

**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales**  
*Working together for equity of access to education for all students who live in rural and remote Australia.*

**MEDIA**



**RELEASE**

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**Remote Education Forgotten in Border Closures**

Border closures in South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales/Victoria are causing unnecessary hardship on remote children due to the conditions of entry across the borders.

“We need policy writers to consider the unique situation these children are in before they make policy on the run.”  
ICPA-NSW State President Claire Butler said.

The issues vary between the States, but one thing is clear, ICPA-NSW needs to be part of the decisions being made and children who need to cross the border for education should be classed as essential travellers.

**New South Wales/Victorian Border:**

The permit system introduced on 7 August for a returning boarder from Victoria to NSW is completely unworkable. Many NSW children board in regional areas of Victoria with schools that have very tight COVID-19 risk management plans already in place under AHPPC guidelines. These plans can easily incorporate the return of children to rural and remote NSW without the need to greatly expose them to COVID-19 by catching flights from Melbourne to Sydney and parents then driving thousands of kilometres to pick them up, then travelling back home substantially increasing the risk to regional and rural NSW going against all publicised medical directives. None of this is making logistical sense when all the while the child could have been bussed by the school straight to the NSW border in Regional Victoria. We call on NSW Government to amend this condition immediately.

**South Australian/New South Wales Border:**

ICPA-NSW recently assisted members' children returning to boarding school and enter SA without needing to quarantine. Their applications were dealt with by SA Health Authorities on a case by case scenario. However, one remote NSW family was declined and for a second time in as many months that child had to quarantine for 14 days once back in SA before returning to school regardless of the fact they had been in isolation on their property. ICPA-NSW are still searching for the reason. We call on the SA Authorities to future plan to enable these children to continue their education without unnecessary avoidable interruption within an already unprecedented situation.

**Queensland/New South Wales Border:**

Families now face more uncertainty with the Qld/NSW border, and we are seeking clarification from Qld Health on what the new rules mean for our members. Parents in Northern NSW are unable to visit their children who must board

away to access a compulsory education and it is unclear what the quarantine arrangements will be for children who live in Northern NSW and board in Queensland.

“There is no consistency nationally and we need a future plan of what the return to school looks like for children, who due to geographic isolation must attend boarding school interstate. These children are from remote properties and can easily self isolate at home during the holidays.”

“ICPA-NSW has been forming policy with NSW Government for nearly 50 years and together we have achieved much to enable rural and remote children to access an education – we call on the NSW Government to include us in any decision making that is going to impact the education of isolated children during this pandemic. Some of these children have only had three weeks of face to face learning since March.”

We also call on all the State Governments to include respective ICPA State Councils in their decision making regarding rural and remote children, this would ensure a clear plan is in place for children who must cross state borders to access an education. This call is the reasoning behind why ICPA-NSW moved the following motions at the ICPA Federal Conference on Wednesday 5 August. :

*“That ICPA (Aust) urge the Minister for Regional Education to establish an Isolated Children’s Pandemic Advisory Group made up of State and Federal Education Ministers and Relevant Authorities, ABSA and ICPA representatives to ensure consistent decisions are made specific to the needs of geographically isolated children who must cross the State borders in order to access education.”*

*“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant authorities to ensure the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) guidelines be adhered to with consistency across all states with regards to rural and remote education.”*

Claire Butler said “We certainly understand caution, but the schools already have the risk management plans in place, they do risk management very well and can help keep communities safe whilst at the same time not negatively impact these children accessing their education.”

“The effects of the border closures are also being felt by many apprentices and tertiary students who live interstate and school students who cross the border for daily access to education.”

“These children are the future of agriculture and we call on the State Governments of SA, QLD and NSW to put their politics aside and work together with us and other stakeholders so that this situation finds some middle ground. COVID-19 isn’t going away in a hurry and policy being made without consultation is making it extremely and unnecessarily difficult for regional, rural & remote families living in NSW.”

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