax Family and the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation for their support of ICPA Qld and for the opportunity to complete the Executive Leadership Program through UQ Business School. This program offered professional and personal development that I’ve been able to bring directly back to Council.

Qld State Council, every member currently on and off council along with those who have recently stood down, deserve to stand proud, be proud of not just the organisation that you volunteer for but also of yourselves. With your commitment we are able to inform, educate and grow ourselves. This year we have participated in over 110 Stakeholder Meetings online, 104 Stakeholder Meetings face to face, 11 monthly meetings, 3 face to face meetings, 1 midyear meeting, 2 training courses, 1 executive gathering, mentor branch meetings, emails, messenger conversations and telephone calls. If we expand that out and very conservatively say each of those meetings went for half an hour – this is in excess of 238.5 volunteer hours, if we say 3 hours a day, that is 79.5 days on top of your everyday lives. Not back for volunteers with the same 24 hours in a day as everyone else. Every minute dedicated to ICPA is time taken from family and business, and over the past year, those minutes and hours as you have heard have added up, reiterating a significant family commitment to the organisation.

ICPA Qld have not only ensured that doors are open, we have them wedged open and with a seat waiting.

PEDALS EDITOR'S REPORT

Hannah Calcino

Federal President Louise Martin, Federal Council, Branch members and guests, as always, it is an honour to present my 2025 report as editor of Pedals Magazine. This is my 3rd editors report and the thrill of giving you all an overview of the last 12 months in the land of Pedals hasn't waned.

Having spent the last 5 years living and working in Brisbane, 2025 signified a new adventure for me, I packed up my life and moved to Winton in Central West Queensland, population 856. While I was employed as the HPE teacher at the local state school, in the first 6 months I have taught HPE, English, HASS, Maths and Literacy and before the end of the school year, will also add Sport and Recreation, Digital Technologies and Language teacher to my resume. It's been challenging but incredibly rewarding and I am grateful to have landed in a community that has been so welcoming.

I am loving being back in the bush and as a previous Lone Member, am adoring being connected with the ICPA Winton Branch. The highlights of my time with the Winton Branch thus far include being engaged in discussions regarding drafting motions for QLD State Conference and seeing the ICPA banners fly high at our inter-school athletics carnival.

While I've always understood the importance of the advocacy work that ICPA does, now being a teacher in a small rural school, I feel like I have more skin in the game and am even more passionate than ever about ensuring all geographically isolated children receive an equitable education (just ask my staff room, I will spruce the importance of ICPA any chance I get!).

Highlights of Pedals Magazine in the 2024/25 Federal Council year include:

Celebrating 175 issues. Every issue is enjoyable to put together, but the 175th issue particularly so. I really enjoyed hearing from previous Pedals editors Ralene Hall, Lyn Cadzow and Jan Gall about their time at the helm (in a less technological advanced society, which is no mean feat!).

The phone calls, emails and passing comments I've received from readers about the consistent quality of our magazine. This quality is thanks to our members who are always so willing to contribute content to the magazine.

Articles about deserving recipients receiving state and branch life memberships. Lisa Slade (SA) and Amanda Clark (Belyando–Mt Coolon) were awarded state and branch life memberships respectively, in the last 12 months. A worthy accolade for two women who have dedicated countless years and hours championing for ICPA.

Pedals Magazine would not be possible without the support of Federal Council or our incredible publisher Tracey Dewell. Tracey pours hours into ensuring our magazine looks professional and visually appealing, I will forever be indebted to her work and friendship.

ICPA is known as a changemaker. It's an efficient and effective organisation and people are often surprised to hear that such a sleek organisation is run purely by volunteers. But I just smile knowingly when people proclaim their surprise, because I know that when you're bound by a collective purpose and have a hearty helping of good ol' bush grit, nothing is out of reach.

We are an organisation that makes politicians, policymakers and people in power stop and listen, we are an organisation that plants seed in the driest of communities and faithfully waters them and

watches them flourish and we are an organisation created by the members, for the members. It will always be an honour to play a tiny part in the ICPA story and to stand alongside you all, as we work hard to ensure that those who come after us can see a little farther and benefit like we have, from those who have come before us.

PORTFOLIO REPORTS

BOARDING/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME REPORT

Amber Driver

*“Absence makes the heart grow fonder”
‘Isle of Beauty’ Thomas Haynes Bayly. 1844.*

Thomas H. Bayly never got to see how his phrase captured people’s imagination and grew into a popular saying, as he died 10 years before the poem was published.

In 2017 I re-wrote this saying when I sent my first child off to boarding school at age 11.

“Absence makes the heart ache and days feel longer”

Personal Note:

Any parent of a child who has attended or is attending boarding school is instantly impacted when reflecting on a boarding school journey. There is a physical and emotional reaction when you allow yourself to feel the gravity & realisation that your child will be living away from home, for months at a time, at a boarding school. You will not be there to nurture and love them, watch them grow, learn, play sport, interact with their new peer group, help with homework or observe their emotional space and well-being as they learn to navigate a new life so far from home and experience new activities, culture, events, and city life for the first time.

For our family, geographical isolation dictates that sending my children away to Boarding School is a necessity. Attending boarding school is the only way that they will access a full, well rounded, secondary education and like our family and many ICPA members, there is simply no other choice.

Over the past 12 months I have been on a steep learning curve as I navigate the incredible workload and advocacy work the ICPA(Aust) Federal Council seems to complete with ease. I have tried to provide you with a comprehensive ‘snapshot’ of the direction I have taken to advocate for all of the motions listed within the Boarding Portfolio. Member contributions, support and guidance are warmly received as I endeavor to resolve more of your issues in my second term as the Leader of the Boarding Portfolio.

ICPA Members Matter:

For many of our ICPA members, the decision to send our children away to boarding school in order to access a secondary education is not a choice. Many of our members have NO access to secondary school.

ICPA Members want their issues resolved, and they need to gain traction on the solutions they put forward year on year at the Federal Conference. Our members need results to remedy the issues faced in the Boarding Portfolio. Delivering solutions to the issues we have been lobbying the Federal Government for is long overdue.

The Government ‘weighs in’ on the conversation:

In recent correspondence from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (April 2025) it was stated that “The Government is committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of socioeconomic background or geographical location has access to a high-quality education.”

Here-in lies the problem, families in rural and remote Australia are slipping through the ‘access gaps’ and we need the Federal Government to stand by their own words and take action on our basic, fundamental, education asks. Boarding School is not a luxury, nor is it a business cost to gain a Tax Benefit. There are families living and working across Australia who are 100’s of kilometers from a town or school.

Quoted from the Australian Government, Department of Foreign affairs and Trade “Since 2010, it has been mandatory in all States and Territories for students to complete Year 10 and participate full time in education, training or employment, until they are at least 17 years old.”

Education is a mandatory, Australian Government requirement. When children are not given access to a secondary or senior secondary school in the town, region or remote location where they live, boarding school becomes their only option. Access to Compulsory Education needs to be affordable and adequately address the out-of-pocket expenses incurred by rural and remote families to access equitable educational opportunities for their children.

POLICY: Boarding Schools, School Term Hostels, and Second Home Arrangements

The ICPA advocates for the recognition of boarding schools, school term hostels, and second home arrangements as legitimate forms of educational access for students from rural and remote areas who need to live away from home to receive primary and/or secondary education.

Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC)

Increasing the AIC Allowance and Alignment with the CPI Education Sub-Index:

The AIC allowance should fully address the out-of-pocket expenses rural and remote families face when sending their children to school via distance education, boarding schools, or by establishing a second home to access education. It is crucial to note that, despite the increasing costs of education in geographically isolated areas, the AIC allowance has not seen a significant increase in recent years. The Gap between the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance and the actual costs of boarding continues to widen, increasing the financial burden on rural and remote families. The AIC Basic Boarding Allowance is indexed according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which does not reflect the real cost escalation. There are approx. 13,391 rural and remote boarders and approx. 4000 meet & receive the AIC BBA allowance criteria. In 2024 the average cost of boarding was \$25,166.00 (not including tuition and other expenses)

Objectives: Federal Government Departments must continually review and amend legislation to ensure rural and remote families can access financial assistance through the AIC program. A unified approach across all states is needed to support students who must live away from home to access education. Additionally, there should be recurrent funding for both government and non-government school term hostels, and capital funding to support these institutions. Commonwealth school funding models must support geographically isolated students, regardless of the education type.

Costing Challenges: The biggest challenge is documenting the actual costs families incur when sending their children to boarding schools, especially families in geographically isolated areas who have no alternative options. In February 2025, during a face-to-face delegation in Canberra, ICPA Federal Council asked Senator the Hon Matt Canavan to help estimate the financial impact of a \$4000 increase in the AIC Boarding Allowance.

In March 2025, The Hon Matt Canavan provided ICPA with official costings to identify the costs to Treasury. The preliminary costing suggests that this would decrease the fiscal and underlying cash balances by approximately \$23.7 million to \$24.3 million over the 2024-25 Budget period.

ICPA Thank Matt for his continued support in this area – we are calling on all members of Government to take action and implement one of these options:

Summary of proposal: The proposal would increase the Basic Boarding Allowance (BBA) under the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme by \$4,000 per year. The proposal has 2 options:

- **Option 1:** Annual indexation of the BBA would be in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as per the current arrangements. \$23.7 million over the 2024-25 Budget forward estimates period
- **Option 2:** Annual indexation of the BBA would be in line with the CPI Education subgroup (CPI Education). The Additional Boarding Allowance (ABA) would also be indexed to the CPI Education. The proposal would commence on 1 January 2027 and be ongoing. \$24.3 million over the 2024-25 Budget forward estimates period.

ICPA(Aust) Recommendations:

- Increase the AIC Allowances across all categories and ensure the allowances are indexed to the CPI Education Sub-Index.
- Requesting an urgent increase to the AIC Boarding Allowance of at least \$4000 to cover at least 55% of the average boarding fee followed by indexation to the CPI Sub Index: Education to truly reflect the costs of education.
- Seeking an increase to Second Home Allowance
- Review the AIC Scheme to ensure it adequately meets the needs of geographically isolated students.

Correspondence In:

24th October 2024, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP (MC24-010874)

“... The AIC Basic Boarding Allowance is intended to help with the additional costs incurred by geographically isolated families to access schooling. It is not set to cover a particular percentage of boarding costs. The Basic Boarding Allowance is indexed annually in line with CPI increases to ensure it maintains its relative value...”

6th November 2024, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm (MC24-009322)

“Thank you for raising your concerns regarding the application for Assistance for Isolated Children, (AIC) ... Minister for Social Services and the Department of Social Services are best placed to discuss any changes to the AIC scheme and ECEI funding...”

27th November 2024, Stakeholder meeting with Services Australia & ICPA FC to inform us that new guidelines have been set to support and resolve Motion S1, 2024. (see below)

9th December 2024, Assistant Director of Abstudy & AIC Programs, Services Australia.

Email received confirming the [AIC 2025 Payment Rates](#) and also that families who travel will be able to supply a PO Box as their primary postal address. (Motion S1. 2024) Motion S1 is now resolved.

30th April 2025, The Office of The Hon Matt Canavan, Pre-Election Media Release (in part):

“...An elected Dutton-Littleproud Coalition Government will commit \$40 million towards increasing the Basic Boarding Allowance paid under the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme, delivering much-needed support to rural and remote families across Australia. The scheme helps parents and carers with the costs of sending their children to boarding school when there is no school close to

home. Leader of The Nationals, the Hon David Littleproud MP, said the rising cost of living under Labor was impacting families from geographically isolated areas, who are forced to make significant sacrifices to be able to send their children to school... Under the Coalition's plan, the boarding allowance will increase by an extra \$4,000 per student from \$10,338 per year to \$14,338 per year for two years commencing 2025-26. After the first year of additional funding, a Coalition Government will undertake a review of the financial impact on isolated families. This review will inform decisions about future payments beyond the initial two years. While the review is underway, the Coalition will change the indexation factor to the CPI Education sub-index for the 2026-27 year. Shadow Minister for Regional Education Darren Chester said an increase to the boarding allowance is a critical component of closing the gap in educational outcomes between regional and metropolitan students. "The increased Boarding Allowance will help ease the financial burden and support more young people to get a quality education and thrive," Mr. Chester said.

Boarding Schools:

Many rural and remote families are required to send their children to boarding schools for secondary education, especially in regions where high schools are unavailable. There are only 2 Boarding Facilities in the Northern Territory and combined, they offer 615 beds, yet there are over 1200 secondary Students in the NT, due to geographical isolation, who need a boarding school. Half of the Children in the NT must travel interstate because there aren't enough beds in their own state. The gap between the AIC Boarding Allowance and actual boarding fees continues to widen, straining the financial burden on rural families. Boarding School fees increase annually by 4-8%, yet the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance only increased by 3.79%

On October 24, 2024, the Minister for Social Services acknowledged that while the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance is indexed annually to the CPI to maintain its value, it is not set to cover a specific percentage of boarding costs. The recent increase of 3.79% to \$10,338.00 (Basic Boarding Allowance) and 3.81% to \$2,965.00 (Additional Boarding Allowance) is insufficient given the rising costs of boarding school.

Second Home Allowance:

The AIC Second Home Allowance helps families set up a second home in a nearby town so their children can attend school. This option is essential for families who live hundreds of kilometers from the nearest school and face a tough decision: either send their children to boarding school or establish a second home. Expanding this allowance can support the educational needs of students in rural and remote areas.

Access & Timing of AIC Payments:

ICPA(Aust) has worked with Services Australia to explore improvements in the AIC payment system. A proposal to change the payment structure to allow for three payments instead of four for families with Year 12 students is under consideration. This adjustment would help ease the financial strain on families as their children approach the end of secondary education.

ICPA(Aust) Recommendation:

- Allow AIC payments to be made in either 3 or 4 instalments, depending on the family's needs.

Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) Exemption

1. FBT Exemption for Schools/Boarding Facilities:

The current FBT policy negatively impacts the cost of education for isolated students by imposing unnecessary taxes on boarding school staff accommodation. Removing the FBT on residential accommodation for essential supervisory staff would help reduce the costs incurred by some boarding schools, particularly in metropolitan areas. This exemption would lower the overall fees

charged to families, making education more accessible. The Australian Boarding Schools' Association (ABSA) estimates that the FBT on staff accommodation adds around \$2000 per student. Removing this tax could significantly reduce the financial burden on families who rely on boarding schools due to geographical isolation.

2. FBT Exemption for Employers Assisting Employees:

Employers in geographically isolated areas should be exempt from FBT when providing financial assistance to employees for their children's boarding school fees. The current tax burden makes it difficult for rural and remote families to afford education for their children, even with employer assistance. Removing this tax would help level the playing field for children in rural areas, ensuring they have equal access to education.

28th November 2024, A letter was sent to ABSA for them to distribute to their membership of Australian Boarding Schools asking support for Motion S2 2024.

4th February 2025, a second letter was emailed to multiple Ministers and Senators showing the support ICPA(Aust) received from Australian Boarding Schools in relation to Motion S2 2024.

6th February 2025, The Hon Sarah Henderson, Senator Shadow Minister Education confirmed that the correspondence was received.

7th February 2025, The Office of Hon Matt Canavan advised that:

"... I note that Senator Rennick mentioned the FBT issue you raised in the Senate yesterday afternoon... I can confirm that I have sent a request for an updated costing based on an increase of the boarding allowance to \$4000. It may take some weeks for that to be completed, however we will share that with you when received."

Correspondence In:

14th March 2025, Office of Senator The Hon Mat Canavan.

"...the costings which have just been released by the Parliamentary Budget Office can be found at [Increase of the Assistance for Isolated Children \(AIC\) boarding allowance | pbo](#) Please feel free to share this widely with other ICPA members..."

22 April 2025, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (MC25-011842)

"Thank you for your letter regarding Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemption for Schools with Boarding Facilities. The Prime Minister has asked the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to respond on his behalf. Firstly, thank you for drawing the Isolated Children's Parents Association concerns to our attention. The Government is committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of socio-economic background or geographical location, has access to a high-quality education. Education can play an instrumental role in improving outcomes for children and youth, especially those in regional and remote areas. This is why the Commonwealths Recurrent School Funding model provides extra funding in the form of a loading for schools in regional and remote locations, calculated through a school's Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) score.

The FBT plays an important role in maintaining the fairness and integrity of Australia's taxation system. It is designed to place employees with access to fringe benefits on a more even footing with employees whose remuneration consists entirely of salary or wages. As you are aware, there are existing FBT concessions for remote employers (and by extension their employees) for certain housing-related benefits... I trust this information will be of assistance."

ICPA(Aust) Recommendations:

- Introduce a Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) Exemption for schools and boarding facilities that provide on-site accommodation for essential supervisory staff.
- Introduce FBT Exemptions for employers assisting employees in geographically isolated areas with boarding school costs for their children.

Disability Support at Boarding School

ICPA(Aust) advocates for additional financial support to schools catering to students with disabilities from rural and remote areas. Many of these students are left to navigate the complexities of boarding school without adequate support, and financial assistance is crucial to meeting their needs. The “Disability Standards for Education 2005” must be amended to address the unique needs of students with disabilities who live in residential settings to access education. ICPA(Aust) work towards resources for students with specific needs to be made available and funded in boarding schools including resources for mental health programs in boarding schools and provision of additional resources to Boarding Schools for students with disabilities.

Correspondence In:

22nd October 2024, the Hon Bill Shorten MP (MC24-003027)

“... In addition to the reform program to improve the NDIS, the NDIA (National Disability Insurance Agency) has a National Remote Services Branch, which is responsible for providing essential services to support people with disability who live in geographically isolated locations in Australia. This includes children and their families. The branch works with a range of partners and other government agencies - State and Commonwealth - to develop the relationships and connections that the agency needs to support delivery of the NDIS...”

6th November 2024, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm (MC24-009322)

“...I appreciate the concerns you have raised regarding the added financial burden for geographically isolated families in meeting the needs of students with a disability while residing in a boarding facility. The Government has undertaken significant work to implement recommendations arising from the 2020 Review of the Disability Standards including support for educators to meet their obligations and new co-designed resources for students with disabilities and their families on their rights. The next review of the Disability Standards will occur in 2025. For your information, the Disability Standards do not set out funding arrangements, they are a legislative instrument made under the DDA to clarify the obligations of education and training providers ... Students with disability attract SRS based funding to their school or system and their school may also attract funding from other loadings depending on the students or the their school’s circumstances. For example, the school location loading provides extra funding for schools in regional and remote locations. It recognises it generally costs more to educate students in regional and remote schools than in city-based schools...”

5th February 2025, email from, Assistant Secretary, Inclusion and Disability Branch, Australian Government Department of Education:

“...The Australian Government Department of Education has published a new information resource on the Disability Standards for Education 2005, the standards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students with disabilities and their parents and caregivers. This resource was designed by and for young First Nations people with disability, with the help of First People's Disability Network Australia and Children and Young People with Disability Australia: [Our right to learn and play.](#)”

My team and I are more than happy to answer any questions you may have about our resources for students with disability and their families...”

26th May 2025, email from Rosemary White, Assistant Director, Regional and Equity Policy, Wellbeing and Equity Branch, Improving Student Outcomes Division, Schools Group, Australian Government Department of Education.

“...has added the ICPA and your contact details into their list of stakeholders to contact when and if the work progresses...” re: stakeholder input for Additional support (financial) needed *for schools* to care for a student with a disability (from rural and remote areas) who have no choice for the education other than boarding school. An amendment to 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 to access a local school because of isolation.

ICPA(Aust) Recommendations:

- Additional financial support for boarding schools catering to students with disabilities from rural and remote areas.
- Amendments to the Disability Standards for Education 2005 to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities in boarding settings are properly addressed.

Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program (CRSP)

ICPA(Aust) members support the continuation and expansion of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program (CRSP), which assists *some* students from rural, regional, and remote areas with boarding fees. Feedback from ICPA members highlights the program’s positive impact, but many families feel the need for broader assistance, as the financial burden remains significant and does not include all eligible children to receive the much-needed assistance.

Correspondence In:

6th November 2024, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm (MC24-009322)

“...I appreciate the advice you have provided to establish the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program pilot and your feedback on the program as part of its initial evaluation. I also note your correspondence to the Prime Minister expressing ICPA’s strong support of the program...”

6th February 2025, Meg Brighton, Deputy Secretary of Schools at DoE - stakeholder meeting with ICPA.

Meg provided an update on the CRSP; still under review, it is not listed in the next budget (no CRSP offered in 2025). Future CRSP will depend on the outcome of the review.

Key objectives of the CRSP are to:

- Support students from isolated areas with boarding fees where local education options are limited.
- Reduce the financial burden on families, particularly those in low socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Provide more comprehensive support to all families meeting the criteria, not just a select few.

ICPA(Aust) Recommendations:

- Expansion of the CRSP to support all families' children who fit the criteria.

Review & Update Forms and Eligibility Criteria

ICPA(Aust) has worked successfully with Services Australia to resolve issues related to families with businesses in rural and remote areas. These families are now eligible for AIC assistance, even if their postal address had previously been an obstacle.

ICPA(Aust) continues to monitor the 'Review and amend Rule 3' in the AIC application to remove unnecessary ongoing requirements once the initial criteria have been met. We would like Members to reach out if they are still experiencing issues to have their AIC approved under Rule 3.

Correspondence In:

24th October 2024, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP (MC24-010874)

"... you also requested consideration for changes to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) scheme reasonable access criteria (Rule 3) and increases to the Basic Boarding Allowance amount and ongoing indexation arrangements. As you know, applicants for AIC must first establish eligibility for the relevant allowance by demonstrating geographic isolation or a special need of the student. These circumstances are then validated toward the end of the year by Services Australia in the end of year review. This intends to capture any change of circumstance and includes travel distance and conditions under Rule 3. Where the student's attendance at school is no longer affected for at least 20 school days in a year, AIC payments under Rule 3 are no longer payable. Where a pattern of disruption is *likely to* consistently prevent access for at least 20 days, AIC can be paid in recognition of historical disruptions. For example, historical weather reports showing impassable roads for at least 20 school days would satisfy AIC evidence requirements under Rule 3..."

Moving Forward:

This year (2025), the Boarding Portfolio has received 9 Motions from Branches in NSW, QLD. South Australia State Council, Queensland State Council and Federal Council also submitted motions in the Boarding Portfolio. Some of the issues are complex and it will take time, patience, skill and dedication to resolve them. Other motions presented appear to be very simple and fast to solve. Some of the issues have been raised at this forum since the 1970's - and we continue to work diligently, as your elected Federal Council and say we have not managed to enact change... yet.

There is no doubt that ICPA(Aust) possesses grit and determination needed to continue to advocate, as volunteers, on your behalf, and we need your support for the long haul. Not just today and tomorrow, ICPA(Aust) hear you loud and clear, we understand your plea for help.

We need to take your passion and lived experience to the people who are tucked away in shining city offices, where there is a public high-school round the corner, a bus run and access to sporting facilities a stones through away – they are the people who write and change legislation, they have access to the data that shows the how many rural and remote families have no secondary school within reach.

ICPA Members – Take Action:

What are the challenges you face when accessing equitable education for your child.

1. Send ICPA(Aust) your 'case study' / 'your story'
2. Offer to share your story in the news and across our media campaigns
3. Write to your local elected member and federal member of Parliament and tell them what your issues are.

2024 - Motion Snapshot:

(A1, A2, A3. 2024)

Ongoing.

Restore the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance *to cover at least 55% of the average cost of boarding* as was its intent when established in 1973 by Kim Beasley, Minister of Education under the Whitlam, Labour Government.

(A4. 2024)

On Notice.

Member input required if applications have been rejected due to Rule 3.

Review and amend Rule 3 in the application for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) from SY040 to remove the continuing requirement once the initial requirement has been met.

(A7. 2024)

Ongoing.

Member case studies are required to support this motion.

Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) payments available, as an option, of three payments instead of four, for families with Year 12 students.

(A8. 2024)

Ongoing.

Member case studies are required to support this motion.

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.

(A9, A10, A11. 2024)

Ongoing. Continue and expand the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program pilot.

(S1. 2024)

RESOLVED in 2024

Review the “No reasonable access to school” conditions to better cater for travelling families whose core business is located in geographically Isolated areas.”

(S2. 2024)

Ongoing.

ICPA(Aust) is working with multiple stakeholders to resolve this issue.

To implement an exemption for schools/boarding facilities providing on-site living facilities for essential supervisory staff from Fringe Benefits Tax on that accommodation.

(S3. 2024)

Ongoing.

For additional support to schools for student with a disability from Rural and remote areas, who have no choice for their education but to go to boarding school.

(S4. 2024)

Ongoing.

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 to access a local school due to isolation.”

References:

[Map of schools located in the Northern Territory | Teach in the Territory](#)

[The Australian Education System - Foundation level](#)

Correspondence received from: Ministers, Prime Minister & Cabinet, Federal Government Departments.

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Sally Brindal

The Communications Portfolio continues to remain a focus and dedicated effort for Federal Council to guarantee existing communication services are maintained. New technologies and enhancements to existing technology are providing the opportunity for improvements to rural and remote connectivity however, it is important that these improvements continue to provide rural and remote students and their families with adequate communications services commensurate to their needs and that existing communication services are maintained.

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 Regional Forums with community group representatives from across regional Australia. 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.

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 2024 Conference, ICPA members again requested for services to be reliable, fit for purpose and maintained at a fully functioning standard.

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.

Our correspondence from Minister Rowland reiterated that Telstra has regulatory and contractual obligations to provide fixed phone services, nationally. Furthermore, Telstra is generally required to provide USO (Universal Service Obligation) voice services using pre-existing copper connections. However, not all premises will have previously had a copper connection that can be re-used, or the connection may have degraded. In these cases, Telstra would still need to provide a USO voice service using an alternative technology.

The USO applies nationwide, but for regional areas, Telstra is required to report publicly each quarter against a number of key indicators and provides performance details to the Department and the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). These data reporting requirements include service availability, connection timeframes, faults and outages, repair timeframes and appointment timeframes at the exchange service area level. It also provides national complaint and customer contact handling data. Quarterly reports can be downloaded from Telstra's [Regional Service Performance page](#).

Telstra 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.

MOBILE COVERAGE/SERVICE

3G Closure

Following the 2024 Federal Conference, ICPA (Aust) wrote to the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications, citing concerns regarding the impact the closure of the 3G network may have on rural and remote families, and what procedures are in place should the transition to 4G not provide the 'equivalent or better coverage'.

It was quite evident from the Minister's response that the Government was relying on the public statements by both Telstra and Optus that there will be no loss of coverage following the 3G network switch off together with other rhetoric regarding published coverage areas and independent testing.

Well, 3G is now gone and as we all know, it certainly has not provided an 'equivalent or better coverage' for a number of consumers. Since the closure of the 3G network a constant theme amongst all communication stakeholders has been the lack of mobile network coverage and call quality. Members have reported, and continue to report, a lack of 4G coverage where there previously was 3G coverage and call dropouts in existing 4G areas. These concerns are continually raised with Telstra at a federal level and with the Minister for Communications.

On 17 December 2024, the Government held the '3G switch off lessons learned roundtable' with the telecommunications industry; 4G case studies detailing issues were provided by ICPA (Aust) to the Minister for Communications Senior Advisor, Matt Healy. More recently cases studies were also forwarded to ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) at the request of the Communications Minister seeking information on consumer experiences of the 3G shutdown.

Telstra have a [3G Helpline](#) to further support customers who need more help with the transition. Telstra will work with customers 1:1 to troubleshoot their issues. For some, this may be quite straight forward with device setting updates, upgrading to a blue tick device or installing a go repeater. For others, it may require escalating it to their colleagues to better understand what the network experience is in that specific location so we can provide advice.

Key information:

- Customers can call 1800 990 853 between 8am to 7pm Monday to Friday AEDT
- Different device types and the diversity of Australia's landscape mean that each customer's experience is unique, which is why we want to work directly with each customer to help troubleshoot
- The helpline is staffed by a team of agents with deep knowledge on the transition to help troubleshoot why mobile experience may have changed
- [Telstra.com/3Gclosure](#) is our main hub with guidance for customers to self-serve some of the basic troubleshooting

Telstra have not put a timeframe on how long the helpline will operate for. They will continue to review the volume and types of calls and make their decision on longevity as we progress. Telstra encourages all members to call the hotline if they continue to experience issues as a result of the 3G shutdown.

Telstra offer the following steps you can take to get the best out of 4G and 5G coverage.

1. Always update your phone's software. [Check your software is updated and network settings are correct](#), then [set your network to automatic](#). TIP: to make sure you have the latest software update, power cycle your phone by turning it off for a few minutes and then turning it back on. This forces the phone to refresh its network settings and will bring up the latest software update available.
2. In a regional, rural or remote area? For optimal coverage, Telstra recommend a Bluetick device. You can also consider getting [coverage extension devices](#) for home or on the road.
3. Ensure your Telstra Go Repeater or Cel-Fi Go is set up for 4G. Make sure it's [configured correctly to boost 4G signal](#).
4. Check your location on Telstra [coverage maps](#). Telstra 4G coverage is equivalent to sites previously covered by 3G on our maps but remember that these maps are a guide only.

Remember, fewer bars of coverage on your new phone does not mean less service – there are no 4G standards for signal bars.

Preparedness Activities

Telstra have released a helpful resource to help Australians prepare ahead the disaster seasons. Preparedness activities and the initiatives available to help communities respond and recover when the worst happens include:

- Extra data: Postpaid mobile customers that are impacted in disaster-affected areas will automatically receive 100GB of extra data. Prepaid customers are eligible for 70GB of extra data that can be activated by SMS.
- Upgraded payphones: Telstra have updated almost 800 of the 1,000 payphones they are committed to delivering in disaster-prone areas by mid-2025. These upgrades provide free Telstra Wi-Fi, USB charging for devices, and backup power.
- Telstra Response Team: Telstra's team of technicians will be on the ground to restore connectivity and provide emergency services as soon as it is safe to do so when disaster strikes. At the same time, trained disaster assistance agents are available 24/7 to take calls and provide bill relief and other support. You can reach them on 1800 888 888.
- Prepping temporary connectivity: From their mobile Cell-On-Wheels (COWS), to deploying many more portable satellite kits to Telstra's teams in the field, they are getting equipment ready to help provide temporary Wi-Fi connectivity at priority locations if required when infrastructure is impacted.
- Network inspections and maintenance: Telstra are clearing vegetation and maintaining fire breaks at nearly 8,000 sites around the country. They have conducted hundreds of site inspections in cyclone risk areas and tested backup power supplies, including checking or replacing thousands of batteries.

ARE YOU E-PREPARED FOR A NATURAL DISASTER?

Summer in Australia brings natural disasters and emergency situations. Telstra has partnered with Justice Connected to develop a free online training tool that provides a simple guide to identifying your personal documents and how to store them safely.

[Learn how to e-prepare for a natural disaster.](#)

[Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee \(RRAT\)](#)

The Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee, chaired by Senator Matt Canavan, undertook a Senate enquiry into the shutdown of the 3G mobile network and have made three recommendations of particular interest is Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 1:

The committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a program to help customers that have lost mobile phone coverage since the 3G shutoff. This program should be co-funded between industry and government and be for the purpose of purchasing connectivity equipment for use by residents in rural and remote areas. For example, subsidies could be provided to purchase:

- *boosters for buildings and vehicles.*
- *Starlink or other low-earth orbit satellite equipment, including access to mobile phone by Starlink services; and*
- *replacements for equipment rendered obsolete by the 3G shutdown.*

This aligns with a motion carried at the 2024 Federal Conference. Given that most people are already addressing 3G coverage issues at their own expense I am not sure that the Government will instigate a program of reimbursement. However, technologies will continue to change so I will log this recommendation for future reference.

In April 2025, Federal President Louise Martin and I joined representatives from key regional, rural and remote groups and the Telstra Regional Council in Melbourne, for a Telstra Regional Workshop. The workshop focussed on three sessions led by presentations from key Telstra executives including:

- Understanding the regional, rural and remote customer needs, expectations and challenges in regional connectivity, plus reflections on the recent 3G transition.
- Regional network resiliency and reliability, with a specific emphasis around power and energy.
- Empowering new regional technology for regional and remote communities, including the evolving policy landscape to enable these technology developments.

The workshop concluded with a Q&A session involving CEO, Vicky Brady where Vicky discussed a wide range of topics from stakeholders, from geopolitical risks to cost of living pressures and affordability for vulnerable customers.

The desired outcome was for Telstra to continue to hear directly the opportunities, issues and challenges faced in regional and remote Australia; to improve shared knowledge around regional telecommunications and Telstra's connectivity roadmap; to foster relationships so that we can better collaborate together.

Mobile connectivity topics continued to be 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)

Stage 1 provided grants totalling \$37.2 million to deliver improved mobile coverage and quality of service to 42 target locations. Stage 1 of the IMCR was audited by the Australian National Audit Office

during 2023-24 and the department was found to be largely effective in the design and award of funding.

Stage 2 of the IMCR closed for applications on 25 September 2025; up to \$3.047 million is available but only to fund solutions to implement the Government's commitments to improve mobile coverage and quality of service at the two target locations of Majors Creek, NSW, and Mangrove Mountain, NSW.

Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP)

Rounds 1-7; the Government's commitment has generated more the \$1 billion to deliver 1400 new mobile base stations across Australia. This has also been supported by co-contributions from a range of third parties including local and state governments, and telecommunications industry grantees that are Mobile Network Operators (Telstra, Optus, TPG – formerly Vodafone), and Mobile Network Infrastructure Providers (Field Solutions Group and One WIFI). Round 7 of the MBSP was a combined grant opportunity with Round 3 of the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) but further rounds of the RCP have not been announced since 2023.

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](#)

Funding for new rounds of the MSBP was provided in the [Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia](#), through the 2022–23 Budget.

Round 8 opened for applications on 17 December 2024 and closed 30 April 2025. The Government is providing up to \$55 million which will co-fund projects to provide new resilient mobile coverage in regional and remote areas of Australia that are prone to natural disasters, including bushfires, cyclones and floods. The focus on areas impacted by, or at risk of, natural disasters reflects the increasing exposure of many regions to these events, and the need for communities to access resilient mobile communications services during and after these events.

Applications for funding under Round 8 were open to Mobile Network Operators and Mobile Network Infrastructure Providers. Applicants were strongly encouraged to consult with state, territory and local governments, and local communities on proposed solutions, including referring to the Round 8 Project Noticeboard.

A [Project Noticeboard for Round 8](#) was established for local governments and state, territory and federal parliamentarians to identify potential projects or locations which would benefit from new and improved mobile coverage. Industry applicants were encouraged to consider the proposed projects and locations on the Project Noticeboard when developing their applications.

The Noticeboard closed on 7 February 2025, to allow industry applicants time to consider the submissions and to engage with other applicants on the development of proposals.

Mobile Network Hardening Program (MNHP)

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, in addition to maintenance, upgrade and improvement of mobile coverage concerns.

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 grant funding to Optus, Telstra and TPG to deliver approximately 1000 projects to strengthen the resilience of regional telecommunications infrastructure. The first stage is funding the enhancement of the battery backup power to at least 12 hours at 467 base stations funded under the first two rounds of the MBSP. The second stage is funding the delivery of over 532 resilience upgrades at mobile base stations 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.

As of 30 June 2024, 91% of Round 1 projects have been completed, with the remaining schedules for early 2025.

Round 2 is providing \$14.2 million in grant funding for 386 projects to strengthen the resilience of regional telecommunications infrastructure, across regional Australia.

Grant funding is being provided to:

- CiFi to improve back-up power capacity and strengthen network resilience on Christmas Island and Norfolk Island
- Optus to install new generators and improve transmission resilience in clusters of connected base stations to reduce single points of failure
- Telstra to uplift battery back-up power reserves at sites in remote Australia, providing continuity of service during outages and other emergencies, and
- Indara for 2 Disaster Recovery Skids for deployment across regional NSW, Victoria and Tasmania to restore mobile services during and after a natural disaster.

The full list of projects being funded can be found here: [Mobile Network Hardening Program—Round 2 funded sites \(infrastructure.gov.au\)](#)

The Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia is providing funding for a further round of the Program.

Round 3 of the program closed for applications on 20th December 2024. The Government is providing up to \$20 million (GST exclusive) for Round 3, which will fund mobile telecommunications Resilience Upgrades in areas impacted by, or at risk of, Natural Disasters in:

- regional and remote Australia, and
- the peri-urban fringe of 19 capital and major regional cities.

Round 3 will be delivered in two streams:

- a \$10 million (GST exclusive) 'Regional and Remote Australia' stream for projects that deliver Resilience Upgrades in regional, remote and very remote Australia, including First Nations communities; and

- a \$10 million (GST exclusive) 'Peri-Urban Fringe' stream for projects that deliver Resilience Upgrades in the peri-urban fringe of 19 capital and major regional cities (consistent with Round 2 of the [Peri-Urban Mobile Program](#)).

Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia

The Better Connectivity is providing more than \$1.1 billion to rural and regional communities. This commitment forms part of the Government's investment of more than \$2.2 billion in regional communications.

The Plan includes \$656 million provided in the 2022–23 October Budget over five years to improve mobile and broadband connectivity and resilience in rural and regional Australia. Initial funding allocations under the Plan include:

- \$400 million to boost multi-carrier mobile coverage on regional roads, improve mobile coverage in under-served regional and remote communities, and increase the resilience of communications services and public safety communications facilities (including through the [Broadcasting Resilience Program](#), [Telecommunications Disaster Resilience Innovation Program](#), [Mobile Black Spot Program](#), [Mobile Network Hardening Program](#) and [Regional Roads Australia Mobile Program](#));
- \$200 million for two additional rounds of the [Regional Connectivity Program](#) to invest in place-based digital connectivity infrastructure projects in regional communities;
- \$30 million for [on-farm connectivity](#), so farmers can take advantage of connected machinery and sensor technology;
- \$20 million to conduct an [independent audit of mobile coverage to better identify black spots and guide investment priorities](#); and
- \$6 million to boost funding for the [Regional Tech Hub](#), which supports regional consumers to access advice and support on digital connectivity options.

The Plan also includes the \$480 million already provided to NBN Co through the NBN Fixed Wireless and Satellite Upgrade Program. This investment is upgrading 120,000 satellite premises to Fixed Wireless and boosting the Fixed Wireless network by enabling speeds of up to 100 Mbps for all premises in the expanded Fixed Wireless footprint, and up to 250 Mbps for 85% of Fixed Wireless premises. This upgrade is also delivering important benefits to NBN satellite services by relieving satellite capacity.

The Broadcasting Resilience Program (BRP):

\$20 million over 3 years from FY2022–23 to BAI Communications to improve the resilience of 98 ABC AM and FM broadcast sites across Australia. The sites that will be upgraded as part of the program:

- are used for priority emergency broadcasting during natural disasters
- have no or at-risk backup power to run their transmission facilities if the power is disrupted
- are at greater risk of failure due to being in a bushfire area or other natural disaster.

The Telecommunications Disaster Resilience Innovation (TDRI):

Promotes the development of new technologies to provide solutions for telecommunications disaster resilience, particularly in our regional, remote and First Nations communities.

Funding has been awarded to 33 projects under the TDRI program's 2 streams:

- 18 projects received funding under the Power Resilience Round. This round funded solutions that strengthen the resilience of telecommunications against the impacts of power outages—the leading cause of telecommunications outages during natural disasters.
- 15 projects received funding under the Innovation Round. This round funded innovative telecommunications solutions to improve the resiliency, redundancy and availability of telecommunications during and/or following a natural disaster.

Peri-Urban Mobile Program (PUMP)

PUMP is a grants program that provides funding to improve mobile connectivity in bushfire and other natural disaster-prone areas along the edges of Australia's major cities. The program targets long standing mobile coverage and reception issues in the peri-urban fringes of Australia's major cities. The peri-urban fringe is where the bush meets the edges of the suburbs, creating natural disaster risks for those living and working in those areas. These areas have been historically underserved because of the high cost of deploying infrastructure, difficult terrain, planning challenges and lower population densities.

PUMP complements the MBSP. Round 1 is providing \$28.2 million (GST inclusive) in funding to Optus, Telstra and TPG to deliver 66 4G and 5G mobile base stations at [50 sites on the peri-urban fringe of Australia's major cities](#). Round 2 awarded \$40.9 million in funding to 47 new mobile solutions across Australia. These mobile solutions attracted more than \$43 million (GST inclusive) in co-contributions from the telco industry and the Queensland Government.

As a result of the number of high-quality proposals submitted by industry, which fully met the round's assessment criteria and represented value with relevant money to the Commonwealth, the department recommended that funding earmarked for a future round be brought forward to support a larger number of mobile solutions under Round 2. The government accepted this recommendation which increased the number of solutions announced under the round and means more communities will benefit from these projects sooner.

The Regional Roads Australia Mobile Program (RRAMP)

A government initiative to improve multi-carrier mobile coverage on highways and major roads in regional and remote Australia. The National RRAMP is expected to open for applications in the second half of 2025 and will provide grant funding for projects which boost multi-carrier mobile coverage on regional and remote highways and major roads.

National Audit of Mobile Coverage

The aim is to better identify mobile coverage black spots across Australia to help target future investment and to provide an independent resource that better reflects on ground experiences of mobile coverage provided commercially by mobile providers.

The Audit commenced in May 2024 with a pilot, covering 3 roads and 3 locations in each state and territory and will run until 30 June 2027.

The main Audit is currently underway and involves drive testing around 180,000 km of regional and rural roads every year for 3 years. Drive-testing is being conducted by Accenture and Australia Post. Devices will also be placed in up to 77 locations, mostly post offices, across all states and territories to conduct testing over an extended period over the 3 years. This will assist in identifying seasonal variations in mobile coverage.

[Map of Audit Roads and Locations](#)

The map displays roads and locations proposed to be audited and may be subject to change. Queries related to the National Audit of Mobile Coverage can be sent to mobileaudit@infrastructure.gov.au.

The Audit will measure coverage and performance across Optus, Telstra and TPG 4G and 5G services (it also covered 3G while it was available).

Crowd-sourced data and data collected from drive testing and static locations are updated regularly and available to the public via the [Mobile Audit Visualisation Tool](#). The data and coverage maps presented are compiled through community input and field testing, capturing real-world user experiences at given moments in time.

Crowd-sourced data is collected via the [Accenture Crowdsourcing platform](#) and draws upon about 160,000 active users in Australia at any one time contributing to 3.5 billion samples annually.

Pilot Programs

The Australian Government is providing \$50 million nationally to state and territory governments to fund [pilot programs](#) with the States and Territories that trial new, innovative and novel solutions which increase mobile telecommunications coverage along roads and highways in their jurisdiction. The pilot programs also allow each state and territory to tailor solutions that meet their own needs and priorities.

The pilot programs are testing new ways of:

- approaching the market to deliver solutions.
- identifying roads based on data, need and local priorities; and
- encouraging the market to identify new technology, power, backhaul and connectivity solutions

Multi-carrier coverage will also be prioritised to improve consumer choice and access. Participating States and Territories are expected to contribute to their pilot program, either through partner funding or an in-kind contribution, including fast tracking access to Government controlled land or provision of project and contract management services.

Improved Services

The value of ICPA (Aust) was clearly demonstrated by the Kindon Branch motion that was carried at the 2024 Conference. In attendance was Lyndall Stoyles, Telstra Group General Counsel & Group Executive Sustainability, External Affairs & Legal (SEAL) who took a particular interest in this motion which has resulted in a positive outcome, not just for Kindon State School but also other schools within Queensland. Telstra has been partnering with the Department of Education (DoE) to deliver an uplift of bandwidth to schools throughout Queensland including Kindon State School. In some instances, Telstra continued to work with the DoE to augment existing services to boost the current data network experience to ensure each school can continue to deliver quality educational outcomes.

Telstra worked with the DoE Enterprise Technology Services Project Team to upgrade existing services to the impacted schools below including, for example, via the installation of Telstra's Enterprise Grade Starlink service. These services were ready for students to return in Term 4, 2024 or early at the start of term:

- Kindon State School
- Bymount East State School
- Grosmont State School – Telstra has been advised by the DoE in QLD that this school does not currently have enrolled students. As a result, Telstra will perform technology upgrades at a time advised by the DoE

- Wyandra State School

ICPA (Aust) contacted the Minister for Communications and Telstra to ensure that when major network disruptions occur in rural and remote areas for more than 24 hours, Telstra supplies an alternative temporary network to the affected town or area to minimise disruption to students' education.

Telstra's response was that while the vast majority of outages are resolved within a day or two, it is not practical or possible for them to link the development of a temporary solution to the duration of an outage alone — the travel time to site may exceed the expected restoration time, and/or there may be competing demands for deployable assets in other locations. Telstra, claim they focus on restoring services as soon as possible and strive to support their customers.

Scams

[SMS Sender ID Register Legislation Goes Before Parliament](#)

Legislation to establish an SMS Sender ID Register was introduced to Parliament by Minister for Communications Michelle Rowland and the Sender ID Register Bill has now passed Federal Parliament. The proposed Register aims to reduce the number of scams and help consumers identify legitimate texts from fraudulent ones. It is an important tool to combat SMS scams consumers frequently experience. The ACMA will now move to establish and operate a Register. All industry participants need to do their part.

The Federal Government's planned SMS Sender ID Register will be mandatory rather than voluntary. This comes after a government trial of a voluntary register and consistent pressure from ACCAN and the consumer sector to create a mandatory Register. 89% of respondents to consultation expressed a preference for a mandatory model. The Register will help to drive down the number of scam SMS' Australians receive. Australians are frequently bombarded by scam texts – and from international experience (Singapore) that a mandatory Register will make a difference.

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 2024 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

Correspondence received acknowledged that access to reliable communications is an essential service and understanding there can be significant technological challenges and opportunities in maintaining connectivity in regional communities. The Minister referred to the Government's \$480 million to improve both mobile and broadband coverage across Australia.

In correspondence, the Minister made reference to the improvements to the Sky Muster Plus Premium Plans and the School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI) which is providing a free nbn

internet service to 30,000 eligible families until December 2028. The Government has also committed to funding free Community Wi-Fi in over twenty remote communities around Australia.

The nbn Fixed Wireless (FW) upgrade, as part of the \$750 million Fixed Wireless and Satellite Upgrade program is now complete (\$480 million from the Australian Government and \$270 million from nbn). This means around 800,000 homes and businesses in regional, rural and remote Australia can now access higher speeds with a Fixed Wireless connection. Some of these customers were previously only able to access a satellite connection and the transition to a FW connection is helping to maintain a lack of congestion on the satellite network as data demands increase.

Key benefits for those in regional and remote Australia include:

- Faster speeds: Around 800,000 homes and businesses can now enjoy faster speeds, including during busy periods.
- New high-speed plans: Two new high-speed tier plans are now available via participating retail service providers, offering peak wholesale nbn network download speeds of up to five times faster than what was previously available:
 - FW Home Fast: 200-250 / 8-20 mbps to approx. 90% of coverage area by end of upgrade
 - FW Super Fast: 400/10-40 mbps to approx. 80% of coverage area
- Expanded access: More than 120,000 homes and businesses previously within the nbn Sky Muster satellite service footprint now have access to nbn Fixed Wireless for the first time.
- Enhanced performance: Improved network performance for uncapped data plans under nbn Sky Muster Plus. Satellite network slower speeds during busy periods has been resolved.

Sky Muster Plus capped data plans that required a data allowance for video streaming and VPN use between 4pm and midnight were discontinued from 1st March 2025 with consumers automatically migrated to a nbn Sky Muster Plus Premium plan.

nbn have been increasing awareness about FW availability through their “Check Your Address journey. To learn about your nbn connection status and more click on the following link. [Check your address | nbn](#)

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, had been extended until the end of December 2028. The announcement was made mid-Jan as part of ‘Government Back to School’. Families had until December 2028 to sign up, but the capacity had been reached by May 2025 and no new sign-up applications are being received.

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.

In response to the introduction of LEOSat technology, Gavin Williams confirmed nbn released a closed RFI (request for information) last year to further understand the offerings of various low earth orbit satellite providers, including the advantages and challenges of different LEO constellations. This is their first step in examining how to best meet the needs of people who live and work in their present satellite footprint. They are continuing to work on this endeavour and can confirm that the principles outlined in 2024 Federal Conference motions feature in their thinking.

The Minister has confirmed that NBN Co has received responses to its closed RFI from several suppliers and is currently undergoing a detailed analysis and evaluation of these responses. The

process is still ongoing, and the Government is engaging with NBN Co throughout this process and fully supports the thorough consideration of this opportunity.

Additionally, the Australian Government has established a Low Earth Orbit Satellite Working Group to consider the range of issues and opportunities related to LEOSats and hybrid solutions. Consideration for all options includes how best to meet the safety, security, sovereignty and sustainability needs of all Australians, ensuring the regulatory and policy settings are fit-for-purpose so these new technologies can be easily adopted.

The Government has announced a significant trial of fixed voice and Low Earth Orbit Satellite (LEOSat) connectivity. This is a notable step forward for consumers, particularly in regional areas. With direct to handset connectivity anticipated to provide mobile phones with voice and text capabilities in the future, these trials may inform future universal service policies. As part of the trials, the reliability and quality of voice calls will be tracked and impacts of weather conditions on services will be tested.

Emerging developments in technologies associated with LEOSats is providing opportunities to enhance rural and remote communications and provide increased choice and opportunities for ICPA members, both in the area of telephony and internet. Federal Council will continue to raise awareness of members' concerns and issues at every opportunity.

REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDEPENDENT REVIEW COMMITTEE (RTIRC) 2024

The Review occurs every 3 years and is an opportunity to examine the existing and future telecommunications needs in regional, rural and remote communities across Australia. The [Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee](#) has delivered its report to the Australian Government, informed by extensive consultation with people living and working in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia, sharing their views and experiences with connectivity.

The 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review 'Connecting communities, reaching every region' report and recommendations, are available in the following formats:

- [Connecting Communities, reaching every region \(PDF\)](#)
- [Connecting Communities, reaching every region \(DOCX\)](#)
- [Extract of the 2024 Recommendations \(PDF\)](#)

ICPA (Aust) made a submission to the review, but I must confess I have not read the whole 119-page report! There were however, 14 recommendations that can be summarised as follows:

1. Upscaling connectivity literacy

The Committee recommends a significant increase in the focus and resources for connectivity literacy in regional, rural and remote Australia.

The Australian Government should:

- develop a program to create Connectivity Champions
- develop high-quality connectivity literacy training programs to train Connectivity Champions, communities, businesses and other stakeholders
- refocus the Regional Tech Hub and increase funding to expand its capacity, boost awareness of its services, and improve its performance in providing existing core services
- review the Regional Tech Hub's scope, strategy and governance at the end of its current contract period.

2. Improving the mobile experience

The Committee recommends actions to improve mobile services, including addressing diminishing mobile experience in existing regional, rural and remote coverage areas.

The Australian Government should:

- prioritise funding to improve existing terrestrial mobile network capacity, service quality, and resilience, rather than further extending terrestrial coverage
- continue funding new terrestrial mobile coverage for critical areas like roads, and leverage strategically located Wi-Fi hotspots where needed
- request the ACCC to conduct a new inquiry into mandatory domestic mobile roaming, considering emerging DTH (direct to handset) satellite technologies and its effect on competition
- mandate, at the earliest opportunity, emergency mobile roaming during disasters and expedite the regulatory and operational framework for its use
- increase consumer and business awareness of terrestrial mobile network alternatives like Wi-Fi calling and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services for fixed locations
- enhance the ACMA's resources to enforce compliance against the sale and use of illegal mobile phone boosters and other unauthorised equipment and installation practices.

3. Expedite universal service modernisation

The Committee recommends the Australian Government expedite modernising the USO and the Statutory Infrastructure Provider (SIP) regime by merging them into a unified service obligation. NBN Co, as the provider of last resort, and other SIP operators would be required to provide voice-capable broadband services with minimum speeds and standards for all premises.

The Committee also notes that continued public ownership of NBN Co will be crucial to ensure that service standards are met under a modernised USO in regional, rural and remote Australia. The contractual Copper Continuity Obligation (CCO) should be phased out where and when proven and effective voice-capable broadband services are available.

The Committee further recommends:

- NBN Co be tasked and funded to implement, in consultation with industry stakeholders, a plan to manage the needs of different cohorts of regional, rural and remote users
- the modernised USO be technology-neutral
- the modernised USO be flexible, ensuring that minimum speeds, quality and other standards are readily adaptable, so they remain relevant to changing needs
- premises without terrestrial mobile coverage have access to an affordable secondary redundant broadband service including optional battery backup, with government contributions as necessary
- when a modernised USO is introduced, the Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) is updated and strengthened to provide appropriate protections for regional, rural, and remote consumers
- public phones (payphones) be embedded as a free service for domestic calls. Once current contractual obligations expire, the Australian Government should consider tendering for a provider to operate public phone services.

4. Consumer protection

The Committee:

- recommends a full review of consumer protections and service standards to consolidate and strengthen protections contained in a multitude of legislative instruments

- supports the ongoing TCP Code review with a focus on strengthening enforceable consumer protections, in particular, ensuring commission-based sales incentives do not undermine the fair treatment of vulnerable consumers.

5. Affordability

The Committee recommends:

- the introduction of pre-paid, low-cost broadband plans in remote First Nations communities, as proposed by the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group
- the Australian Government facilitate extending these options, promoting affordability and access for all regional, rural and remote Australians
- developing an initiative for unmetered access to critical government websites for users on limited data plans
- ongoing availability and funding for the School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI) to ensure all school-aged children have access to broadband internet, along with initiatives to increase awareness of the program in regional, rural and remote Australia.

6. Develop a national telecommunications data platform

The Committee recommends the Australian Government establish a national telecommunications data platform. Managed by the ACMA or the ACCC, the national platform should include:

- For consumers: an interactive online tool that allows consumers to easily access detailed information on broadband and mobile service availability in their area, helping them make informed decisions about their connectivity options across Australia.
- For the restricted use of Australian and state and territory governments: information about the location of telecommunications infrastructure assets for the purpose of investment and emergency planning and response.

Telecommunications providers should be required to supply data to governments in standardised formats to enable comparisons between locations and providers. This will enhance transparency in broadband and mobile coverage and help guide infrastructure investments, especially in underserved rural and remote areas.

The Committee further recommends that the Measuring Broadband Australia (MBA) program is continued beyond its current contract enabling the ACCC to monitor service performance.

7. Regional telecommunications strategy

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government develop a regional, rural and remote connectivity strategy. The strategy should be a vision for regional telecommunications and guide future investment and the regulatory environment for the future.

8. Modernising government programs

The Committee recommends that rigorous evaluations of the Australian Government's current rounds of telecommunications investment programs be conducted to ensure public investment is well targeted and delivered effectively. Further, the Government should ensure that future rounds of existing and new programs, are fit for purpose by:

- considering technology developments, such as LEO satellites and DTH capabilities
- mandating meaningful community engagement throughout each project phase, with special emphasis on First Nations communities both as title holders and consumers
- prioritising competitive retail and infrastructure options where viable
- addressing connectivity literacy and affordability
- enhancing resilience and capacity
- recognising the value of cross-government collaboration and planning.

To increase transparency, the Government should create a public website to track milestones for all funded telecommunications projects. This platform would keep regional, rural and remote communities informed about infrastructure rollouts by providing regular updates on timelines, potential delays, and their causes, thereby building trust and awareness of government efforts to improve connectivity.

9. Support for the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group

Recognising the value of the work of the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group, the Committee recommends that it be continued as a standing initiative. Consideration should be given to adopting relevant First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group recommendations across regional, rural and remote communities to address the digital divide.

10. Embedding community Wi-Fi

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- continue funding contributions for existing Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters (STAND) facilities
- invest in new community connectivity hubs to provide community Wi-Fi services during emergencies and natural disasters
- expand investment in mesh Wi-Fi networks in remote First Nations Communities allowing a choice from a tailored menu of connectivity options that best meet local needs and noting that communities without mobile coverage should be prioritised
- invest in and promote free public Wi-Fi initiatives in key locations across regional, rural and remote Australia.

11. Transition oversight

The Committee recommends comprehensive independent monitoring and public reporting during large-scale telecommunications transitions, such as mobile technology switch offs and the migrations required for modernising the USO. The ACMA could be well-placed to perform this role.

12. Expedite planning approval

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government should exercise its power to expedite planning approvals for large telecommunications infrastructure projects, such as tower installations in regional, rural and remote Australia and in instances where Australian Government funding has contributed to projects.

13. Powering connectivity

The Committee recommends that regulation be introduced to require:

- minimum backup power periods for new critical telecommunications infrastructure installations in regional, rural and remote Australia, with existing assets to be captured over time. The backup period would be regularly reviewed to take account of changes in storage and network technology
- energy providers to give high priority to restorations of power for critical telecommunications infrastructure in regional, rural and remote Australia
- energy providers to prioritise energy connections for new telecommunications installations.

14. Evolution of Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committees

The Committee recommends replacing the current appointment of Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committees every three years with a permanent Regional Telecommunications Commissioner or Regional Telecommunications Advisory Panel. Given the rapid pace of technology change, increasing complexity of the market and the need to modernise the USO, continuous oversight is required.

REGIONAL TECH HUB (RTH)

Our friends at the Regional Tech Hub have launched a podcast - Tech Hub Talk.

It is now available on all major podcast platforms!

Tech Hub Talk offers practical, easy-listening conversations hosted by Joshua Groch, featuring guest speakers discussing regional connectivity. The first season opens with a conversation about the 3G shutdown; why it was necessary and what you can do if you were caught off guard or are experiencing problems. Other episodes offer insights from various perspectives, including a bush connectivity advocate, a primary producer, and Telstra representatives and real-life stories of resilience, including handling natural disasters in remote areas and emergency preparedness.

Season One Episode Highlights:

- Episode 1: *3G Shutdown* – A discussion with Kristy Sparrow from BIRRR on the impacts and what it means for regional users.
- Episode 2: Insights from a primary producer on adapting to the change.
- Episode 3: Telstra's perspective on the shutdown and future improvements.
- Episode 4: A pastoralist's experience with natural disaster recovery in Far North QLD.
- Episode 5: Preparing for emergencies and insights from emergency response teams.

Keep an eye on their socials for episode updates!

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 or 1300 081 029.

LOW EARTH ORBIT (LEO) SATELLITE SERVICES

The Government has announced a significant trial of fixed voice and Low Earth Orbit Satellite (LEOSat) connectivity. This is a notable step forward for consumers, particularly in regional areas. With direct to handset connectivity anticipated to provide mobile phones with voice and text capabilities in the future, these trials may inform future universal service policies. As part of the trials, the reliability and quality of voice calls will be tracked and impacts of weather conditions on services will be tested.

Approximately 250,000 Australians use the service, a significant slice of global users.

As first reported by [CommsDay](#), Starlink has placed some Australian customers on waiting lists, citing limited capacity in certain areas of the country. Users in zones around Perth and Brisbane will have to wait for new capacity to come online before ordering and receiving their satellite dishes. ACCAN has confirmed this through [attempts on the Starlink website](#) to order the dishes to addresses in affected areas. PCMag reports that this is also occurring in parts of the US – a sign of the fast-growing popularity of the service.

UNIVERSAL OUTDOOR MOBILE OBLIGATION (UOMO)

Federal President Louise Martin and I attended the inaugural Comms Day Regional and Remote Forum in Canberra on 25 and 26 February 2025. ICPA (Aust) would like to thank nbn for sponsoring the cost of attendance. At the Forum the Minister for Communications, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, addressed conference and provided more detail on the Government's recent announcement of the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation (UOMO) which has the expressed objective to facilitate competitive coverage. Additionally, that D2D (direct to device) SMS and voice obligations are to be implemented by late 2027. D2D will complement existing terrestrial networks, and current programs still have government commitment.

As is often the case there has been a number of different terms used for D2D: Satellite to Mobile (STM), Direct to Handset (DTH) or Direct to Cell (DTC); making understanding the technology confusing for consumers.

SATELLITE TO MOBILE (STM)

On 7 June, Telstra announced Satellite to Mobile messaging capability, Australia's first satellite to mobile text messaging product as part of its collaboration with SpaceX's Starlink Direct to Cell. The service is available for consumer and small business customers on Telstra month-to-month mobile plans with a device from the Samsung Galaxy S25 series family and iPhone13, iPhone 14, iPhone 15 or iPhone 16 (all models). It is currently unavailable on Telstra Pre-Paid mobile plans.

CURRICULUM REPORT

Heather Whigham-Reid

The Curriculum Portfolio did not receive any motions in 2024, however Federal Council continues to advocate on behalf of members on previous year's motions, in the NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy) space and keep abreast of other key issues in Curriculum, such as the inclusion of food and fibre production within the curriculum and curriculum research.

Federal Council continues to hold a position on the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) National Peak Parents body 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.

NAPLAN 2025 saw the third year of NAPLAN testing being administered online to students from years 3,5,7 and 9, in term one (March). 1.3 million students across over 9400 educational campuses completed over 4.5 million online tests.

ICPA (Aust) is pleased to report that preliminary results, with the exception of writing as it takes longer to mark, were provided to schools in mid-April this year. Individual reports will be sent from the start of Term 3 and the national report is expected in August.

ACARA stresses that NAPLAN's purpose is for using the results in discussions with students, parents and teachers and helping students who need more challenge or extra support, and to improve teaching and the effectiveness of programs. This year has seen the inclusion of a map in the MySchool website. There is a distinct move towards comparing students with their own past personal bests, rather than through ranking with league tables.

<https://www.nap.edu.au/naplan/for-parents-carers>

The Curriculum Portfolio has engaged with the Ochre Ace Project which aims to look at how high-quality curriculum implementation can advance schooling equity in Australia. It focuses on Priority Equity Schools which are disproportionately located in regional, remote, and very remote areas. Part of its approach involves using explicit instruction. Explicit instruction is a teaching approach where information and skills are clearly explained and demonstrated rather than students discovering the information for themselves. Its report details how this approach is an effective way to improve outcomes for Priority Equity students like our Geographically Isolated ones.

<https://ochre.org.au/blog/new-release--ace-concept-paper-on-curriculum-implementation-and-advancing-schooling-equity>

How can untrained Distance Education (DE) Tutors be supported sufficiently to be able to deliver that style of education? With high quality resources. This research shows that using structured, knowledge rich curriculum materials improve student learning, and this is even more so for priority equity students. For educators, it saves time; 92% of users in the project reported that the OCHRE resources saved them an average of 3 hours and 20 min in a typical week. This can be beneficial for DE Supervisors/Tutors if it is used to reduce the amount of intellectual preparation or cognitive load involved in lesson preparation.

ICPA (Aust) is looking forward to seeing Carnarvon School of the Air (SOTA), Western Australia participate in the project and to hearing about its experiences.

We are in the early stage of discussions with Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA) about how ICPA(Aust) might help recognise teacher implementation of Food and Fibre programs and so encourage the uptake of the use of these resources. Jill Greenfield attended PIEFA's conference and reported that discussions centred on strategies to better integrate agriculture into education and build stronger connections between industry and youth. PIEFA has a large range of resources that have been created with primary industries that are ready to use.

ICPA Federal Council has encouraged industry to support PIEFA in its work.

DISTANCE EDUCATION REPORT

Jill Greenfield

Thank you to the ICPA Federal Council for the opportunity to lead the Distance Education (DE) portfolio. My connection to the DE portfolio goes back some time, as a governess and teacher. My three children completed their primary schooling through the School of the Air in Port Augusta, SA. Throughout those years, I shared the teaching role with a governess and also spent significant time as supervisor in our schoolroom myself. While balancing the responsibilities of mother and teacher was often demanding, I look back on that experience with fondness and an understanding of the challenges faced by families involved in Distance Education.

Remuneration for supervisors in DE settings continues to be a core issue. ICPA (Aust) has advocated on this matter for over five decades, with more than 50 motions on the topic passed at Federal Conferences in just the past 15 years. This consistent advocacy underscores how vital this issue is to many of our members. Federal Council has held regular meetings with Regional Education Commissioner Ms Fiona Nash, who has been both encouraging and supportive of our plight. Ms Nash is currently working to establish a virtual roundtable with relevant stakeholders to identify strategies for supervisor remuneration. Among the ideas discussed were the potential for supervisors to be formally recognised with job titles, eligible for pay, and supported through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) opportunities.

At the 2024 Federal Conference, ten motions relating to Distance Education were presented and carried. Advocacy began promptly to progress these motions. One key proposal was for the Commonwealth Government to formally acknowledge Geographically Isolated (GI) students as a priority cohort through the addition of a fifth student-based loading to the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). The current four student-based loadings include students with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students experiencing socio-educational disadvantage, and students with low English proficiency. The proposed Geographically Isolated Student Loading would be calculated annually based on a student's location and provided to the DE school. This would enable schools to fund supervisor allowances or employ supervisors.

Another approach being developed involves engaging state and territory Departments of Education to revise policy language related to supervision in Distance Education classrooms. Federal Council will continue raising this with the Department of Education and relevant stakeholders to encourage consistent, systemic support across jurisdictions.

In October 2024 and again in February 2025, Federal Council met with the Department of Education to further explore supervisor funding options. During the February meeting, Deputy Secretary Meg Brighton confirmed that GI students are currently addressed within the school size and location loadings of the SRS. We raised the possibility of introducing a separate student-based loading for GI students, and were informed that the upcoming 2027 SRS Review, part of national education reforms, would provide a formal opportunity for ICPA (Aust) to contribute input. However, introducing a new loading would require coordination between federal and state governments to ensure funding reaches DE schools and can be allocated toward supervisor support.

One motion at the 2024 Federal Conference called for DE schools to meet their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the Disability Standards for Education 2005, and international human rights treaties. In October 2024, the Federal Council met with Rosemary White from the Department of Education and her team to discuss how DE schools can ensure the well-being and educational inclusion of all students. The Assistant Director for Disability, Inclusion, and Student Services reaffirmed that all schools, including DE schools, are legally required to provide reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities. Resources have been developed by the Australian Government to help educators understand and meet these obligations, available at www.nccd.edu.au/dse. Additionally, new online training modules for school leaders and teachers will soon be released to further support this work.

In a follow-up meeting in February 2025, Meg Brighton explained that tailoring education to meet individual needs is central to upcoming education funding reforms focused on equity and excellence. Teachers are seen as best placed to assess and respond to student needs. New training resources will be made available online for flexible, after-hours access. Families encountering challenges are encouraged to contact their DE provider first, with the option to escalate concerns to the Department of Education if necessary. We also raised concerns that GI students are often overlooked as DE enrolments rise and emphasised the importance of prioritising their unique needs.

The availability of In Home Care (IHC) to support DE supervision has been consistently raised in our correspondence and advocacy. It was mentioned in a letter to Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP, in September 2024. Although we did not receive a reply specific to this issue, it was discussed with Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm during delegations in October 2024 and February 2025. In February, Federal Council contributed to the review of the IHC Guidelines and the Inquiry into the Early Childhood Education and Care (Three Day Guarantee) Bill. In both cases, we advocated for the inclusion of language such as "except where care is being provided in a remote or very remote location" to provide greater flexibility for rural families.

A costing review for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education allowance has been requested, to better support families in setting up and maintaining classroom facilities and attending critical face-to-face events. Additional costing requests were also submitted for other AIC allowances to strengthen ICPA's broader advocacy efforts.

ICPA (Aust) also achieved significant outcomes during this reporting period. A motion passed at the 2024 Federal Conference called for Services Australia to update the "no reasonable access to school" conditions, specifically to better accommodate families working as travelling contractors in geographically isolated regions. Services Australia acknowledged the need and confirmed that policy updates could provide the necessary flexibility to support itinerant and transient families in accessing AIC payments. This outcome represents a major win for our most mobile and remote members, and we thank Services Australia for listening to our concerns.

Another example of successful advocacy occurred when an ICPA member from South Australia sought assistance after their child was deemed ineligible for AIC-DE due to starting school during a mid-year Reception intake. Following ICPA's engagement, Services Australia reviewed and updated their assessment criteria to reflect South Australia's new enrolment guidelines. These changes have now been applied nationally to ensure mid-year intake students are not unfairly excluded, highlighting the strength of ICPA's collaborative relationships with key stakeholders.

ICPA (Aust) remains committed to supporting families engaged in Distance Education and will continue advocating for equitable access, recognition of supervisor roles, and improved policy frameworks that acknowledge the challenges faced by our most geographically isolated students.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE REPORT

Julia Broad

Thank you to the ICPA Federal Council for the opportunity to lead the Distance Education (DE) portfolio. My connection to the DE portfolio goes back some time, as a governess and teacher. My three children completed their primary schooling through the School of the Air in Port Augusta, SA. Throughout those years, I shared the teaching role with a governess and also spent significant time as supervisor in our schoolroom myself. While balancing the responsibilities of mother and teacher was often demanding, I look back on that experience with fondness and an understanding of the challenges faced by families involved in Distance Education.

Remuneration for supervisors in DE settings continues to be a core issue. ICPA (Aust) has advocated on this matter for over five decades, with more than 50 motions on the topic passed at Federal Conferences in just the past 15 years. This consistent advocacy underscores how vital this issue is to many of our members. Federal Council has held regular meetings with Regional Education Commissioner Ms Fiona Nash, who has been both encouraging and supportive of our plight. Ms Nash is currently working to establish a virtual roundtable with relevant stakeholders to identify strategies for supervisor remuneration. Among the ideas discussed were the potential for supervisors to be formally recognised with job titles, eligible for pay, and supported through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) opportunities.

At the 2024 Federal Conference, ten motions relating to Distance Education were presented and carried. Advocacy began promptly to progress these motions. One key proposal was for the Commonwealth Government to formally acknowledge Geographically Isolated (GI) students as a priority cohort through the addition of a fifth student-based loading to the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). The current four student-based loadings include students with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students experiencing socio-educational disadvantage, and students with low English proficiency. The proposed Geographically Isolated Student Loading would

be calculated annually based on a student's location and provided to the DE school. This would enable schools to fund supervisor allowances or employ supervisors.

Another approach being developed involves engaging state and territory Departments of Education to revise policy language related to supervision in Distance Education classrooms. Federal Council will continue raising this with the Department of Education and relevant stakeholders to encourage consistent, systemic support across jurisdictions.

In October 2024 and again in February 2025, Federal Council met with the Department of Education to further explore supervisor funding options. During the February meeting, Deputy Secretary Meg Brighton confirmed that GI students are currently addressed within the school size and location loadings of the SRS. We raised the possibility of introducing a separate student-based loading for GI students, and were informed that the upcoming 2027 SRS Review, part of national education reforms, would provide a formal opportunity for ICPA (Aust) to contribute input. However, introducing a new loading would require coordination between federal and state governments to ensure funding reaches DE schools and can be allocated toward supervisor support.

One motion at the 2024 Federal Conference called for DE schools to meet their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the Disability Standards for Education 2005, and international human rights treaties. In October 2024, the Federal Council met with Rosemary White from the Department of Education and her team to discuss how DE schools can ensure the well-being and educational inclusion of all students. The Assistant Director for Disability, Inclusion, and Student Services reaffirmed that all schools, including DE schools, are legally required to provide reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities. Resources have been developed by the Australian Government to help educators understand and meet these obligations, available at www.nccd.edu.au/dse. Additionally, new online training modules for school leaders and teachers will soon be released to further support this work.

In a follow-up meeting in February 2025, Meg Brighton explained that tailoring education to meet individual needs is central to upcoming education funding reforms focused on equity and excellence. Teachers are seen as best placed to assess and respond to student needs. New training resources will be made available online for flexible, after-hours access. Families encountering challenges are encouraged to contact their DE provider first, with the option to escalate concerns to the Department of Education if necessary. We also raised concerns that GI students are often overlooked as DE enrolments rise and emphasised the importance of prioritising their unique needs.

The availability of In Home Care (IHC) to support DE supervision has been consistently raised in our correspondence and advocacy. It was mentioned in a letter to Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP, in September 2024. Although we did not receive a reply specific to this issue, it was discussed with Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm during delegations in October 2024 and February 2025. In February, Federal Council contributed to the review of the IHC Guidelines and the Inquiry into the Early Childhood Education and Care (Three Day Guarantee) Bill. In both cases, we advocated for the inclusion of language such as "except where care is being provided in a remote or very remote location" to provide greater flexibility for rural families.

A costing review for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education allowance has been requested, to better support families in setting up and maintaining classroom facilities and attending critical face-to-face events. Additional costing requests were also submitted for other AIC allowances to strengthen ICPA's broader advocacy efforts.

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ICPA (Aust) remains committed to supporting families engaged in Distance Education and will continue advocating for equitable access, recognition of supervisor roles, and improved policy frameworks that acknowledge the challenges faced by our most geographically isolated students.

RURAL SCHOOLS REPORT

Nikki Mahony

ICPA (Aust) thanked Minister Clare for including ICPA (Aust) as a stakeholder in the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) Ministerial Reference Group. The National School Reform Agreement is a joint agreement between the commonwealth, states and territories to lift student outcomes across Australian Schools.

<https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/review-consultations/ministerial-reference-group>

Federal Council participated online and in person in these discussions and reiterated that we looked forward to continued involvement.

A Summary report can be found here: <https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/resources/better-and-fairer-education-system-consultation-paper>

The above report echoes the concerns of many members. Attraction and retention of teachers in our rural, remote and regional schools is difficult due to the complexities of the environment they find themselves in. The report acknowledges that some schools find it hard to attract and retain skilled teachers, these schools are often in rural, regional, and remote locations.

The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (December 2022) was developed by all education ministers across Australia. This plan is well underway and is designed to attract teachers in all areas of education, both in the metropolitan and rural areas. There are five priority areas – two that deal directly with improving teacher supply and keeping the teachers we have.

ICPA (Aust) is encouraged that all governments are finally recognising the shortage of teachers in our schools and are putting plans in place to address this worldwide concern. Unfortunately, it is rural and remote schools that are often at the wrong end of the supply chain when teachers are deciding which school best meets their needs and metropolitan schools are often favoured over rural and remote schools for teaching placements.

Incentivising experienced teachers into rural, regional & remote positions

The Rural Schools portfolio received one motion from the Goldfields Eyre branch in Western Australia at the Federal Conference in Sydney in 2024, again reiterating the need for national awareness and incentive programs.

A letter was sent to the Minister for Education, Hon Jason Clare MP in September 2024 acknowledging the national teacher shortage and requesting the federal government continue to explore options for incentive programs to attract experienced teachers to rural, regional, and remote schools.

The Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship Program and special measures to reduce the HELP debt for teachers in very remote areas of Australia were announced in 2023.

During our May 2024 delegations to Canberra, Federal ICPA Council confirmed our support for the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships, however also raised concerns that this is a missed opportunity for rural and remote schools. 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. Federal Council implored the Federal Government consider including a rural and remote incentive into the scheme.

More information on these programs can be found on the following links.

<https://www.education.gov.au/teaching-scholarships>

<https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-loan-program/reduction-help-debts-teachers-very-remote-areas>

In response to ministerial letters in 2024, ICPA (Aust) acknowledged that while State Governments are responsible for employing teachers and have varying incentives to encourage teachers to rural schools, 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 requesting federal funding for national incentives that would address teacher shortages nationwide and better support States, ICPA (Aust) advised that a Federal Government run advertising campaign pitched at experienced teachers and their families to encourage them to “go bush” would also be beneficial.

Paid Pracs

Members of ICPA Aust. welcomed the Federal Government’s announcement that students studying to be a teacher, nurse, midwife or social worker would now be eligible to receive \$319.50 per week while on a compulsory practicum placement. During Canberra delegations in May 2024, ICPA Federal Council also requested that paid practicums be extended to include students in the allied health areas as we can see that this would have a significant impact in supporting rural and remote schools.

While advised by some ministers that this was unlikely to happen it was suggested that a HELP reduction type scheme would be more beneficial to attracting university graduate students to rural and remote schools. ICPA Aust. has appealed to the Federal Government to explore options for such a scheme.

The roll-out on July 1 highlighted several gaps and issues – for example Diploma of Education students NOT being eligible under the scheme despite needing to meet same prac placement requirements.

Anyone experiencing issues with prac placement process and eligibility, PLEASE fill out lived experience forms and contact us with your specific case studies.

Skilled Visas

One potential tool to address the national teacher shortage sits within the immigration portfolio - Australian work visas for teachers and early childcare educators from overseas. Education providers have the option to sponsor educators and teachers to work in Australia via a **Temporary Skill Shortage visa (subclass 482) or Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186) visa**. At present the category of Primary School Teacher (ANZSCO 241213) is on the STSOL (short term skills occupational demand list) and not eligible for application under subclass 189 (MLTSSL; Medium- and Long-Term Strategic Skill List). All primary teaching applicants must be state sponsored under the subclass 190 or 491.

ICPA (Aust.) has written to The Hon Tony Burke MP - Minister for Home Affairs, Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Cybersecurity and Arts - requesting the Federal Government consider including Primary School Teacher into the MLTSSL list and also consider a secondary quota with rural and remote placement conditions for all teachers. The response from Minister Burkes office is below;

“The Government remains committed to supporting the education sector to address workforce shortages, including in regional Australia. Applications for employer sponsored visas for teachers in regional Australia are currently being processed as the first priority, along with applications for occupations in the education sector across Australia, see:

<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-processing-times/skilled-visa-processing-priorities> .

While I acknowledge that the Skilled Independent (subclass 189) visa is not available for primary school teachers, there are a range of other visas available including regional visas; the Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (provisional) (subclass 494), employer sponsored stream and the Skilled Work Regional (provisional) visa (subclass 491) which is a State or Territory nominated visa for primary school teachers. On 7 December 2024, the Government replaced the Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visa with the Skills in Demand (SID) (subclass 482) visa. The Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) applies to the Core Skills stream of the new SID visa, of which Primary School Teacher (241213) is included. This list also applies to the Direct Entry stream of the permanent Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS) (subclass 186) visa, see

<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/Visa-subsite/Pages/work/skills-in-demand-482-landing.aspx>

Thank you for raising this matter”

ICPA (Aust) will continue to follow the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan and the National School Reform Agreement. We invite members to contact Federal Council for any further information.

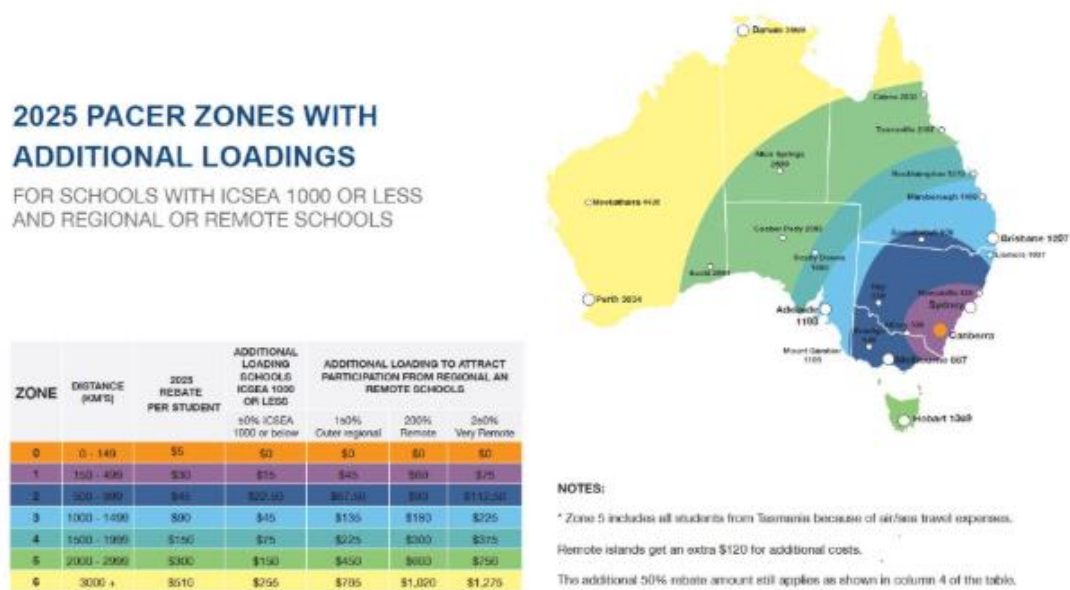
Additional PACER Rebates to Continue in 2025

While no changes have been made to account for remoteness and ease of access to transport options, the temporary 50% increased PACER rebate rate (2024) will in the very least going to continue throughout 2025.

The rebates are per student travelling and are based on schools distance to Canberra (as the crow flies!)

The Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) is an initiative of the Australian Government which provides financial assistance for students in Years 4-12 across Australia to travel to Canberra, the nation’s capital. To be eligible schools are required to participate in PACER approved programs

with at least three of the four Mandatory PACER Institutions booked when submitting an [Online Application](#).



For more details, visit the PACER website (www.Pacer.org.au)

We encourage all members to keep up the pressure for modifications to remote areas in these zones. We would love any case studies to support our argument.

Joint Council Portfolio catch-up

In November 2024, ICPA State and Federal Rural School portfolio leaders met over zoom to give updates and discuss possible supportive actions moving forward. The team also discussed the introduction of a new curriculum for teacher education at universities, the positive outcomes of a trial program conducted by the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE), and the potential for Prac students in WA to stay in residential colleges for rural and remote placements. Other topics included the challenges and solutions related to schools’ facilities, the department’s efforts to address housing issues for staff in rural and remote areas, and the ongoing issue of workload for principals in small one-teacher schools. Louise Martin (Federal President) shared her experience at the first-ever parent roundtable meeting with the Minister for Education, where she highlighted the issue of declining Naplan results and the need for better-skilled teachers in rural areas.

Thank you for your case studies and for bringing issues to the attention of ICPA Aust. Please continue to submit these to support the advocacy for our rural schools, teachers and students.

“Lived experience” (case study) forms can be found on the website and are the most useful tool we have in being better able to explain and provide meaningful context for all your issues that we advocate for, so I encourage you to make good use of them.

STUDENT TRAVEL REPORT

Jennifer Ruska

Over the past 12 months, the Travel Portfolio team has worked actively to address the real and growing costs of travel faced by families living in geographically isolated areas. Access to secondary education for rural and remote students continues to come with significant financial burdens, and our focus has remained on seeking practical, achievable solutions to reduce those barriers.

ICPA Australia wrote to the Hon. Catherine King, Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development regarding the prioritisation of maintenance on roads used on school bus routes. In her response, the Minister highlighted significant federal investment in regional roads:

- \$120 billion Infrastructure Investment Pipeline
- Doubling of Roads to Recovery funding to \$1 billion annually from 2027–28
- \$1.9 billion in maintenance over four years
- \$150 million per year in Black Spot funding
- New Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program

These programs provide welcome progress, and we will continue monitoring to ensure school transport routes are included.

As we are all too familiar, road travel is only part of the equation when transporting our students to and from school each term.

At one of our meetings with Qantas this year, they confirmed the heavy use of its Resident Fares program but unfortunately currently they have no plans to extend it.

During these meetings ICPA has continued to advocate for flexibility in the Resident Fares program to allow for multiple departure and return points—particularly critical in times of weather disruption or remote access challenges.

Qantas has shown interest in developing a discount code for rural and remote students, using the WA government's program as a model. Discussions on logistics and eligibility are ongoing.

ICPA delegates met with the Department of Social Services in February 2025. It was recommended that we collect further evidence to highlight the inequities AIC families face compared to other schemes. Following advice from DSS, ICPA launched State-based travel cost surveys to collect firsthand data from families. These surveys capture detailed information on flights, fuel, accommodation, and income loss. This data is already shaping our conversations with policymakers and stakeholders.

We are pleased to report that **over 100 responses** have been collected so far. The **survey will officially close after Conference on August 1.**

Thank you to all families and branches who contributed motion content, survey responses, and case studies. Together, we keep our students connected to opportunity—no matter how remote the road.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS REPORT

Ali Alison

For students with specific education needs (SEN), access to quality education is essential for their development, inclusion, and lifelong success. However, for children living in rural and remote areas of Australia, meeting these needs poses significant challenges.

Following the 2024 Federal Conference, the Specific Education Needs portfolio addressed the following issues-

- Improving 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.
- A commitment to a set intervention period of no more than six months from diagnosis of students with learning disabilities to commencing treatment.
- Addressing inequities within the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), particularly regarding the ability of NDIS providers to charge cancellation fees to remote and geographically isolated participants for telehealth services. This issue arises when participants are unable to cancel appointments at least seven days in advance due to circumstances beyond their control related to their geographic location.
- Improved rural and remote access and utilisation of Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) funding, currently managed through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Unfortunately, as reported in the portfolio's April Motion update, after writing to the relevant Ministers and Shadow Ministers in regard to all motion issues, Federal Council only received replies from the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in regard to issues relating to the NDIS.

As we look at the motions received over the past few years in this portfolio, and the information provided in the case studies alongside these motions, it is clear that access to professionals who can diagnose and support students with specific education needs, including speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, and special education teachers, is at a crisis point in many rural and remote areas of Australia.

In his response to one of our letters, the Minister for the NDIS at the time, the Hon Bill Shorten, referred to the recent changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013. He stated that the changes were made to *'Get the scheme back on track to support the people with disability that it was originally intended to support, this includes making sure that early intervention paths are in place that can better support children and their families to receive supports within the NDIS that are aligned with their individual support needs.'*

'These changes are in response to the independent NDIS review and are informed by key recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission. The NDIS review observed that there are continuing issues in accessing allied health supports in regional and rural parts of Australia and that Governments, as market stewards should be more active and flexible to help ensure NDIS markets work for everyone everywhere.'

It is hoped that NDIS legislation changes, which took effect in 2024, will not only address concerns about the scheme's sustainability and implement recommendations from the NDIS Review, but that continued work from both public and private sectors will help address issues of access to essential allied health services and disability support for rural and remote students.

Office of the Rural Health Commissioner Consumer Advisory Group

ICPA Australia's involvement in the Office of the Rural Health Commissioner Consumer Advisory Group (CAG), provides a great opportunity to hear the issues at the forefront of health reform in rural and remote Australia and to share our member's stories. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this report, we have only been able to attend one meeting, due to the postponement of the June meeting to late July.

At the first meeting for the year, the National Rural Health Commissioner, Professor Jenny May AM, expressed her passion for advocating for equitable health services and her dedication to collaborating with stakeholders to develop effective solutions. Jenny also outlined her priorities for the role, including enhancing place-based education and supporting rural and remote health professionals.

This goal of place-based education is well aligned to addressing the challenges that many ICPA members are facing. Place-based Health education is a vital component of addressing the challenges of recruiting and retaining health (and education) professionals in rural and remote Australia.

Place-based education is not only important to students who want to remain in their rural or remote community to live, train and work in the health and education professions, but also to the rural and remote communities who will benefit not only from their professional skills but their commitment to rural and remote Australia.

We are all aware of the difficulties that the sector is facing, a combination of professional, personal, and systemic challenges:

- Workforce Shortages and High Turnover
- Geographic and Social Isolation
- Professional Development and Career Progression
- Infrastructure and Resources
- Personal and Family Considerations
- Cost and Administrative Barriers

Addressing these challenges requires targeted incentives, improved infrastructure, support for professional development, and community integration strategies. There are examples of successful models which were discussed in the meeting, yet there is still so much to be done by both the public and private sectors in addressing both healthcare and education workforce shortage in rural and remote areas.

You can find more about the Office of the Rural Health Commissioner at - www.health.gov.au/our-work/onrhc

You can find more information on one of the successful model highlighted in the meeting here: <https://www.flinders.edu.au/study/health/regional-allied-health-courses>

The Disability Standards for Education draft Amendment Standards 2025

Australia's Disability Standards for Education (DSE) are reviewed every 5 years to find out how they could be improved.

The 2025 review by the Department of Education, proposed significant amendments to enhance inclusion and accessibility in education. The draft Amendment Standards, released in early 2025, primarily aim to extend the DSE to encompass early childhood education and care (ECEC) services and outside school hours care (OSHC) providers. This expansion aligns with Recommendation 12b from the 2020 review and reflects the Government's commitment to inclusive education across all age groups.

The Key Aspects of the Draft Amendment Standards:

Inclusion of ECEC services: The primary change is to explicitly include most ECEC and outside school hours care service providers in the Disability Standards for Education.

Clarification of obligations: The amendments aim to make it clearer for ECEC services to understand their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and the Disability Standards for Education, particularly regarding making reasonable adjustments and providing educational program adjustments.

Definition of ECEC services: The draft includes a definition of ECEC services that aligns with those approved under the national Family Assistance Law (Child Care Subsidy) and those approved under state or territory laws that require delivery of an education program based on an approved learning framework.

Examples of ECEC services: The consultation paper provides examples of ECEC services that would be included, such as centre-based day care, family day care, outside school hours care, and in-home care.

For more detailed information or to access the draft Amendment Standards, visit the Department of Education's official website.

<https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/consultations/disability-consultation-ecec>

Autism CRC Guidance Reference Group

ICPA (Aust) has been invited to be a part of the Autism CRC (Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism) Guidance Reference Group, (GRG), the Reference Group for Autism CRC's new Commonwealth funded project: *Developing National Guidance for Best Practice in Inclusive Education for Autistic Students* ("National Guidance").

The National Guidance aims to develop evidence-based guidance for teachers, educators, school leaders and allied health professionals in formal (mainstream) preschool and school settings to inform best practise for supporting positive social, emotional and academic outcomes of autistic children and youth.

The responsibility of the CRG is to provide feedback and input on documents, components and processes and to advise and support during the development of the National Guidance.

This is a fantastic opportunity for ICPA (Aust) to share the point of view and perspectives of our member families educating autistic children and youth in rural and remote Australia.

<https://www.autismcrc.com.au/>

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)-Inclusive Capability Project

ACECQA has been engaged by the Australian Government Department of Education to lead the development of an Inclusive Practice Framework, a professional development resource to strengthen the capability of early childhood education and care services to embed inclusive practices. It will also better support children and families experiencing barriers to access and participation. It is an 18-

month project which will involve collaboration with early childhood education and care educators, services and providers, national peak associations, sector organisations and expert practitioners. This framework will help services reflect on current inclusive practices and plan for ongoing improvement.

A suite of free and practical resources is also being developed to support implementation. ICPA (Aust) was represented by myself and ECEC Portfolio Lead, Julia Broad, at the initial consultation session, where we had the opportunity to share an overview of the experiences of our members and the issues they face when it comes to inclusivity in early childhood education and care in rural and remote Australia. For more information on the project please visit-
<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/projects/inclusivecapability>

Children with specific education needs in rural and remote Australia face systemic challenges in accessing equitable education and support. While initiatives exist, more comprehensive and coordinated efforts are needed. Enhancing services, empowering educators, and addressing geographical barriers are essential to ensuring that every child, regardless of location or need, can access quality education and reach their full potential.

ICPA (Aust) will continue to work with members and advocate on your behalf to highlight and address these challenges. We thank you for your continued support and strongly encourage you to continue to provide us with your stories and case studies to inform our advocacy.

TERTIARY REPORT

Tim Fletcher

The number of tertiary motions last year (24) tells of the need to provide equity of access to a tertiary education for rural and remote students and narrow the gap in terms of access, participation and achievement with our city cousins.

News that some long-term issues have been successfully addressed.

1. The **Tertiary Access Payment (TAP)** of \$5000 has been changed to allow for students from regional and remote areas to commence first year university study up to the age of 22. The original requirement was that students had to go directly from school to university. This disqualified students who wanted to work of a year or more before starting tertiary studies.
2. The **Student Ombudsman**, which was a university accord recommendation, commenced on 2nd February. This is an independent office that will help address complaints and issues relating to the fair treatment of students within educational institutions.
3. The **Tertiary Education Commission** will commence in mid-2025, with an interim commissioner appointed (another recommendation from the universities accord). This is in addition to the *Regional Education Commissioner, currently The Hon Fiona Nash* who has focused on the needs of regional, rural and remote communities across Australia to access higher education opportunities.
4. The initial **Paid Practicums** for selected tertiary courses of *nursing, midwifery, social work and teaching* will commence on the 1st of July 2025 and are budgeted to continue for four years. The payment for eligible students is \$319.50 per week, benchmarked to the single Austudy rate.

5. The expansion of **Regional University Study Hubs** continues with the announcement on the 3rd February of 10 new centres opening in: Clermont and Moranbah QLD, Hughenden QLD, Hay NSW, Tumut NSW, Northam WA, Kununurra WA, Kangaroo Island SA, Hamilton VIC, St Helens TAS, and Burnt Pine Norfolk Is. The new hubs are expected to be operational by mid-2025. This brings the total number to 56 centres across the country. CUC's and RUSH locations being accessed by high school students to study DE or after hours.
6. The new federal government has not yet passed the legislation to reduce student **HECS debt** by 20% from the 1st of June 2025.

For additional reading there have been three significant reviews into tertiary education: The Halsey Review, The Naphthine Review, and The Australian Universities Accord.

1. **Tertiary Access Payment**

- Eligibility is expanded to include students who take a gap year before commencing tertiary study
- Payments of TAP are timely to provide assistance with the cost of relocation prior to moving.
- Members wanting assistance with TAP applications for university.

2. **Youth Allowance changes**

- Removal of the Liquids Assets Waiting Period
- Increase the parental income limit for dependent youth allowance
- Extend Relocation scholarships to all YA recipients from inner and outer regional, remote and very remote areas
- Classify rural and remote students who have to relocate for tertiary study as independent for YA purposes
- Remove the parental income limit for students applying for independent YA under workforce participation criteria
- A real increase to the Commonwealth Rent Assistance

3. **Implementation of all recommendations from Australian Universities Accord Final Report.**

- Expansion of Regional University Study hubs
- Tertiary Access Payment: as above
- Improved student income support:
 - Increase the Parental Income Free Area for dependent Youth Allowance
 - Expand income support eligibility to include pro rata student payments for part-time study
 - Review eligibility criteria and payments including for rural and remote students.
 - Introduction of financial support for mandatory unpaid work placements.
 - Government Funding for placements in nursing, social work and teaching professions (announced in Budget 24/25)
 - Employer Contributions for placements in other fields by both public and private employers.
 - Introduce a fairer and simpler indexation and repayment arrangements for HELP loans:
 - Reduce Student Contributions for high-cost courses
 - Change Indexation timing so amounts withheld are accounted for before indexation is applied
 - Marginal Rate Repayments and indexation rate set 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 complex social security system:
- Eligibility criteria for youth payments should take into account regional students have specific needs including high relocation costs and are effectively independent once they have left home and should be considered for eligibility for Youth Allowance as an independent.
- Allow students to undertake reasonable amount of work while studying – review arrangements such as the income bank.
- Increase aspiration, participation, and success in tertiary education among under-represented groups by:
 - Establish a consistent national framework for career guidance.
 - Ensure post-school pathways are visible and integrated into the high school curriculum.

Thank you to my fellow Tertiary portfolio members - Louise, Julia, Kelly, Anna, Melissa and Sally, Federal Council and State Councils for the support, expertise and assistance in the tertiary portfolio. Bit by bit we can bring about the changes required to assist our tertiary students.

TRAINING REPORT

Anna McCorkle

ICPA (Aust) is committed to ensuring rural and remote students have equitable access to vocational education and training (VET), including Australian Apprenticeships. In 2024–25, the Training Portfolio focused on addressing systemic challenges and advocating for practical reforms that support regional, rural, and remote learners pursuing trade and vocational pathways.

Four motions were presented and carried at the 2024 Federal Conference in Sydney. These focused on:

- Financial supports for relocating Australian Apprentices
- Reform of the Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA)
- Apprenticeship Support Providers - Apprentice Connect Australia Provider (ACAP's)
- Improved recognition of apprentices who relocate

These and previous motions shaped the 2024-5 Training Portfolio, policy and our advocacy efforts throughout the council year. In 2024–25, ICPA (Aust) continued to advocate strongly for financial supports for rural and remote apprentices who must relocate. This included direct advocacy to Elected Members and Ministers; meetings with stakeholders and particularly Services Australia and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR).

The [Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System](#) was released in January 2025. ICPA (Aust) put forth a submission late in 2024. The release of the review's Final Report identified two specific regional, rural and remote Key Issues

The Review identified Two Key Issues that affect Regional and Remote apprentices:

- Apprentices in regional and remote areas often have to travel into major cities, otherwise they are limited to occupations and industries in their region.

This issue is exacerbated by low population density, resulting in low levels of enrolment in some courses. This can often result in apprentices working in regional and remote areas having to travel long distances to conduct off-the-job training in another area.

- The need to relocate or to travel long distances for training results in additional costs that apprentices in major cities often do not face.

[Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government](#)

The Review made 34 recommendations to the Government. Three of these are focused on regional and remote apprentices, and one has fortunately already been delivered.

- All Governments work together to provide more financial support to apprentices through subsidies for their travel and accommodation expenses, purchasing tools, and reforms to apprentice support payment to increase the amount and frequency of payment.
- Increase the LAFHA payment and then index payments on an ongoing semi-annual basis in line with the Consumer Price Index, consistent with Youth Allowance. (Delivered 1 July 2025)
- Training providers provide more flexible training options for Regional and Remote apprentices such as block release training or with 'pop up' training centres.

[Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System – Fact sheet for regional and remote apprentices - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government](#)

ICPA (Aust) is awaiting the release of the Governments response to the independent review from Minister Giles' office (Minister for Employment and Skills) and will continue to advocate for the realisation of the relevant recommendations.

[Living Away from Home Allowance \(LAFHA\)](#)

On the back of the Review release and after many Federal and State Conference motions and widespread advocacy ICPA (Aust) welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement in January 2025, of the first increase to LAFHA in over two decades. The new rates starting 1 July 2025, are

First year \$120/week
Second year \$90/week
Third Year \$45/week

Overarching the initial increases is an important legislation change that indexes the LAFHA annually from 1 July in line with CPI.

Australian Apprentices must work with their Apprentice Connect Australia Provider (ACAP) regarding their relocation and eligibility for LAFHA. ACAP's are responsible for submitting the LAFHA form on behalf of the Australian Apprentices.

[Discussion with Department of Employment and Workplace Relations \(DEWR\)](#)

Apprenticeship Support Providers - Apprentice Connect Australia Providers (ACAP's)

ICPA (Aust)

- *Acknowledges the lack of a formal mechanism to capture information about apprentices who have relocated.*
- *Suggests that providers should identify relocated apprentices during the initial assessment process to address potential barriers to completion.*

DEWR

- *Mentoring by ACAP's is available to those who relocate – doing so in the context of undertaking an Australian Apprenticeship would be considered a complex need and thus trigger the on-demand mentoring available.*

- *Encourage member families with Apprentices to seek the available mentoring from ACAP's*

Recognition of Regional, Rural and Remote (RRR) Apprentices who relocate

ICPA (Aust)

- *Clarification of data recorded in the Training Contract not Training Plan*
- *Raise the idea of capturing the apprentice's home/residential address within the training contract, currently only recorded as RRR if the Employer's address in one of these location classifications.*

DEWR

- *The Training Contract is localised, State by State, so this change would need to be individually implemented across each State and Territory. DEWR recommended an alternative option – to work with the Apprenticeship Data Management System (ADMS) team to explore the feasibility of two addresses within the Federally managed system to negate the need to work with States and Territories yet still capture accurately the number of Australian Apprentices who need to relocate for their on and off-the-job training. DEWR representatives are looking into this, and ICPA(Aust) will continue to explore and seek resolutions.*

During the 2024-25 Federal Council year ICPA (Aust) has also monitored aspects that are relative to the Training Portfolio and its policy. Some of the events and developments are listed below –

Apprentice Connect Australia Providers (ACAP's)

ACAP's are the point of contact for all parties involved in Australian Apprenticeships and Traineeships. It is vital that Apprentices know and seek out support from their ACAP as they plan, commence and undertake an Apprenticeship. As federal funded bodies the current agreement see the individual organisations work in regions or within one or more of the following four specialisations –

- Generalist
- Women in Male Dominated Trades
- Clean Energy
- First Nations

DEWR encouraged all regional, rural and remote Apprentices to make sure their ACAP was aware if they had relocated for all or any aspect of their apprenticeship.

Details for the ACAP's and supporting documents can be found on the Australian Apprenticeships website. <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.au/>

The Key Apprenticeship Program (KAP)

The newly introduced KAP is part of the Australian Government's commitment for a Future Made in Australia and available to Australian Apprentices working in either the clean energy sector or the housing construction sector. There are over 65 occupations listed as clean energy and/or housing construction on the [Australian Apprenticeships Priority List](#). While this is a positive development for Australian Apprentices, ICPA (Aust) has raised concerns about the Key Apprenticeship Program (KAP), noting it is limited to specific industries and may not meet the broader needs of regional apprentices.

KAP Recipients are eligible for:

- Up to \$10,000 (\$2,000 at 6, 12, 24 and 36 months and on completion)
- Personalised non-financial support services (peer-support, networking).

- An income contingent loan, as part of the Australian Apprenticeship Support Loan program.

Employers of KAP recipients are also eligible to receive a Priority Hiring Incentive of up to \$5,000.

Jobs and Skills Australia

The development and release of the **Jobs and Skills Atlas** – a national tool designed to provide insights into workforce needs, emerging occupations, and training gaps across regions. This interactive resource is valuable in highlighting localised skill shortages and supports the case for more responsive and accessible vocational training in rural and remote communities. Its data will be instrumental in strengthening the evidence base for ongoing advocacy and planning. [Link to the Jobs and Skills Atlas](#)

Jobs and Skills Australia's (JSA) - Work Plan 2024-25

The JSA Work Plan includes the development of a [Regional, Rural and Remote Jobs and Skills Roadmap](#). The Roadmap will meet all five of the JSA's outcomes whilst also intersecting with regional, rural and remote focused reforms and initiatives across education, skills and employment policy. ICPA (Aust) will contribute to the review early in the 2025-26 Council Year and would appreciate members' contributions regarding their experience in the RRR space when they or their children are accessing skills and training.

Post School Pathways Harmony

The release of the Department of Education's "Towards a Tertiary Education System: A Unified Tertiary Education System Roadmap". This roadmap outlines proposed reforms aimed at greater integration and consistency across vocational education and higher education sectors, "Towards a Harmonisation".

ICPA (Aust) welcomes the move toward a more coherent system that could simplify pathways for rural and remote learners. However, we caution that any reform must explicitly address the barriers faced by geographically isolated students—particularly those who must relocate or travel long distances to study—and ensure that flexibility and affordability remain core priorities.

To support this alignment, the report outlines 19 key recommendations, across 3 pillars.

Pillar 1: Key players: roles and relationships A roadmap to tertiary harmonisation will require co-operation among diverse system actors. This includes relationships between state and territory governments and the Australian Government, providers, employers, unions and licensing and accreditation authorities.

Pillar 2: Knowledge, skills and qualifications: architecture and perceptions. Tertiary harmonisation involves developing a common language that will facilitate innovation in qualification design, expand career opportunities that draw on combinations of skill and knowledge levels and that better support industries, especially those in transition.

Pillar 3: Legislative, regulatory, financial and data architecture Legislative, regulatory and funding arrangements will need to be reformed to put VET and Higher Education on a level playing field and incentivise harmonisation.

| Pillar 1: Key Players – Roles & Relationships | Pillar 2: Knowledge, Skills & Qualifications – Architecture & Perceptions | Pillar 3: Legislative, regulatory, financial & data architecture |
|---|--|---|
| State and territory and Australian Government relations | VET and Higher Education system connection through skills and knowledge | Governance, regulation and legislative frameworks |
| Industry: Employers, unions and accrediting bodies | Qualification design and the AQF, NST | Funding incentives |
| Provider collaboration | RPL and Credit Recognition to support student access and mobility | Financial support for students to participate |
| Ownership of system elements | Culture and perceptions in and of the tertiary system/sectors | Coherent data collection and reporting |

Access to and increases of National State based travel and accommodation programs to access Vocational and Educational Training (VET)

Australian Apprentice Travel Assistance for Training and Assessment as of May 2024.

| Location and Scheme Name | Travel Rates/Kilometre | Accommodation Rates/Night |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| SA Travel and Accommodation Allowance (TAA) | 30c | \$60 |
| QLD Travel and Accommodation Allowance | 32c | \$55 |
| NSW Vocational Training Assistance Scheme(VTAS) | 33c | \$56 |
| WA Travel and Accommodation Allowance (TAA) | 40c | \$100 |
| TAS Travel and Accommodation Allowance | 41-45c (zone variation within TAS) | \$55 |
| NT Apprenticeship travel and accommodation subsidy scheme | 50c | \$100 |

The above table highlights the disparity in state systems that are in place to assist apprentice travel to training. The inconsistency is a state-by-state issue, ICPA(Aust) encourage all State Councils to take the issue to their respective Government departments.

Australian Apprenticeship/ Traineeships - Data Snapshot

As at 31 December 2024, there were 311,760 apprentices in training nationwide,

Of those 39 % are located as follows, based on the apprentice’s residential address

- 74,935 were in inner regional areas
- 37,860 were in outer regional areas
- 6,390 were in remote areas
- 2,660 were in very remote areas

This breakdown of location is based on the ARIA+ index of remoteness (2021 version) (which has been adopted as the ABS standard for measuring remoteness)

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3e64dfb19529465dbcc09ed838da6557>

In the 12 months ending 31 December 2024, there were 98,665 Apprentice or Traineeship completions. Of those:

- 25,220 were in inner regional areas
- 12,400 were in outer regional areas
- 2,000 were in remote areas
- 935 were in very remote areas

In the January-March 2025 quarter (the most recent nationally released data) there were 55,845 commencing apprentices. Of those:

- 14,160 were in inner regional areas
- 7,770 were in outer regional areas
- 1,295 were in remote areas
- 805 were in very remote areas

All of this data comes from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, and is available here: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/data/databuilder#>

The Training Portfolio remains focused on practical reforms that address real barriers faced by rural and remote learners. Looking at the data above we know RRR Apprentices are still represented in the national data, yet it is well documented that disparities are present, and these are reducing the commencement, retention and completion of post school training for our members children.

ICPA (Aust) acknowledges the valuable input from members and branches through motions, lived experiences and case studies. These contributions directly shape our advocacy with decision-makers and enhance the credibility of our recommendations.

May our member families continue to grow and prosper as lifelong learners.

SPEECHES

President's Welcome 2025

Louise Martin

Welcome, members and guests, to the 54th Annual Federal Conference of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (ICPA Aust), proudly hosted this year by the South Australia State Council. We extend our sincere thanks to each of you for making the journey—from all corners of the country—to be here with us.

ICPA (Aust) remains steadfast in its mission: to advocate for equitable access to education for all geographically isolated children across Australia. No matter what their location, background, or circumstances, every child deserves the opportunity to learn, grow, and reach their full potential. It is this shared vision that unites us here today.

This year's conference theme, "**Education for the Heart and the Mind,**" speaks to the hopes of every parent—that their children receive a well-rounded education, with access not only to strong academic foundations but also to enriching experiences in areas such as sport, music, and the arts.

For many families in rural and remote communities, making this dream a reality is a constant challenge. Limited options and access barriers mean parents often go above and beyond to secure what is simply fair and reasonable. That's why ICPA continues to advocate strongly—to bridge these gaps and ensure regional families can access the same opportunities taken for granted in urban centres.

Over the next few days, this conference offers a valuable platform to connect, collaborate, and learn from one another. We encourage you to participate actively in the discussions and debates—your insights and voices matter. For your reference, a list of commonly used **Acronyms** is included in your conference booklet.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who played a part in bringing the 2025 Federal Conference to life: the South Australia Convening Committee, Federal Council, our generous sponsors, and many others working behind the scenes. Your contributions are truly appreciated. To stay up to date and connected, please scan the QR codes in your conference booklet for access to key information and social media channels.

Thank you once again for joining us here in Adelaide. Your presence, experience, and commitment enrich our work and strengthen our collective voice. I look forward to the conversations, collaboration, and shared passion that make ICPA such a powerful force for positive change in the lives of isolated children and their families.

Opening Speaker

Jane Gloster FLM

Federal President Louise Martin, Federal Councilors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and, most importantly, ICPA members –

I would firstly like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional lands of the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationships with the land, and we acknowledge that they are of continuing importance to the Kurna people living today. We also extend that respect to other Aboriginal Language Groups and First Nations' people.

My name is Jane Gloster. I live in Auburn, in the beautiful Clare Valley, on the lands of the Ngadjuri people. Thank you for the privilege of speaking today.

Now, in the normal course of events, I can talk about ICPA underwater with a pie in my mouth (providing it's not too early in the morning!) But I have to confess that when Louise rang and asked me to speak today, I was pretty gobsmacked, and more than a little flabbergasted. Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined, when I attended my first federal conference in 1995, that I'd be standing here in 2025. In response to Louise, I babbled and rambled on, and Louise probably wondered what on earth she'd done! So I will try my best to repay your faith Louise.

I joined the North East Branch, in the pastoral country between Burra and Broken Hill and one of ICPA's oldest branches, in 1989. This was, unusually, before our son was born. The reason for this was my husband's uncle, Gerald Gloster, who was a Federal Councilor in the 1970s and was a stalwart of the NE branch. He pointed his bony finger at me at the 1989 Mannahill Races, and said, "Young

lady, it is time you gave back to your community.” It was never wise policy to disregard Uncle Gerald’s ‘advice’, so join ICPA I duly did. I’m not sure if he ever realized what he’d unleashed on our association! As it transpired, I found my tribe, my happy place and my life’s work. And I’ve never been able to shake ICPA off, which I’m sure sometimes drives the young women of our current NE branch nuts!

The NE branch at that time was a large and busy branch (as were many back then) - from memory, we had nearly 40 member families. We met quarterly, and of course, all meetings were face to face. We often held meetings at each other’s stations, and our partners and kids came for the day. I think my first SA State Conference was in 1992 at Glendambo, and I attended with my longtime friend Glennis Crawford. Thus began a long and often hilarious career that saw the two of us travelling to ICPA meetings and conferences, all over SA and Australia. Kind of like “Travels with My Aunt”, but crazier. I recall at Glendambo being amazed at how articulate and knowledgeable everyone seemed – I doubted my ability to ever be useful to SA State Council.... But – I also felt a real ‘buzz’ in the air and I felt totally at home.

The first time Glennis and I did a long road trip together was to a SA state conference at Penong, on the eastern edge of the Nullabor. Now, some of you will know I have Type 1 diabetes, (52 fabulous years so far), but I’ve never regarded it as the most important thing about me, or made a big deal of it. When Glennis found out, she asked, reasonably enough, what would happen if my blood sugar levels dropped very low in the middle of the night? “All good”, I replied, “I always wake up and I always have food with me.” But what if you don’t wake up? Glennis asked. “I always do,” says I. “But what if you actually don’t?” persisted Glennis? “Well I guess I’ll wake up dead!” replied a frustrated me. That night, in a very noisy motel on the highway in Ceduna, at 4am, I felt a hand gently shake my shoulder. I ignored it. I felt a slightly more vigorous shake. I ignored this too. Then came an urgent, not very quiet, whisper “Jane, Jane – are you still alive?!” “Yes”, I hissed, “and I’m also awake now too!” No further correspondence about my diabetes management was ever entered into between Glennis and I.

In 1995 it was time for my inaugural attendance at a federal conference, which was in Broken Hill (my hometown coincidentally). The room was full – 220+ people – who filled me with awe at their understanding of the issues and their capacity to think on their feet in an erudite and intelligent way. ICPA luminaries of the time, such as David Houston, Julia Materne, John Tully, Mac McLymont and Jenny McLellan (about to become Federal President, who terrified me!) were in attendance. Never, I thought, would I be good enough to be on Federal Council. Motions included asking for an increase in the AIC primary and secondary allowances, requesting adequate phone and mail services, calling for advances in DE technology to not financially burden DE families, pleading for the introduction of a DE Supervisor allowance, and so on. Recognise any of these issues? Many have been addressed over the years, and some have been superseded by the march of time. However, many of the same ideas are still being debated today. Which, in my opinion, is a) an indictment on the ability and will of governments at all levels to grasp the simple notion that “Demography should not equal destiny”; and b) testament to the patience and capacity of ICPA to keep on fighting the good fight and advocating with passion for the rights and needs of regional, rural and remote students. And out of interest, at that 1995 conference, Day 1 ended at 6.14pm and Day 2 wound up well after 7pm – they were very long days!

I went on to co-convene the 1996 Adelaide Federal Conference, with Janne Warwick, as well as too many more state and federal conferences to remember. I was well and truly hooked! I recall having to cook meals for six men and leave instructions about them with R when I went away for the week to the 1996 conference, as we were lamb-marking at the time. When I look back at that now, I feel slightly shell shocked!

However, I got an even larger and more permanent shock in 1997 when William started school through the Pt Augusta SOTA, using an HF radio. Despite doing RICE Kindy of the Air, and having heard SOTA talked about for some years, nothing prepared me for the reality of teaching my own child. I am aware that I'm swimming against the tide with the following remarks, as the vast majority of people I speak to say that they love teaching their own kids and feel privileged to have the opportunity. I felt very differently – I found teaching William the most challenging and overwhelming task I'd ever undertaken. Give me a meeting with the Prime Minister over teaching Wills SOTA any day! It was not uncommon for Richard to come home for smoko to find William in tears at one end of the house and me raging around the kitchen at the other end. There was a lot of mediating going on. Every day seemed to involve an endless round of debate, discussion, negotiation and veiled (and sometimes not so veiled) threats around handwriting, creative writing, maths, colouring in within the lines, staying inside, time management, concentrating, calling in on the radio and so on and so on. Largely this is because William and I are very (very) similar and I often say that Wills was educated despite me, not because of me! However, thanks to generous employers and the advocacy of ICPA, we were able to employ a governess from Year 1 on, and Wills seems to have, notwithstanding his mother, turned out just fine. He's still arguing with me though..... And Richard is still mediating..... I will say, though, that to this day, when I step inside the modern DE schoolrooms of friends, with banks of computers and wonderful work displays, I still get a touch of PTSD!

I was appointed to SA State Council in 1993, and held various roles over the years, including Secretary, President and Vice-President. It afforded me the chance to travel all round this great state of SA, often with Glennis and occasionally with Richard or William. I met some fascinating people and made some wonderful friends. I also learnt a great deal about meeting procedures, minute taking, debating protocol, submission and letter writing, thinking on my feet, drawing information out of people, how to listen to someone's reasoning and change my view about an issue, and how to have an excellent party. It also taught me just how big SA is. I stepped off State Council in 2007, at the Parachilna conference, which was largely memorable, from my perspective, for the heat and flies, and for having to make a suitable farewell speech with a terrible hangover.

2007 also saw my Federal Council journey begin, at the Adelaide conference. I found it much like SA State Council, but a whole lot more! I used the skills I'd learnt on State Council, and acquired more, including the two secrets to success: "Fake it 'til you make it", in the immortal words of fellow federal councilor Sally Quigley; and that, if you speak loud and fast enough, people assume you know what you're talking about. I was able to travel around Australia, again often with Glennis and/or Richard, and met some terrific people and visit some amazing places. My number one, all-time favourite place was Parliament House, which I just loved, and I really looked forward to going there 3 or 4 times a year on delegations and visits. In the complete absence of any geographical or directional sense, I learnt to navigate around that vast building using the art, and I can report that, as of just last week, you can indeed still turn left at the barbed wire emu! We lobbied hard and advocated passionately for tertiary access, better internet, recognition of DE supervisors from pre-school onwards, better internet, appropriate support for all students across the learning spectrum, better internet, support for VET students, better internet, and much more. You get the picture and you'll no doubt notice some similarities in this year's motions. Over the years, I took on various positions on council, including Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Vice-President. My time on Federal Council came to an end in 2014 in Launceston. Could I have continued? Yes, and I would have loved to work alongside some of the people who followed me on Federal Council. Should I have continued? No, I don't think so. I've always believed strongly in making room for newer, fresher, younger (sometimes) members who have their own ideas, talents, skills and experiences to add. I missed, and still miss, it enormously. But I know that ICPA, at all levels, is in strong and capable hands, so I am content to sit back and satisfy myself with annoying – sorry, advising - the current NE branch members!

I'd like now to take a minute or two to share some thoughts and ideas with you. It's food for thought - feel free to agree or disagree!

Firstly, ICPA has traditionally been seen as having a three-part, triangular structure, with the branches at the bottom, widest part, State Councils in the narrower middle section, and Federal Council at the narrowest top part. I asked some current, younger members their views on this, and they largely agreed (with some interesting additions). My view is that we should look at ICPA like a Venn diagram, with three interlocking and overlapping circles, and one common place or piece in the middle. That common section is us - you and me, the individual members of ICPA. Without us, the whole association would fold, and there would be no branches, State or Federal Councils.

Secondly, and apologies to SA State Councilors who I've previously bored silly with this idea, I believe we need to see more men – more dads of rural and remote students – involved in the workings of the association. When I first started on SA State Council, the President, Secretary and Publicity Officer were men. When I went on to Federal Council, there were three men. It changes, in a very positive way, the dynamics of meetings, conferences and delegations, and it ensures that an isolated child's education is not at risk of being seen exclusively as 'women's business'.

Thirdly, very often, State and Federal Council, and some branch executive positions have a four-term limit. Please always remember that it's a limit, not a set term. If you believe you have a couple of years to give, then put your hand up for that executive position, and don't feel you should be pressured or locked in to those four years.

And lastly, someone today will likely ask you if you've thought of putting your hand up for State or Federal Council. Please don't dismiss it straight way! Give it some serious thought, talk to your partner, and never doubt or underestimate yourself. Never worry that a question you have might be seen as 'silly'. It won't be because there is no such thing as a silly question, and anyway, I've ticked that box for you years ago!

Many thanks to my friends from past Federal and State Council days, for your photos and information, particularly the formidably efficient Carmel Elliott; to William for doing the PowerPoint show for his luddite mother; to Richard for his support and belief in me over the past 36 years (indeed the past 40 years!); and to Federal Council for the honour and privilege of speaking today.

I now have great pleasure in declaring the 2025 Adelaide ICPA Federal Conference officially open.

Conference Address

The Hon Fiona Nash - Regional Education Commissioner

Thank you very much, Louise, for the very kind introduction, can I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we're meeting today and extend that to anybody else in the room and, of course, acknowledge elder's past, present and emerging.

Good morning, everyone, it's an absolute delight to be back here today. I want to acknowledge Jane, you are inspirational. It is people like you that make people like me get up every day and keep doing what we do. You just exemplify that commitment to community and drive, never let go and never take no for an answer. So, thank you so much for everything you've done for rural Australia.

There are so many people in the room to acknowledge, everybody here today and I also want to acknowledge Gavin Williams and Elise Petty from nbn. nbn is doing a tremendous job with connectivity out in regional Australia. They often don't get thanked for it. It's often the challenges

you hear about! Better internet, better internet, better internet, better internet. Telstra is doing a good job and I want to commend them for the work that they're doing.

My role as Regional Education Commissioner, as many of you probably may already know, extends from early childhood to schools, vocational education and training, and to higher education. I also have an eye to regional workforce. This role was created to put a national focus on regional education for the first time. It's been a real privilege to be in the role now for three and a half years, working with stakeholders like ICPA. Thank you, Louise. I appreciate the relationship that I have with ICPA and people in communities, industry, the states and territories, that look at the challenges for regional education. What's more important is looking at what the solutions are to those challenges and that's where I come in.

My role is very much part advocate and champion for regional people when it comes to regional education and, predominantly to give advice to the Minister for Education and to the government on what I see will improve outcomes in regional education. It is important to keep reminding people of the importance of rural, regional and remote Australia. When I say regional, assume I'm using all three, regional, rural and remote. Regional Australia is the backbone of the nation's economy. I am yet to hear a decision maker say, "We want everyone to move from rural and remote Australia to the coast". So, until they're going to do that governments have to take responsibility for delivering, where the market doesn't, in rural and remote Australia, and to make sure that people have an equitable level of access to services out in regional Australia.

One of the things I've been so pleased to see over the last few years in this role, is that there is a real focus from people in decision-making positions, on rural, regional and remote Australia. You are really on their radar. The importance of the ICPA voice, of your voice, cannot be underestimated.

Although I work with the education department I'm not of the department. I am a ministerial appointment, and I work very closely with the department. Recently, somebody very high up in the department mentioned, unsolicited, how good the voice of ICPA is. They referred to Minister Clare's Parental Roundtable that ICPA sits on and how clear and sharp the voice is and how valued it is in that forum. And that was just one example. So don't ever underestimate the importance of the work you do, even when some of those things are still on the list and have been for some time.

The other place it's really become predominant, is in Jobs and Skills Australia. I was talking to Anna McCorkle earlier about having a meeting with Jobs and Skills Australia, and that's definitely going to happen. They have a real focus on the jobs and skills and training perspective on regional Australia. I work closely with the Commissioner and with Jobs and Skills Australia. They have just released a regional roadmap. One of the things contained in that roadmap, is a ten-point policy position on regional Australia. Ten things that decision-makers should think about and consider about regional Australia before they make any decision. I think that is fantastic, because if we have got that policy across the board, across departments, across states and territories, then we're going to have real consideration of regional Australia when people are looking at policy or program development. I think that would be a tremendous step forward.

We've had a lot of wins and opportunities, and I do like talking about positive things as well as the challenges. There's been a lot of wins and opportunities emerging over the last few years. Looking at the tertiary access payment and getting rid of the unfortunate condition that if you'd taken a gap year you couldn't access the tertiary access payment. I don't know who came up with that, but it was rather stupid. Anyway, it's fixed now, I pushed hard for this. You need to look at this from the perspective of some young people. When they finish year 12 they are exhausted and simply need some time off before they go on to further education. And a big issue is that the independent youth

allowance requires students to have a year off if they're going to access it before they go to university. Now students who have taken a gap year able to access that tertiary access payment is terrific.

The Regional Commonwealth Scholarships, the pilot program set up for boarding assistance. Again, this person in the department raised with me that the changes in the guidelines before being implemented came from ideas ICPA put forward, one of which extended the period from four to six years. Just making sure you know what you say and the impact that you're having on decisions about programs is important.

I would also like to touch on the Regional University Study Hubs expansion, and I want to commend Minister Clare for his focus on expanding the Regional University Study Hub (RUSH) program. We've now got 56 across the country, which is terrific. I've sat on the last three rounds of assessment panels for RUSH's, and the thing that really impressed me is how many communities are investing in developing these applications and, seeing the areas they're coming from. There's one I just want to call out and I'm sure there are people in the room here, from the RAPID application up in Central West Queensland. Longreach, Winton, Junda, Barcaldine, Blackwell, Boulia, Bedourie and Birdsville, they all came together under the RAPID banner to put in an application for regional diversity study hub, run as a collective. I think this is an amazing example of power of collective in the regions. Those communities have populations from around 100 to a bit over 3,000. We had never seen that before in an application. There was a funny point as we were doing the assessment panel, some people on the assessment panel were a bit worried that these towns were a long way from each other, saying they don't know if we could do this as there's a lot of travel involved. I somewhat flippantly said, don't worry about it, these people travel that far for milk and bread. To be able to give them the concept of distance, and what you do on a day-to-day basis was really important.

I would like to give a big shout out to Duncan Taylor; he's done an extraordinary amount of work getting these Regional University Study Hubs on the map and expanded. I am working with him in regard to also using them for secondary students. They have been set up for tertiary education but the opportunities, in my view, to expand their remit to more formally provide opportunities for students out in rural and remote areas for secondary education. I think this is important.

It's interesting that often you can have wins that look small but are huge. I just want to share this story. A family came to me a while ago from Loxton in South Australia. They had two children. One of their daughters was going to primary school and the other one was at preschool. The school bus would pick up the primary school child, but the preschool child wasn't allowed to get on the school bus. Again, how stupid is that? Anyway, after a period of time working with the local upper house member, that little girl is now on the school bus through an exemption. Try everything, as ICPA does all the time, you can get a good outcome. To some people, that looks like one little girl on a bus. To others, that's a family not having to make that trip twice a day with their younger child when the elder one is on the bus. Sometimes things can be simple, but they are definitely good outcomes.

In terms of challenges, and I see a lot of those challenges are obviously within the motions that you've got in front of you today, I really want to acknowledge the work that you're doing with 71 main motions, 18 supplementary motions. You are bringing your expertise from the ground to put those motions forward to make things better. The differences and the disparity between city and metro, we have to keep talking about, and keep being very loud about to make sure that decision makers listen. One example, the geographically isolated educator support subsidy, that's very important. We have people in their homes providing supervision to their children, which is required. To me, that is exactly the same as supervision that is required in a classroom in a school. So why shouldn't it be

valued exactly the same way? You know, governments would not not pay the supervisors in schools! I think is important to keep going with that. I will absolutely support you as much as I possibly can.

I've noticed that there's a few different terms for this subsidy The sooner you can collectively land on one term for it, one name for it, would be helpful. When you're going to the decision makers, the greater clarity of message you have the easier it is to say yes to. I'd encourage you, from all the states and territories you come from, the importance of a single voice on the things that you're pushing for is really, important.

The PRAC payment also was highlighted in your motions, and I think that's very important and looking at expanding it to medicine, to vet, to allied health as you've put forward. Again, keep pushing for that. I'm hoping that the initial PRAC payment the government announced, while very welcome, can eventually be expanded. The shortage of rural vets in Australia is something that's very dear to me and something I am pushing for. We are in some desperate situations with vets being completely overloaded, not to mention biosecurity issues as well. There should be a national workforce strategy developed for the vet industry, in my view, and in the view of the Jobs and Skills Australia report that came out earlier in the year. So, well done to you for having that as part of the expansion that you're calling for there.

I just want to conclude on a couple of things. One is around raising aspiration in our young people in the regions. I say aspiration in inverted commas because often people talk about raising aspiration. What I find is that there are some young people in regional areas that don't have aspiration. Most of them do. What they don't have is the confidence and the sight of a pathway to get them where they want to go. You might have a young person that says, oh, I'd love to do engineering. There's your aspiration. No one in my home's ever been to university. I'd have to move away. How would I afford it? Where would I stay? I'd have to get a job. How would I get a job? I'd be so far from home, I wouldn't know anyone. I won't do it. That's not lack of aspiration.

We've got to find better ways to make it easier for young people in regional areas to be able to find that pathway that they want and see the opportunities that are sitting there for them, for any pathway they want to take. As communities, we all support our young people to be able to go down those pathways that they want to walk. We need to do better at home, growing our regional workforce. Over time, we've talked a lot about attracting people to the regions and retaining people in the regions, quite rightly, whether it's from cities or other regions or internationally. What we haven't talked about enough is how do we better home grow the workforce? How do we have that education pathway right through to local industry?

So, with our young people, there's bit of an urban myth. People in cities think every young person in the bush is trying to get to the bright lights of the city. Some are, but I find a lot of them want to stay. The more opportunities we can train them in the regions and the more opportunities we can give them a future career in the regions, the more they're going to have that opportunity to stay in their community. And I think that's really important.

So, in conclusion, I just wanted to say to you, do not underestimate how important your voice is. It is something from each of your communities, taking the grassroots perspective and putting it into policy development, putting it into decision makers' minds. You can have people sitting at desks, sitting behind desks, in departments; and there are tremendous people in departments I work with wonderful people in the Department of Education, but they're not on the ground. They're not in the homes, they're not in the schools, they're not on the properties, they're not driving hundreds and hundreds of kilometres on dirt roads. So, the concerns that you come up with as ICPA and take forward are extremely important.

And I do love established dominance by putting glitter in Christmas cards. I think what we should all do is write to ministers at Christmas with a Christmas card full of glitter, just to make the point that it's come from ICPA. Maybe not, sorry, ministers. I can see a lot of advisers sweeping a lot of glitter off the floor of the offices.

But it's important. And back yourselves, I can tell you, your voice is being heard. So as hard as it seems sometimes, as long as it takes, don't ever underestimate how important you are and that voice is being heard. I just want to finish with something Jane said - demography should not equal destiny. Thank you for that, Jane.

All the best for your conference.

PRESENTATIONS

Constitution and Governance Update

Kelly Ostwald

Good morning again. I'd just like to take a moment to share some updates from Federal Council on a few key governance and administration matters that we have been working on behind the scenes.

Following recent governance training, it has become really clear that, like other not-for-profits, we need to make sure that we are keeping pace with modern governance standards and to help do that we have formed a governance subcommittee. This group has been tasked with developing and overseeing the policies that we need to meet our legal and operational obligations.

We're especially pleased to welcome Kim Hughes back to this subcommittee. Kim is now taking the lead in policy development and brings fresh insights, and she is a great asset and we are looking forward to the work she's bringing to us as a Council.

One of our major current projects is the move toward a national registration and recognition. This process has given us the perfect opportunity to take a look through our Constitution. After consulting with Governology, a group who specialise in not-for-profit constitutional reviews, their advice was clear, our constitution needs a full rewrite.

I just want to let you know that this isn't about changing who we are or what we stand for. The purpose and values of ICPA Australia will remain exactly the same, but after 54 years it is time to modernise the language and bring it in to line with current governance expectations so that we're future ready for the next 54 years.

While working through this, we've also discovered that we haven't always used our correct legal name in official documents, and now just a heads up, the correct legal name and register name is 'The Isolated Children's Parents' Association'. So, we're making sure that the word the is on all our official documents and updating all of those items. Our acronym is still ICPA. We will still go as ICPA Australia, but on official documents we have to have the word 'the'.

Finally, we've submitted an application to register under the Australian Registered Body Number, the ARBN Framework, which is currently being reviewed. Once it's approved, all committee members will need to apply for a Director Identification Number (Director ID) and this is a new requirement under our ARBN registration and will also be recorded with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) register.

So, in short, we're doing the work now to make sure that we're not only compliant, but we're well positioned into the future. And I would like to thank you for your continued support as we continue to work through these important updates.

Thank You.

Join Federal Council Presentation

Nikki Mahony

Passion is often touted so much in sports, community groups and volunteer roles. For a long time, the thought that I had to be “passionate” about whatever the activity or cause was, actually stopped me from getting involved.

In my mind, this meant ‘being born ready’, confident, outspoken, knowledgeable, qualified and I very definitely did not feel any of them!

So, what to do instead?

Find the thing you are great at and put that into the world

1. STEP ONE

Be curious

Ask yourself these questions:

- What are you great at?
- Where do you have on the ground experience or knowledge?
- What do you want to learn more about?
- How might you be able to participate in a meaningful way.
- Could you learn what you need in any of this space to help ICPA advocate more effectively to make a difference to students and families across Australia?

2. STEP TWO

Resolve to do something about it

- find out more about what’s involved at every level or maybe even propose other ways you might be able to contribute that we haven’t thought of yet.

Find me, or the other Nikki on AV and interrogate us!

We all agree that your postcode should not determine your chance of success or your access to education.

The face of advocacy and engagement is changing rapidly, we need new skills, fresh ideas and different concept.

If you could form just one thread in the rich tapestry that eventually rewrites the future of education in Australiawhat colour and fabric would you choose?

Certificate of Merit - Nikki Macqueen

ICPA Federal Council 2014 - 2021
ICPA Webmaster 2021-2025
ICPA Tech Team 2024-2025
Conference AV Coordinator 2023-2025

When I walk onto the stage, with no hint on the AV about what this strange addition to the program is, one person in this room always gets very nervous!

Nikki Macqueen and her husband Bill live outside Milmerran (in Qld), breeding cattle and growing crops. With a son and two daughters now fully launched into adulthood. She joined the Kindon ICPA Branch in 2011 and jumped feet first into educational advocacy!

Nikki was so excited about joining Federal Council at the 2014 Tasmania conference and with her winning smile and effervescence, she went onto be the main ICPA recruiter for years, and she is still going now.

Legend has it that Nikki stepped into the publicity officer role in 2015 and lit a fire under ICPA. She made an enormous amount of media contacts and kept council on their toes with interviews and opportunities. Quoting from previous councillors who served with her.

- She got us a TV gig for the Canberra Conference, and desperately tried to get us on Q & A
- She marched us into the Media level of Parliament House several times and managed to coordinate some very timely interviews just as good news broke for our ICPA families.
- She was in her element talking to Journos and never wasted an opportunity, constantly asking them for advice, different ways to go about things and how ICPA could get our message out there better. (Doing the same with Politicians and their advisers as well).
- She took ICPA Australia's social media pages from fledgling to soaring and has done it all with a smile and a few laughs, even if it was the second, third or fourth take.

Her enthusiasm to help people is unsurmountable. She embraces everything as an adventure and everyone as a friend. She CANNOT believe that anyone WOULDN'T want to be a part of this AMAZING organisation. She is bold and brave and if it's for ICPA, she will swallow her fears, march across the room, introduce herself and see where her conversation takes her.

In her time on ICPA Federal Council, Nikki led the Boarding portfolio, did two stints as Publicity Officer and put her hand up to co-develop and manage the changeover to the new website. In the unexpected switch to a fully online Federal Conference in 2020, Nikki tackled the steep and rapid learning curve to manage all the tech and voting on the fly.

Upon stepping down from ICPA Federal Council duties in 2021, Nikki put her hand up to continue managing the website and assist with the member database, through off-council volunteer roles. She stepped in to help with AV at the 2022 Conference and since then has well and truly mastered it. Each of these roles is individually big responsibilities and not without their challenges!

Nikki has been a key touchstone for many, helping train State and Federal webmasters and regularly being available on the end of a phone and email for tricky website issues. Nikki was also a key player in establishing the formation of a dedicated team tasked with overseeing the operation and continuous development of the ICPA website

The ICPA Tech Team established in 2024 comprises individuals with diverse expertise and a shared commitment to enhancing the digital presence of the organisation and is better able to service all

cohorts within ICPA. Thanks in part to Nikki's efforts and enthusiasm ICPA is progressing a more sustainable and practical model for all volunteers, members and associates.

Nikki Macqueen, for your extraordinary ongoing contribution to ICPA, all done with those super expressive eyes and a big smile, ICPA Australia are absolutely thrilled to present you with an Award of Merit.

Farewell to Ali Alison

Ali Allison came on to Federal Council at the Longreach conference November 2021. A 5ft pocket rocket, her energy, enthusiasm and passion were contagious. Ali took on the Distance Education portfolio, an area very close to her heart. At the time she was still home tutoring her own children at their property near Broken Hill, which she shares with her husband John and their two boys, who now both board here in Adelaide.

Ali's lived experience further strengthened the advocacy in the DE portfolio, particularly around the plight of geographically isolated home tutors and the huge contribution they make, without recognition or remuneration despite the crucial role they play. This shone through in her portfolio's letters, submissions and meetings with government.

Ali's passion for educational access for rural and remote children is equalled only by her dedication to ICPA as an organisation. When Ali put her hand up for the Publicity Officer role in 2022 it was a perfect fit. Ali strived to build upon the public profile of ICPA Aust, to affectively connect with the needs of members, to build the member base and to raise the issues of rural and remote students with the widest possible audience. Ali has an amazing instinct on how to engage members on social media with her vibrant sense of fun and colourful content. It is obvious she takes great pride in her posts and how the information she shares will strengthen the organisation and cater to the needs of all who have an interest in ICPA and the issues it advocates for.

In 2023 Federal Council took a new direction and engaged Public Relations Company C7even to assist with achieving some longstanding advocacies. Ali took a lead role in this engagement, building the working relationship with the C7even team and defining and streamlining the balance between the role of C7 and the role of the Publicity Officer. She worked alongside C7even to produce Media Releases, publicise portfolio campaigns and build the social media following and engagement.

Ali, in partnership with her PO state counterparts, was instrumental in creating Rural and Remote Education Day, with new branding that was rolled out last September - recognising the many faces and ways of rural learning across remote Australia. This is a project which has been close to Ali's heart and she has built the foundations for Kym Ross as the following Publicity Officer and Council to run with.

As Federal Council were preparing for the 2024 Sydney Conference Ali expressed that she felt it was time for her to be focusing her time at home particularly as their two station hands were now away at boarding school. In her true job to completion way Kim Hughes dutifully wrote the majority of this speech after being asked to farewell Ali on Councils behalf. Councils gain last year was that Ali decided to stay with us for another year, and Kim kindly shared her prepared but not delivered speech!

Ali has taken on the Special Education Needs Portfolio for the 2024-25 year and supported as Kym Ross joined council and stepped into the publicity Officers role.

When preparing a lot of this farewell, Kim Hughes asked those on federal council to come up with some words for Ali.

- Ali is a bundle of smiles, happiness and mischief. She is also a cracker PO
- When asked if she would be the PO, she was so shocked and honoured to be asked, and look at her now
- I love her energetic vibes
- Ali is a breath of fresh air, full of laughter, energy and passion.

At Ali's first parliament house delegation, in 2022 she was bounding up the stairs with Naomi – both chuffed they were in “Wendy Hicks Team” and would be learning the ropes off a dead set guru – Ali was so focused on this - that it wasn't till she was inside through security that she realised she had indeed forgotten her physical Drivers Licence required for ID, but all was saved by a photo of her licence that she found whilst scrolling through 10,000 photos at the sign in desk.

On behalf of Federal Council to conclude I will share a story that demonstrates perfectly Ali's amazing sense of humour, and her true authenticity.

When travelling away with ICPA, Ali is known to get up super early, put on a headlamp and go out into the dark freezing mornings for a run! On the first morning of our face to face in Canberra, Ali was returning from her run, and now strolling leisurely back to the motel, with a coffee in hand. As Ali was casually coming up the path towards the apartments, she passed several of the council group heading down to the meeting room - all dressed for the day and with their laptop bags in hand. After saying good morning, the group quietly mused at how organised and unruffled morning jogging must make you - to be able to get back to the room and be dressed in time for an 8.30 meeting, which was only minutes away. We later learned that Ali too pondered to herself how dedicated everyone seemed to be, going in early to set up the meeting room when there was still so much time before the meeting started! When she turned up an hour later, thinking she might have been 5 mins late at best, she realised she was still on SA time and it was actually 9.30!

The discombobulation continued as Ali recounted what she did in her ‘spare hour’ while she was back at her room. This next bit needs a quick backstory. The night before, the motel had lost power, which came back on for everyone else in the early hours of the morning, except for in Ali and Alana's room. So that morning, after passing Ali, Alana popped to the front desk and reported that their room was still without power, and that her and her room buddy couldn't find the power box to check if it had tripped out. Reception promptly sent the handyman to the room to sort out the problem.

Meanwhile, upon returning to her room after her run, Ali hopped into the shower to get ready for the meeting (that everyone was already at). On hearing a knock on the door, Ali, thinking it was Alana coming back from setting the meeting room up, and that she must have forgotten her key, sprang out of the shower, whipped a towel around her and went to let her in. At the door, instead of Alana she was greeted by the handyman letting himself in to check the power.

So of course, Ali proceeded to assist the guy find the location of the power board to get the power back on, as every bush lady would. She even climbed on a chair to see if it was hiding behind one of the curtain fixtures! Finally, much to the relief of the handyman, the power board was located, and Ali, still only wearing her towel, excused herself and continued to shower then get ready for her “8.30” meeting.

Thank you, Ali, for your spirit, your humour and your infectious energy. And thank you for your contribution to the Federal Council growth and to organisation as a whole. You will be dearly missed and we wish you all the very best for the next adventure.

Farewell to Heather Whigham-Reid

As Louise mentioned Heather cannot be here at conference and is stepping down from Council due to family and business commitments. As you can see from her report Heather has worked hard this year to progress advocacy and has been a very much valued member of the Council team. She's worked diligently and represented ICPA in a passionate but professional way.

Heather attended two delegations in Canberra and was keen to learn and advocate for all portfolio issues, particularly supporting the Distance Education portfolio with new approaches to the Distance Education Tutor remuneration issue. Heather attended ACARA meetings and effectively presented ICPA issues. She instigated discussions with PIEFA regarding promotion of teachers using primary industry resources in their classrooms. She worked hard to network at these events and make meaningful contacts to progress advocacy.

Heather is a research buff and dug deep through legislation, funding systems and data to inform her ideas and innovate approaches to advocating for long standing ICPA issues. It was always a pleasure to work with Heather, and we wish her all the best in the future.

Thank you for your work, Heather.

Farewell to Julia Broad

Ten years ago, I would have appreciated a heavy sedative to deliver my first ever motion on behalf of our branch (on the federal stage in Alice Springs) to ask ICPA's help for our little community childcare centre.... And here I am today requiring surgical removal of a microphone to farewell someone who has completely transformed the rapidly expanding ECEC portfolio.

I holed up on a seat at the Brisbane airport due to board a plane to Adelaide, starting to pull together a few words about Julia (Sporty Spice) Broad in a mild state of panic. Normally I would have this job ticked off a month ago but we're not here to dwell on hormone chemistry fallout and besides then I would have missed the opportunity to take advantage of the flurry of WhatsApp messages hitting our ICPA group chat.

Julia's running dialogue starts at 9am with rolling delayed QANTAS flights out of Townsville converting to cancelled several hours later then rerouting via an overnight in Melbourne at 6pm.

A *"don't get me started on regional transport issues"* comment triggered a flood of helpful suggestions from the rest of us that she could always stay on council and take on the travel portfolio!

Those of us living outside metro Australia often opt to work in a day or two's buffer for any travel plans.... This and many other situations that we've come to accept as **"normal"** is actually why we all end up becoming involved with ICPA!

This may be the way things are but that doesn't make it reasonable and there comes a time to start making a stand and being part of the force that may one day make a difference.

Julia was co-opted onto council in the lead up to postponed 50th federal conference in Longreach in 2021.

She stepped straight into leading the early childhood and education and care (ECEC) portfolio, not so much because she burned with passion for the role, but in a classic case of the rest of us taking two sharp steps back!!!

There was a rumour floating around that the saying in her branch in times of crisis or indecision was *"What would Julia do"* and we quickly learned why.

Not only had she already run two laps of Lake Burley-Griffen before the rest of us had our weetbix; Julia was organised, disciplined, considered, courteous yet firm and excelled at cutting through the fluff. Within a year she had stepped up into the vice-president role, was actively leading the strategic review of ICPA Australia, helping draft the subsequent strategic plan, participating in governance and constitutional reviews, representing ICPA Australia at Beef Australia 2024 and neck deep in eight submissions to enquiries in the in-home care and early childhood space. With 18 motions on the agenda this year, I'm not going to even start on how many meetings, roundtables and consultations she has also participated in along the way. Julia has also saved my bacon on several occasions when I missed not one but two meetings, I was meant to be leading all with no fuss or fanfare and a summary report delivered at the end of it to boot.

This is not to say that Julia found it easier to get her head around everything, she just hid it better than the rest of us. Surely this could not be the same Julia that left her parliamentary pass behind in Charters Towers requiring her husband to meet the sitting Senator at Townsville airport and then coordinate a meet-up in Canberra to collect it. (the only comment that came back from other councillors on this recollection was, *"Or was that you Nikki?"*, a much more believable scenario apparently)

So back to those flight delays, **"What would Julia do"** with a cancelled flight out of Townsville?

Take the opportunity to *"Head back to the river to watch her girls in the rowing 8"* of course.

Mac, Sally & Josie; You and other children that follow in your footsteps remain the inspiration for your Mum's dedicated advocacy. We have loved hearing about your rowing, running and various other adventures.

Thank you, Russ, for the supporting role you play and not being too offended that I almost executed a citizen's arrest in Darwin when I mistook you for a local ruffian stalking Julia 😊 (I should have should have known Julia could probably look after herself in a skirmish anyway!)

Thank you, Julia, for your calm and firm counsel, your pragmatic and emphatic approach; your willingness to dig deep and make a differenceMost especially in transforming the ECEC portfolio while leading with purpose and humility in the vice-president role... all with a twinkle in your eye, a skip in your step and a lap or two around the lake.

You have not just been the hero of your own story but an inspiration for ours.

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

FEDERAL COUNCIL

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| President | Lousie Martin |
| Vice President | Julia Broad |
| Vice President | Sally Brindal |
| Secretary | Kelly Ostwald |
| Assistant Secretary | Shennah Joiner |
| Treasurer | Melissa Kerr |
| Publicity Officer | Kym Ross |
| Councillors | Tim Fletcher |
| | Anna McCorkle |
| | Nikki Mahony |
| | Jill Greenfield |
| | Jennifer Ruska |
| | Ali Alison |
| | Amber Driver |
| Federal Membership Officer | Louise Winten |
| Federal Webmaster | Nikki Macqueen |

FEDERAL LIFE MEMBERS

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Federal Life Member | Sue Shotton |
| Federal Life Member | Jane Gloster |

STATE COUNCIL DELEGATES

| | | |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| New South Wales | Annabel Strachan | Libby McPhee |
| Northern Territory | Maira Lanzarin | |
| Queensland | Wendy Henning | Sancia Fegan (1) Amanda Clark (2) |
| South Australia | Belinda Hatcher | Dani Chapman |
| Western Australia | Jasmyn Allen | Megan Dorrell |

BRANCH DELEGATES

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Alice Springs NT | Katy Hayes | Kiya Gill |
| Alpha QLD | Loretta Goodwin | |
| Balranald NSW | Kathleen Harris | |
| Boulia-Bedourie-Birdsville QLD | Heidi Millership | |
| Bourke NSW | Amanda Bell | Prue Ritchie |
| Broken Hill NSW | Rebecca Pearce | Laura Finch |
| Channel Country QLD | Sarah Molloy | Georgie Ferguson |
| Charleville QLD | Christy Bredhauer | Louise Winten |
| Far North Queensland QLD | Sharyn Gilmore | Robyn O'Brien |
| Flinders Ranges SA | Linda Haydon | Bek Rasheed |
| Goldfields Eyre WA | Ross Wood | |
| Hay NSW | Michelle Crossley | |
| Katherine NT | Sam Selmes | Sally Dyer |
| Kindon QLD | Amanda Martin | Daryl Martin |
| Lakes District WA | Fiona Hobley | |

54th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Lord Howe Island NSW | Bronwyn Tofaeono | Kellie Ellis |
| Marree Air SA | Ellen Litchfield | Jessica Bell |
| Marla Oodnadatta SA | Kirsty Williams | Louise Kohler |
| Meekatharra Air WA | Natalie Bevan | Jim Quadrio |
| Midwest WA | Jen Critch | Trin Suckling |
| Monaro NSW | Pam Fletcher | |
| Moree NSW | Phoebe Watts | |
| Mt Isa Branch of the Air QLD | Katie Brown | Margaret Brock |
| North East SA | Kristina Crawford | Leisa Breeding |
| North West SA | Petie Rankin | Candice Brown |
| Port Augusta SA | Katrina Morris | Pamela Cuffe |
| Rankin Springs NSW | Sally Argent-Smith | Trisha Eckermann |
| Tambo QLD | Stacey Ryrie | |
| Tasmania Branch | Kate Thompson | |
| Territory Wide NT | Michelle Gibson | Jacinta McInnerney |
| Tibooburra-Milparinka NSW | Bernadette Maxwell | |
| LONE MEMBER DELEGATES | | |
| SA Lone Member Branch | Jodie Keogh | Georgy Ewing |
| WA Collective Branch | Michelle Abbott | |
| BRANCH OBSERVERS | | |
| Broken Hill NSW | Sally Crozier | Britt Anderson |
| Channel Country QLD | Carolyn Chicken | |
| Flinders Ranges SA | Tracey Dewell | Michelle Hilder |
| | Mija Reynolds | Sonya Fels |
| | Lisa Slade | |
| Marla Oodnadatta SA | Hollie Williams | |
| Mt Isa BOTA QLD | Amelia Jane Keane | |
| North East SA | Leah Beard | Dot Sandilands (1) |
| North West SA | Edwina Bowie | Shona Amos (1) |
| | Joanna Gibson | |
| Port Augusta SA | Michelle Lord | |
| Territory Wide NT | Steve Petty | |
| STATE COUNCIL OBSERVERS | | |
| Queensland State Council | Amanda Clark (1) | Sancia Fegan (2) |
| LONE MEMBER OBSERVERS | | |
| QLD Lone Members | Annette Boyle | |
| NSW/VIC Lone Members | Jesse Donoghoe | |
| SA Lome Members | Trish Ellen (2) | |

CONVENING COMMITTEE

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Edwina Bowie | Mija Reynolds | Belinda Hatcher |
| Kirsty Williams | Hollie Williams | Jodie Keogh |
| Michelle Hilder | Katrina Morris | Pamela Cuffe |
| Jill Greenfield | Lisa Slade | |

GUESTS

| | | |
|----------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| The Hon Fiona Nash | Regional Education Commissioner | Commonwealth Department of Education |
| Roger Rasheed | Keynote Speaker | |
| Megan McLoughlin | Telstra Guest Speaker | Telstra Regional Council |
| Blair Boyle MP (2) | Minister for Education, Training and Skills SA | Government of South Australia |
| Kellie Brittnell (2) | Senior Education Advisor | eSafety Commission |

SCHOOLS

| | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Alice Springs School of the Air NT | Kerrie Russell | |
| Immanuel College SA | Ujith Perera | |
| Marist College Ashgrove QLD | Ty Casey | |
| Pembroke College SA | Doug Fawcett | |
| Prince Alfred College SA | Phil Noble | Will Mercer |
| Rockhampton Grammar School QLD | Ainslie Silcock | |
| Rostrevor College SA | Shana Bennett | Stuart Proud |
| Sacred Heart College SA | Robert Gill | |
| Scotch College SA | Susie Graham | Matt Thomas |
| Seymour College SA | Carolyn Cochrane | |
| St Hildas School QLD | Virginia Warner | Amanda Rigby |
| St Peters College SA | Tim Angus | |
| St Peters Lutheran College QLD | Stuart Delaney | |
| Stuartholme School QLD | Jane Morris | |
| The Southport School QLD | Jackson Elliot | |
| Toowoomba Grammar School QLD | Nick Byron | |
| Walford Anglican School for Girls SA | Edwina Birrell | Tiffany Keller |
| Wesley College | Tom Giles | |
| Westminster School SA | Andrew Junge | |
| Wilderness School SA | Carolyn Matthews | |

ORGANISATIONS

| | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------|
| Australian Boarding Schools Association | Richard Stokes | Jared Daunt |
| AACO QLD | Sarah Acton | Amelia Keane |
| ABC Country Hour SA | Cassie Hough (2) | |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited NSW | Carla Wills | Beth Perin |
| Association of Independent Schools NSW | Douglas Melrose-Rae | |
| Australian Government | Tracie de Boe | Fiona Morley |

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Department of Education | | |
| Australian Parents Council- Tasmania | Jenny Branch-Allen | |
| Australian Wool Innovation Limited | Shannon Donoghue | |
| Barton Gold Holdings Ltd | Marc Twining | |
| Beach Energy Limited | Lucille Bailey | |
| C7EVEN Communications | Ellen McIver | Anna Moulder |
| Catholic School Parents Australia QLD | Wayne Crase | Trish Jarvis |
| Child and Family Health Service- Adelaide SA | Rachel Kirby Nicole Branch | Deb Craig |
| Connellan Airways Trust | Declan Kelly | |
| Country Education Partnership | Mark McLay | |
| Department of Education TAS | Fiona Morley | |
| Department of Social Services | Natalie Robertson | Vesna Kitanovic |
| Dolly's Dream | Nikki Boswell | |
| Early Childhood Australia- ACT | Sarah Wight | |
| Little Poppins | Holly Auld | |
| Minderoo Foundation | Amy Graham | |
| nbn Co | Gavin Williams Elise Petty | Naomi Evans |
| Office for Early Childhood Development Adelaide SA | Hannah Turnbull | Georgy Grundy |
| Regional Tech Hub | Jan Medway | Kristen Coggan |
| Regional Tech Hub SA | Ellen Day | |
| Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise Inc | Stacy Martin | Adele Broadbridge (1) Charu Dhingra (1) |
| Royal Flying Doctor Service | Natalie Szabo (1) Mandy Smallcombe | Tarnya Eggleton |
| Rural Business Support | Mon Saunders | |
| School News | Sarah Davidson | |
| Services Australia | Josh Graham | Athena Kanellos |
| Stock Journal | Paula Thompson | |
| Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents Council | Tricia Di Carlo | Madeleine Bevan |
| Telstra | Michael Patterson Mel Channon | Nicole Ward |
| The BUSY Group | Rodney Martin | Jaclyn Russell |
| Women's and Children's Health Network SA | Mirella Vagnarelli | |

CONFERENCE APOLOGIES

Members

Megan McNicholl OAM
Jack Beach

Wally Mitchell AM
Judy Newton

Branch

Branch Life Member, Federal Life Member, Western Downs QLD
Branch Life Member, State Life Member, Federal Life Member, Julia Creek
QLD
Branch Life Member, State Life Member, Federal Life Member, Bourke NSW
Federal Life Member, Walgett, NSW

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Patricia Mitchell OAM | Federal Life Member, Patron ICPA QLD Inc, Cloncurry QLD |
| Roxanne Morrissey | Federal Life Member, Yalgoo Branch WA |
| Wendy Hick | Mt Isa BOTA, QLD |
| Jane Cunningham | WA State Council President |
| David Murtagh | Territory Wide, NT |
| Sally Sullivan | Branch Life Member, Katherine NT |
| Carmel Elliot | Branch Life Member, Southern Downs QLD |
| Kate Schubert | State Life Member, Katherine, NT |
| Kylie Camp | Mt Isa BOTA, QLD |
| Amanda Ferrari | Central West Plains Branch, NSW |
| Marianne St Clair | Territory Wide, NT |
| Heather Whigham-Reid | Nyngan Branch, NSW |
| Sharon Nutt | State Life Member, Flinders Ranges, SA |
| Kerry Morton | Boulia- Bedourie- Birdsville Branch, QLD |
| Hannah Smyth | Broken Hill Branch, NSW |
| Kathleen Harris | Balranald Branch, NSW |
| Suzannah Palmer | Broken Hill Branch, NSW |
| Shona Amos | North West Branch, SA |

Guests

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Senator Wendy Askew | Senator for Tasmania |
| Tabatha Badger MP | Member of the Tasmanian House of Assembly for Lyons |
| Mr Sam Birrell MP | Federal Member for Nicholls, VIC |
| Hon Emily Bourke MLC | SA Minister for Emergency Services and Correctional Services, Minister for Autism, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing |
| Alison Byrnes MP | Federal Member for Cunningham, NSW |
| Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck | Senator for Tasmania |
| Dr Alan Campbell | Headmaster, Anglican Church Grammar School, Brisbane, QLD |
| Hon Jason Clare MP | Minister for Education, Federal Member for Blaxland, NSW |
| Hon Nat Cook MP | SA Minister for Human Services, Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well, Member for Hurtle Vale |
| Danielle Fairthorne | Director of Boarding, Kincoppal-Rose Bay |
| Matthew Hodge | Department of Education Senior Program Officer- Wellbeing and Equity Branch |
| Madonna Jarret MP | Federal Member for Brisbane, QLD |
| Ged Kearney MP | Assistant Minister for Social Services, Assistant Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Federal Member for Cooper, VIC |

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Annual Financial Statements

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia
Incorporated
ABN 38 908 782 315
For the year ended 31 May 2025

Prepared by Carrick Aland Accountants

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Statement by Members of the Committee

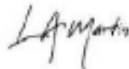
The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated For the year ended 31 May 2025

We, Louise Martin, and Melissa Kerr, being members of the committee of The 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 The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated, which comprise the asset and liabilities statement as at 31 May 2025, 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 The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated during and at the end of the financial year of the association ending on 31 May 2025.
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 The 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 - President

Dated: 10/07/2025



Signed: _____

Melissa Kerr - Treasurer

Dated: 10/07/2025

Financial declaration for Responsible Person

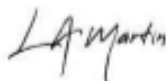
The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated
For the year ended 31 May 2025

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 - President

Dated: 10/07/2025



Auditor's Independence Declaration to the Members of The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated

In relation to our audit of the financial statements of The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated for the year ended 31 May 2025, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

- a) no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*; and
- b) no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

Queensland Audit Services
A Member of CPA Australia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Gripske'.

Kent Gripske CPA
Partner - Audit

Dalby Queensland

16 July 2025

Statement of Cash Flows

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated
For the year ended 31 May 2025

2025

Operating Activities

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Receipts From Grants | 56,155.00 |
| Interest Received | 18,115.80 |
| Cash Receipts From Other Operating Activities | 175,236.45 |
| Cash Payments From Other Operating Activities | (329,929.24) |
| Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities | (80,421.99) |

Other Activities

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Other Activities | 13,775.00 |
| Net Cash Flows from Other Activities | 13,775.00 |

Net Cash Flows

(66,646.99)

Cash and Cash Equivalents

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of period | 617,264.69 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at end of period | 550,617.70 |
| Net change in cash for period | (66,646.99) |

Income and Expenditure Statement

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated
For the year ended 31 May 2025

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Revenue | | |
| Donations & Sponsorship | | |
| Donations | | |
| Donations - Branch to ICPA Aust | 9,250.00 | 15,250.00 |
| Donations to ICPA Aust - general | 2,100.00 | 1,020.68 |
| Total Donations | 11,350.00 | 16,270.68 |
| Sponsorship | | |
| Sponsorship - Federal Conference | 30,000.00 | 26,000.00 |
| Sponsorship - general | 46,367.40 | 27,491.90 |
| Total Sponsorship | 76,367.40 | 53,491.90 |
| Total Donations & Sponsorship | 87,717.40 | 69,762.58 |
| Grants Received | | |
| Government Grants Received | 51,050.00 | 50,000.00 |
| Total Grants Received | 51,050.00 | 50,000.00 |
| Other Income | | |
| Interest Income | | |
| Suncorp Business Saver #0139 | 17,407.01 | 17,997.21 |
| Suncorp Dept of Education Grant #0112 | 459.09 | 1,114.81 |
| Suncorp Tasmania State Trust #4629 | 249.70 | 103.32 |
| Total Interest Income | 18,115.80 | 19,215.34 |
| Other Revenue | | |
| Accommodation Reimbursements | 1,200.00 | 5,629.56 |
| Badges and Pins receipts | 955.50 | - |
| Emails - Additional State Emails | 457.92 | 502.44 |
| Federal Conferences - Profit from Convening Committee | 24,388.44 | 64,282.73 |
| Memberships | 51,318.26 | 57,804.54 |
| Memberships - Tas Online Collected | 249.11 | 49.32 |
| Merchandise Sales | - | 45.45 |
| Reimbursement of Shared Costs | - | 1,127.26 |
| Sundry Income | - | 21.36 |
| Total Other Revenue | 78,569.23 | 129,462.66 |
| Total Other Income | 96,685.03 | 148,678.00 |
| Total Revenue | 235,452.43 | 268,440.58 |
| Expenditure | | |
| Administrative Expenses | | |
| Advertising | 5,290.50 | 454.55 |
| Bank Charges | 132.56 | 130.07 |
| Computer Software | 6,963.50 | 6,303.32 |

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

54th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Income and Expenditure Statement

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Email Expenses | 1,725.08 | 1,791.08 |
| Email Expenses - Mailchimp Brevo | 3,319.35 | 1,648.34 |
| Postage | 244.73 | 507.68 |
| Printing & Stationery | 202.29 | 1,222.38 |
| Subscriptions & Memberships | 80.00 | 80.00 |
| Web Page Expenses | 6,663.60 | 6,551.22 |
| Total Administrative Expenses | 24,621.61 | 18,688.64 |
| Audit Fees | 3,080.00 | 3,440.00 |
| Bad Debts | • | 550.00 |
| Insurance Expenses | | |
| Insurance | 3,032.41 | 2,900.72 |
| Total Insurance Expenses | 3,032.41 | 2,900.72 |
| Operating Expenses | | |
| Badges and Pins Expenses | 2,781.51 | 321.97 |
| Canberra Delegation Expenses | 57,640.08 | 51,275.60 |
| Consultancy Fees | 74,774.31 | 46,846.25 |
| Contract Work IT | 2,498.50 | - |
| Corporate Memberships - State Magazine expenses | 225.45 | 1,533.62 |
| Donations | 1,000.00 | - |
| Fuel & Oil | • | 842.88 |
| Meetings - Face to Face expenses | 5,495.20 | 3,964.72 |
| Meetings - Other Expenses | 7,061.16 | 8,223.48 |
| Membership Expenses | 69.08 | • |
| Membership Fees - Tasmania Online Memberships | (2.15) | 57.78 |
| Staff Training & Welfare | 8,719.67 | 405.00 |
| State Conference expenses | 15,013.88 | 11,435.91 |
| Sundry Expenses | 1,818.18 | 264.81 |
| Travelling Expenses | - | 2,113.38 |
| Total Operating Expenses | 177,094.87 | 127,285.40 |
| Other Expenses | | |
| FC - Branch Sponsorship to Attend | 3,045.46 | 21,058.07 |
| FC - Convening Committee Fwd Fund | 25,713.64 | 42,247.28 |
| FC - Councillor Expenses | 3,977.27 | 1,727.25 |
| FC - Guest Expenses | 8,767.86 | 9,217.16 |
| FC - Meals, Accommodation & Travel | 34,496.75 | 21,404.34 |
| FC - Presentation & Gifts | 1,554.96 | 2,868.04 |
| FC - Profit Split to Host State | • | 14,958.78 |
| FC - Registration | 6,831.81 | • |
| FC - Website Expenses | 702.34 | • |
| Fees & Permits | 40.00 | 39.00 |
| New Equipment Purchased - Immediate Asset Write Off | 11,419.09 | 14,482.00 |
| Total Other Expenses | 96,549.18 | 128,001.92 |
| Total Expenditure | 304,378.07 | 280,866.68 |

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

54th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Income and Expenditure Statement

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Net Current Year Surplus/(Loss) | (68,925.64) | (12,426.10) |

Movements in Equity

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated
For the year ended 31 May 2025

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Members Funds | | |
| Opening Balance | 633,151.18 | 645,577.28 |
| Decreases | | |
| Loss for the Period | 68,925.64 | 12,426.10 |
| Total Decreases | 68,925.64 | 12,426.10 |
| Total Members Funds | 564,225.54 | 633,151.18 |

Assets and Liabilities Statement

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated
As at 31 May 2025

| | NOTES | 31 MAY 2025 | 31 MAY 2024 |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Assets | | | |
| Current Assets | | | |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents | 3 | 550,617.70 | 617,264.69 |
| Trade and Other Receivables | 4 | 23,504.90 | 19,400.00 |
| GST Receivable | | - | 863.46 |
| Total Current Assets | | 574,122.60 | 637,528.15 |
| Total Assets | | 574,122.60 | 637,528.15 |
| Liabilities | | | |
| Current Liabilities | | | |
| Trade and Other Payables | 5 | 8,953.76 | 4,376.97 |
| GST Payable | | 943.30 | - |
| Total Current Liabilities | | 9,897.06 | 4,376.97 |
| Total Liabilities | | 9,897.06 | 4,376.97 |
| Net Assets | | 564,225.54 | 633,151.18 |
| Member's Funds | | | |
| Accumulated Surplus (Deficit) | | 564,225.54 | 633,151.18 |
| Total Member's Funds | | 564,225.54 | 633,151.18 |

Notes to the Financial Statements

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated For the year ended 31 May 2025

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 2025 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

The 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.

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.

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.

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.

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| 3. Cash and Cash Equivalents | | |
| Bank Accounts | | |
| Business Saver Account | 462,300.36 | 509,893.35 |
| Department of Education Grant | - | 29,617.21 |
| Everyday Account | 18,493.04 | 5,436.09 |
| General Account | 57,153.04 | 57,865.46 |
| Membership Account | 7,744.36 | 9,675.38 |
| Tasmania State Council Trust | 4,926.90 | 4,777.20 |
| Total Bank Accounts | 550,617.70 | 617,264.69 |
| Total Cash and Cash Equivalents | 550,617.70 | 617,264.69 |

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| 4. Trade and Other Receivables | | |
| Trade Receivables | | |
| Trade Debtors | 23,504.90 | 19,400.00 |
| Total Trade Receivables | 23,504.90 | 19,400.00 |
| Total Trade and Other Receivables | 23,504.90 | 19,400.00 |

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 5. Trade and Other Payables | | |
| Trade Payables | | |
| Trade Creditors | 8,953.76 | 4,376.97 |
| Total Trade Payables | 8,953.76 | 4,376.97 |
| Total Trade and Other Payables | 8,953.76 | 4,376.97 |



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the members of The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Incorporated (the registered entity), which comprises the assets and liabilities statement as at 31 May 2025, 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 The 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*, including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the registered entity's financial position as at 31 May 2025 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; 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*. 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 *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* 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 the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter – Basis of Accounting

Without modifying our opinion, 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 requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)*, the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, and the members. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

Responsibilities of the Committee for the Financial Report

The Committee is of the registered entity are responsible for preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Notes 1 & 2 to the financial report is appropriate to meet the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA)*, the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and the needs of the members. The Committees' responsibility also includes establishing and monitoring such internal control as the Committee determine is necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the Committee is responsible for assessing the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Committee either intend to liquidate the registered entity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Committee are responsible for overseeing the registered entity's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and 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 and 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:

- 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 for 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.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design 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.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the responsible people.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Committee'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.
- 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 'Kent Gripske'.

Kent Gripske CPA
Partner – Audit

Dalby Queensland

16 July 2025

54th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MEMBERSHIP at 31 May 2025

| Western Australia | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Central Wheatbelt North <i>formerly Kalannie</i> | 18 | 7 | 12 | 17 | 16 | 15 |
| Eastern Districts <i>formerly Hyden</i> | 44 | 40 | 34 | 28 | 19 | 22 |
| Esperance | 22 | 16 | 12 | 12 | 19 | 21 |
| Gascoyne | 15 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 6 |
| Goldfields Eyre (<i>Kalgoorlie Air</i>) | 19 | 17 | 12 | 17 | 9 | 16 |
| Kimberley Air | 9 | 11 | 9 | 4 | 9 | 5 |
| Kondinin | closed | closed | closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Lakes District | 47 | 46 | 37 | 31 | 52 | 59 |
| Meekatharra Air | 20 | 16 | 15 | 20 | 16 | 23 |
| Midwest | 52 | 46 | 47 | 43 | 45 | 37 |
| Pilbara | 20 | 20 | 11 | 20 | 9 | 9 |
| WA Collective (<i>Lone Members</i>) | 24 | 18 | 17 | 14 | 16 | 18 |
| Yalgoo | 7 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| | | | | | | |
| | 297 | 250 | 216 | 218 | 220 | 237 |

| South Australia | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Eyre | 8 | 4 | 18 | 16 | 11 | 9 |
| Far West | recess | recess | recess | 0 | Closed | Closed |
| Flinders Ranges | 24 | 22 | 23 | 41 | 23 | 22 |
| Marla Oodnadatta | 10 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 16 | 15 |
| Marree Air | 10 | 6 | 9 | 9 | 18 | 10 |
| North East Districts | 17 | 15 | 17 | 13 | 14 | 14 |
| North West | 11 | 10 | 11 | 9 | 11 | 12 |
| Port Augusta | 10 | 11 | 14 | 9 | 16 | 14 |
| SA Lone Members | 7 | 15 | 97 | 13 | 13 | 14 |
| | 97 | 91 | 121 | 121 | 122 | 111 |

| Tasmania | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Central Highlands | closed | closed | closed | | | |
| East Coast | 7 | | | | | |
| Midlands (<i>Oatlands</i>) | 9 | | | | | |
| TAS Lone Members | 8 | | | | | |
| Tasmania Branch <i>merged East Coast, Midlands, Tas Lones</i> | | 12 | 10 | 14 | 16 | 14 |
| | 24 | 12 | 10 | 14 | 16 | 14 |

| Northern Territory | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Alice Springs | 43 | 49 | 41 | 46 | 53 | 50 |
| Barkly | closed | closed | closed | closed | closed | closed |
| Katherine | 53 | 80 | 45 | 58 | 61 | 66 |
| Territory Wide <i>formerly NT Lone Members</i> | 13 | 19 | 18 | 21 | 20 | 24 |
| | 109 | 148 | 104 | 125 | 134 | 140 |

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| New South Wales | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Balranald | 45 | 41 | 32 | 24 | 29 | 32 |
| Boomi | 18 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 4 |
| Bourke | 32 | 28 | 35 | 25 | 27 | 26 |
| Brewarrina | 16 | 18 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 14 |
| Broken Hill | 35 | 32 | 34 | 24 | 35 | 39 |
| Bullarah <i>amalgamated with Moree</i> | closed | closed | closed | closed | closed | closed |
| Central West Plains (<i>Tottenham</i>) | 96 | 71 | 63 | 58 | 50 | 35 |
| Collarenebri-Mungindi | 24 | 17 | 15 | 14 | 16 | 9 |
| Cobar | recess | recess | recess | recess | recess | recess |
| Condobolin | 9 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 11 | 7 |
| Corinella | recess | recess | recess | recess | closed | closed |
| Goolgowi | 13 | 15 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| Hay | 69 | 80 | 77 | 47 | 44 | 59 |
| Hillston | 8 | 11 | 10 | 14 | 15 | 11 |
| Lightning Ridge/Goodooga | 10 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 6 |
| Lord Howe Island | 11 | 10 | 13 | 14 | 16 | 14 |
| Louth | 23 | 25 | 27 | 18 | 17 | 20 |
| Monaro | 30 | 21 | 15 | 20 | 18 | 12 |
| Moree <i>amalgamated Bullarah</i> | 39 | 46 | 36 | 34 | 20 | 15 |
| Namoi (<i>Burren Junction</i>) | 45 | 51 | 36 | 31 | 27 | 17 |
| North West Slopes | 11 | 9 | 8 | 7 | recess | recess |
| NSW Lone Member | 117 | 136 | 108 | 71 | 64 | 39 |
| Nyngan | 24 | 21 | 23 | 25 | 25 | 16 |
| Paroo | recess | recess | recess | recess | closed | closed |
| Quambone | 41 | 31 | 30 | 32 | 34 | 19 |
| Rankins Springs | 29 | 28 | 20 | 25 | 27 | 26 |
| Tibooburra/Milparinka | 18 | 8 | 9 | 16 | 17 | 12 |
| Vermont Hill | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| Walgett | 39 | 27 | 31 | 37 | 39 | 32 |
| Warrumbungle | recess | recess | recess | recess | closed | closed |
| Wentworth | 28 | 30 | 20 | 22 | 20 | 20 |
| West Wyalong | recess | recess | recess | recess | closed | closed |
| | 836 | 790 | 692 | 604 | 593 | 491 |

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| Queensland | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Alpha | 28 | 32 | 35 | 28 | 30 | 36 |
| Aramac-Muttaburra | 32 | 33 | 36 | 30 | 26 | 27 |
| Arcadia Valley | 12 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 12 | 11 |
| Auburn-Burrandowan-Cardarga | 28 | 16 | 11 | 10 | 7 | 9 |
| Augathella | 22 | 20 | 16 | 15 | 23 | 19 |
| Belyando-Mt Coolon | 42 | 45 | 40 | 46 | 45 | 38 |
| Blackall | 29 | 44 | 31 | 29 | 28 | 30 |
| Bollon | 19 | 19 | 14 | 17 | 12 | 15 |
| Bouli-Bedourie-Birdsville | 15 | 12 | 10 | 12 | 17 | 12 |
| Capricornia (BOTA) | 33 | 29 | 20 | 17 | 25 | 36 |
| Channel Country | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 11 |
| Charleville | 25 | 34 | 31 | 27 | 29 | 22 |
| Charters Towers | 67 | 59 | 60 | 72 | 70 | 79 |
| Clarke Creek | 26 | 28 | 26 | 22 | 20 | 23 |
| Clermont | 54 | 49 | 42 | 49 | 55 | 39 |
| Cloncurry | 16 | 12 | 14 | 17 | 23 | 20 |
| Cunnamulla | 24 | 31 | 16 | 20 | 20 | 22 |
| Dawson Valley | 15 | 25 | 32 | 32 | 36 | 31 |
| Dirranbandi | 32 | 27 | 26 | 23 | 18 | 19 |
| Far North QLD (<i>Cairns Radio</i>) | 14 | 25 | 23 | 32 | 28 | 31 |
| Hughenden | 17 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 |
| Julia Creek | 28 | 33 | 34 | 50 | 39 | 36 |
| Kindon | 32 | 32 | 34 | 35 | 38 | 37 |
| Longreach | 28 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 23 | 28 |
| McKinlay | 5 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 6 |
| Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld | 40 | 30 | 26 | 26 | 23 | 23 |
| Moonie | 26 | 31 | 28 | 21 | 27 | 22 |
| Mt Isa BOTA | 36 | 33 | 46 | 55 | 51 | 37 |
| Nebo | 22 | 15 | 17 | 20 | 12 | 16 |
| North Burnett (<i>Eidsvold-Cracow</i>) | 13 | 7 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 12 |
| QLD Lone Members | 22 | 12 | 10 | 10 | 15 | 14 |
| Quilpie | 14 | 17 | 14 | 17 | 15 | 13 |
| Richmond | 20 | 31 | 33 | 27 | 30 | 31 |
| Roma | 33 | 40 | 35 | 41 | 44 | 36 |
| Southern Downs (<i>Stanthorpe District</i>) | 32 | 29 | 28 | 30 | 20 | 19 |
| Springsure-Rolleston | 21 | 25 | 24 | 29 | 28 | 22 |
| St George | 52 | 43 | 28 | 25 | 19 | 24 |
| Talwood | 24 | 23 | 24 | 24 | 19 | 15 |
| Tambo | 41 | 36 | 34 | 44 | 36 | 39 |
| Taroom-Wandoan | 44 | 43 | 38 | 35 | 39 | 36 |
| Thargomindah | 5 | 10 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 2 |
| Western Downs (<i>Condamine-WD</i>) | 41 | 40 | 30 | 21 | 13 | 9 |
| Westmar-Inglestone | 55 | 46 | 44 | 39 | 44 | 34 |
| Winton | 29 | 32 | 31 | 35 | 30 | 27 |
| Yaraka-Isisford | 34 | 39 | 35 | 29 | 30 | 27 |
| | 1248 | 1255 | 1167 | 1201 | 1172 | 1119 |

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| Australia Wide Membership Totals | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | | | |
| New South Wales | 836 | 790 | 739 | 604 | 593 | 491 |
| Northern Territory | 109 | 148 | 124 | 125 | 134 | 140 |
| Queensland | 1248 | 1255 | 1265 | 1201 | 1172 | 1119 |
| South Australia | 97 | 91 | 121 | 121 | 122 | 111 |
| Tasmania | 24 | 12 | 14 | 14 | 16 | 14 |
| Western Australia | 297 | 250 | 240 | 218 | 220 | 237 |
| | <u>2611</u> | <u>2546</u> | <u>2503</u> | <u>2283</u> | <u>2257</u> | <u>2112</u> |
| Corporate | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| School Corporate | 5 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 8 |

| Financial Branches | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| New South Wales | 25 |
| Northern Territory | 3 |
| Queensland | 45 |
| South Australia | 8 |
| Tasmania | 1 |
| Western Australia | 12 |
| | 96 |

Chair: Louise Martin

Secretary: Kelly Ostwald

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____