

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



2019 Federal Conference

All Motions in One
Doc

August 2019

BOARDING SCHOOLS/HOSTELS

A1. Pilbara Branch (WA)

CARRIED

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

Explanation:

When the AIC was initially introduced, it was to help alleviate the high costs associated with sending geographically isolated children to boarding school. Since then the gap between the allowance received by families and the true cost of boarding has drastically widened especially since the Western Australian Government is now decreasing the State Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) by 37% over five years from 2018. On average boarding facilities increase their fees by 4-8% per annum, which is supported by research undertaken by ICPA (Aust) into the costs of boarding. Our members feel very strongly about this issue and feel the Government has lost touch with the educational needs of rural and remote families.

A2. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby both the Minister for Families and Social Services and the Minister for Education for a vital increase to the Federal allowance; Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance, to help alleviate the financial pressure families are faced with due to increased fees by boarding schools and hostels.”

Explanation:

An increase in the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance would relieve some of the burden placed on families to pay for their children’s education. WA State Council would like to thank Federal Council for their continued work lobbying the Federal Government for an increase to the Basic Boarding Allowance.

The Western Australian State Government announced last September that they would decrease the much relied upon state funded Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) over the next 5 years. This will now see the allowance fall from \$2105 in 2017, to \$1320 in 2022. This WA allowance has not increased since 2010, when the allowance was increased from \$1320 to \$2105. Many families will feel the impact of the reduction to the BAHA with increased financial pressure placed on families. While some states have seen an increase in their state allowances, WA has had a severe reduction and still other states offer no state assistance at all. Rural and remote families should have consistency and be assisted equally.

A3. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

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

Explanation:

Boarding fees are rising every year and the AIC is not keeping up with these rising fees. The AIC allowance needs to be updated constantly to reflect the increasing financial burden being placed on isolated families to educate their children. We are aware that the AIC allowance is indexed to

the CPI, which allows for a small increase each year. However, this increase is nowhere near the actual increase of boarding school fees. This results in a gap between the allowance and the real costs of educating isolated students.

A4. Louth Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Families and Social Services and the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management to substantially increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance for the duration of the drought and the consequent recovery period.”

Explanation:

Drought packages released by the Government should include an educational component to assist families affected by drought to maintain the current level of educating their children.

For families living in drought affected areas, education costs for many, on top of the crippling costs associated with drought i.e. feeding stock/purchasing water, are causing additional financial hardships and as a consequence of this many families have no choice than to keep their children home for Distance Education rather than sending them away to boarding school.

For those families managing to keep their children at boarding school they are doing so at great financial hardship.

An increase in the AIC needs to be implemented immediately as this would greatly assist those isolated families struggling to give their children equal access to education.

A5. New South Wales/Victoria Lone Members (NSW/VIC)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Families and Social Services and the Minister for Education for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Second Home Allowance to more closely reflect the rising costs of living associated with educating isolated students in a second home.”

Explanation:

Some geographically isolated families find it necessary to establish a second home to access schooling for their children. Educating children in a second home means two of almost everything for each child AND the second home parent. Living costs continue to rise. Incomes for geographically isolated families are comparatively low and some farming families are facing years of negative income as a result of drought. We call for ongoing increases in the Second Home AIC Allowance to allow rural and remote families to continue to access education for our children.

A6. Kindon Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to have the distance requirements for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) eligibility to not be increased if reviewed in the future.”

Explanation:

Concern has been raised that if the AIC were reviewed the current criteria may change and we ask ICPA to strongly advocate for the current minimum distance criteria to not be increased.

S8. Blackall Branch (Qld)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to include a remoteness index to be applied for students who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) but still live remotely, in addition to the current AIC eligibility.”

Explanation:

Families that live in rural and remote areas, that do not qualify for the AIC, face more educational disadvantages as they do not have access to the same opportunities as those who reside in the AIC qualifying region.

Current AIC eligibility criteria includes meeting an isolation condition, where isolation conditions are:

- Geographically isolated (from a school)
- Have a special education need
- No reasonable access to a school
- Meet a continuity condition.

If a remoteness index defined isolation, then those students in and around very remote towns who do not meet the distance criteria from the local school, could consider alternative education by gaining financial support in the form of a revised AIC.

Quite often instead of sending the oldest child away to boarding school, the family decides to move all the children and thus reducing, not only the number of children at the school but also the number of people in the district. If people move the businesses suffer, often these people are business owners and therefore the services in these towns decrease and it causes a flow on effect that is very difficult to reverse.

S2. Northern Territory State Council (NT)**WITHDRAWN**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the relevant Ministers for the expansion of Federal Government criteria for the bypassing of schools to enable eligibility for Assistance for Isolated Children (Boarding, Second Home Allowance).”

Explanation:

The Federal Government has numerous criteria for eligibility for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) in the “Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme Guidelines” (Department of Social Services). The socio-educational or socio-economic status of a town is not one of them. Nor is whether some students in that town can receive ABSTUDY to attend a boarding school.

[In Tennant Creek] ... over the past few years the rising number of child rape, alcohol abuse, domestic violence and family disputes between locals despite such a small population has been raised by numerous media sources and identified as a region of legitimate concern in comparison to other states and isolated townships (Wikipedia, accessed 20 July 2019). Tennant Creek High School currently has 232 students of whom about 85% are Indigenous. From the Myschool website <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50007>, in 2018 69% of students were from families in the bottom quarter of community socio-educational advantage and average NAPLAN scores for Years 7 and 9 were ‘substantially below’ those of ‘similar schools’.

Governments at all levels are piloting and implementing an array of tactics to address the problems in Tennant Creek. For example, the whole township has been classified so Aboriginal children from Tennant Creek are eligible for ABSTUDY to attend boarding schools elsewhere. This

approach is completely understandable given the unsafe home life of some of these children and infers children are better off living and being educated somewhere else. Aboriginal families earning over the qualifying means-test and non-indigenous families in Tennant Creek cannot access ABSTUDY or any other schemes to assist with the costs of educating their children elsewhere. The social dysfunction which has led to Indigenous families being able to access ABSTUDY affects all residents.

Part of dealing with the problems of Tennant Creek must be the attraction and retention of service providers in the town such as doctors, nurses, social workers, police, teachers and so on. Many of these families will also have secondary-school age children. For many reasons, these families may wish to school their children elsewhere. It is highly probable professionals are being lost when their children hit high school. NT ICPA is aware of health professionals from Tennant Creek making enquiries about assistance for their children to attend an NT boarding school. Think of a single parent doing shift-work. High schools or boarding schools in bigger centres inarguably provide access to more educational opportunities through curriculum choices, extra-curricular activities, diversity and larger cohorts of students.

Tennant Creek High School should be a 'limited program school' because students in Senior Years aspiring to go to university are likely to be studying subjects such as higher-level maths or sciences through the NT School of Distance Education. NT ICPA understands the bypassing of limited program schools for the purposes of AIC eligibility is a state decision, however believe the serious issues in some towns (Walgett NSW is another example) warrant a broader approach to allowing for some schools to be bypassed and urge the Federal Government to develop further AIC eligibility criteria to take these issues into account. Every student has the right to maximise their potential; it is unfair and inequitable to expect families to keep their children at school in a town where they may not.

Eligibility for AIC for families ineligible for ABSTUDY would incentivise living in Tennant Creek or similar towns, contribute to resolving dysfunctional towns' problems and remedy the inequitable access to an appropriate education for their children.

F2. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the relevant ministers for the expansion of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) (Boarding Allowance and Second Home Allowance) to include consideration of the socio-economic and Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of a school."

Explanation:

The Federal Government has numerous criteria for eligibility for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) in the "Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme Guidelines" (Department of Social Services). The socio-educational or socio-economic status of a town is not one of them. Nor is whether some students in that town can receive ABSTUDY to attend a boarding school.

[In Tennant Creek] ... over the past few years the rising number of child rape, alcohol abuse, domestic violence and family disputes between locals despite such a small population has been raised by numerous media sources and identified as a region of legitimate concern in comparison to other states and isolated townships (Wikipedia, accessed 20 July 2019). Tennant Creek High School currently has 232 students of whom about 85% are Indigenous. From the Myschool website <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50007>, in 2018 69% of students were from

families in the bottom quarter of community socio-educational advantage and average NAPLAN scores for Years 7 and 9 were 'substantially below' those of 'similar schools'.

Governments at all levels are piloting and implementing an array of tactics to address the problems in Tennant Creek. For example, the whole township has been classified so Aboriginal children from Tennant Creek are eligible for ABSTUDY to attend boarding schools elsewhere. This approach is completely understandable given the unsafe home life of some of these children and infers children are better off living and being educated somewhere else. Aboriginal families earning over the qualifying means-test and non-indigenous families in Tennant Creek cannot access ABSTUDY or any other schemes to assist with the costs of educating their children elsewhere. The social dysfunction which has led to Indigenous families being able to access ABSTUDY affects all residents.

Part of dealing with the problems of Tennant Creek must be the attraction and retention of service providers in the town such as doctors, nurses, social workers, police, teachers and so on. Many of these families will also have secondary-school age children. For many reasons, these families may wish to school their children elsewhere. It is highly probable professionals are being lost when their children hit high school. NT ICPA is aware of health professionals from Tennant Creek making enquiries about assistance for their children to attend an NT boarding school. Think of a single parent doing shift-work. High schools or boarding schools in bigger centres inarguably provide access to more educational opportunities through curriculum choices, extra-curricular activities, diversity and larger cohorts of students.

Tennant Creek High School should be a 'limited program school' because students in Senior Years aspiring to go to university are likely to be studying subjects such as higher-level maths or sciences through the NT School of Distance Education. NT ICPA understands the bypassing of limited program schools for the purposes of AIC eligibility is a state decision, however believe the serious issues in some towns (Walgett NSW is another example) warrant a broader approach to allowing for some schools to be bypassed and urge the Federal Government to develop further AIC eligibility criteria to take these issues into account. Every student has the right to maximise their potential; it is unfair and inequitable to expect families to keep their children at school in a town where they may not.

Eligibility for AIC for families ineligible for ABSTUDY would incentivise living in Tennant Creek or similar towns, contribute to resolving dysfunctional towns' problems and remedy the inequitable access to an appropriate education for their children.

F1. Western Australian State Council (WA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to review the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Policy and Guidelines to allow rural and remote students who are accepted into specialised programs not offered at their local school, and who need to board away from home, be eligible for the AIC."

Explanation:

There are examples where rural and remote students need to board away from home to access Gifted and Talented programs. These students do not qualify for the AIC due to the proximity of a government high school that does not offer these specialised programs.

A88. St George Branch (Qld)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA Federal Council lobbies the Australian Government to upgrade the technology used for processing AIC to allow for completion of forms online to alleviate the problems faced each year with processing of payments and sending out of cancellation letters."

Explanation:

Each year there seems to be a continual problem with delay in payments or double payments to recipients, cancellation letters sent out automatically then families are then ringing in to check that their forms have been received and their payments are not being stopped. This not only adds extra stress to the families involved but must put an extra workload on to the staff in the AIC Office who have to deal with the deluge of phone calls from concerned and stressed families.

A7. Mount Isa Branch of the Air (Qld)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates with Government and other relevant parties for the establishment of a permanent 'Rural Hardship Education Fund' to assist families meet education costs in times of difficulty."

Explanation:

At present there continues to be large areas of rural Australia suffering greatly through one of the worst droughts in memory. Earlier this year, families in North West Queensland were battered by a catastrophic monsoon event which has seen many lose nearly everything in a matter of days - livestock, fencing and infrastructure, their homes and schoolrooms. Drought and other unforeseen disasters such as fires, floods and industry events which are out of producers control (i.e. The Live Export Ban, Dairy Crises etc.) all impact suddenly on rural families' income and their ability to pay the out of pocket costs necessary for their children to access education. This lack of income does not only affect families living on rural properties but also carries over into small town businesses and the other industries such as freight, mustering/shearing contractors, etc which also rely on primary production.

When disaster strikes in a metropolitan area, as devastating as it may be, once the disaster has passed and things cleaned up or re-established, children's schooling continues unchanged. This is not so for families in geographically isolated areas who often still need to find the means to pay for the gap in the costs of their children's education fees even though they have little to no income during these periods and the recovery periods afterwards. In past droughts, Exceptional Circumstances could be applied for and a top up was added to the Assistance for Isolated Children Allowance, but at present no such scheme exists. Families in NW Qld were grateful for the \$1,000 increase to the AIC they received after the monsoon devastation, however this was a one-time assistance which has not met the gap in the cost of education, and due to the monsoon event, families have lost their income for several years to come with no further educational assistance mentioned. During these past few years of drought some families have had to decide whether or not their children can remain in schooling or to choose between their children, deciding who can go away to school and which ones won't receive a further education. It is anticipated that this will also now be the case for families affected by the monsoon catastrophe. Families at small rural schools have also faced difficulty in not being able to raise funds for school excursions and other activities for their students.

It is essential that a Rural Hardship Education Fund be established and put permanently in place to assist rural families that need financial help to ensure that their children can remain in schooling during tough times.

S7. Richmond Branch (Qld)**CARRIED WITH ACCLAMATION**

“That ICPA Richmond Branch thanks ICPA (Aust) for its advocacy for rural and remote families following the NW Queensland floods, including the ‘Issue Paper – NW Qld Flood Impact on Education’, which has served to shine a light on the needs of rural and remote students in the aftermath of this natural disaster.”

Explanation:

We were extremely appreciative of the representation by Federal and Queensland State Councils, who represented the needs of students and families during this unprecedented natural disaster.

This included the advocacy to the Hon Shane Stone, CEO of North Qld Livestock Industry Recovery Agency, which has resulted in significant assistance by the Federal Government with educational costs for rural and remote flood affected families, including boarding school fee assistance.

S1. Hay Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to provide low interest loans to drought affected families for the purpose of paying the gap between the allowances and boarding school education fees.”

Explanation:

For many families in rural and remote Australia the ongoing drought has placed enormous pressure on their ability to finance the secondary boarding education of their children. As cashflows are reduced, the cost of accessing secondary education remains one of the single biggest line items in many farming budgets. The financial pressure to keep children at boarding school or indeed to start children at boarding school is causing immense mental health stress for both parents and children. It is also placing significant pressure on boarding schools who have seen a decline in boarding numbers, particularly for those students from remote areas.

A low interest government loan would allow parents to access secondary education at boarding schools with certainty. It would reduce the number of students who either have to leave boarding school or not start boarding school because of a lack of cash flow caused by drought. This would also assist boarding schools to be able to plan with a greater certainty of students accessing their services.

Anecdotally, we are aware that there was a 28% across the board drop in rural and remote boarding students into Year 7 in Sydney boarding schools in 2019. For many families they do not have a choice. Boarding school is their only secondary school option and therefore they take on the financial burden while suffering through the drought with no certainty as to how they will maintain their children at their schools.

A low interest loan designated for educational purposes would also allow farming businesses to utilise cashflow to reinvest into their businesses and therefore the local economies. This will ensure that farming businesses, who are also educating children at boarding schools have the ability to recover from a drought by ensuring cash flows towards farm expenses rather than education. We propose that the facility be available to all eligible AIC families, enabling those without a large asset base to access the low interest loan.

The low interest loan also means that the government would have a return on their investment, not just monetary, but in the further education of remote and rural communities.

A8. New South Wales State Council (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government to provide resources for mental health programs in boarding schools with drought affected students, to help children navigate through times of hardship.”

Explanation:

Even though children are living away from home at boarding school and therefore not on the coalface of the drought on a daily basis during the school terms, they continue to worry about home, their parents, younger siblings, livestock, and the added pressure of the continuing affordability of them remaining at boarding school.

In school holidays these children are coming home to work alongside their families as equal team members and even though this is normal for our children, they are still trying to process many adult issues with a child’s mind. Worrying about what their education is costing their families heightened by the unprecedented drought and the long and difficult recovery is an ongoing issue for our bush kids.

Even though kids are going to face ups and downs throughout life, we need to be giving them the support and the coping tools that are crucial when they are growing into young adults without the support of their families. Beyond all, these families in many instances are hundreds of kilometres away. With many of us battling mentally, as adults supporting our children, it is vital through these difficult times that these unbelievable kids are supported. They are after all our next generation.

For most of us we could not do what we do without our amazing kids by our sides. All we ask is for more mental health skills to be put in their toolbox, so that they can cope with whatever life throws at them.

A9. New South Wales/Victoria Lone Members (NSW/VIC)**LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) works with the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) and other relevant organisations to ensure that the tuition component of school fees charged to rural, remote and isolated students are affordable for all of their families.”

.

Explanation:

In NSW, over the past six years, fees at private schools have gone up by more than 25 per cent. The CPI has risen 9.1% in that time. At the same time, we are battling floods and drought and reduced incomes with the very resilience that our children bring and use to contribute to their school activities, making them valued members of those school communities.

A solution would include ABSA working with the ICPA to develop guidelines for school policies for bursaries and scholarships and their implementation. The policy for awarding bursaries and scholarships should be applied fairly and equitably to all rural and remote families across all non-government schools. They should be clearly stated in an easy to read form, which is comparable across schools. We ask that ABSA encourage its member schools to consider the hardships that rural, remote and isolated families are facing.

A10. New South Wales State Council (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education to address the funding recommendations of the Socio-Economic Status Score Methodology proposed by the National School Resourcing Board Review, to ensure the ongoing viability of independent schools with a regional cohort.”

Explanation:

Every child should be able to access the best possible education regardless of where they live and regardless of family income.

Independent boarding schools in Australia have a high percentage of rural and remote students and many of the regional boarding schools offer families an opportunity to board in areas geographically closer to home (this still might be 500 kilometres or more from home).

The National School Resourcing Review found that a direct measure of parental income is currently the most fit for purpose approach towards calculating a funding formula for independent schools. This will require data linkage of parental names and addresses with personal income tax data. The Government has agreed with these recommendations and plans to phase in arrangements for a direct measure over three years from 2020. By 2023 it is proposed that all schools will have funding calculated using the new direct measure.

The National School Resourcing Board proposes that the median household income of school families be used as a way of measuring parents “capacity to contribute” to the cost of education at independent schools. The Federal Government has accepted all 6 recommendations of the board, with a transition to implementation in 2020. ICPA-NSW has serious concerns about the viability of regional independent schools, because if the ‘working group’ decides to use gross income as a measure, it will reduce the funding to these schools.

For example, take into consideration a farming family that may have a six-figure gross income, yet because of the expenses of production, or drought, have little (or negative) net income. If the Gross income of families is taken into consideration it will show a highly inaccurate, inflated income average for parents at these schools and therefore funding will be negatively affected for many independent schools with a high regional rural and remote cohort of students.

Regional boarding schools already operate in the face of financial disadvantage imposed by distance. Reliable modelling is indicating that some regional independent schools would be forced to close under this regime, with consequent effects on regional employment and development. Underlying this is the fact that to compensate for the reduced funding and to avoid closure, some schools have indicated they will have to increase their fees by 20% per child.

The cost to an isolated family of boarding fees, transport, uniforms, books and extra-curricular activities can double the cost of educating a student at a non-government school. The need to provide for boarding therefore clearly reduces a family’s ‘capacity to contribute’. The median gross household income model does not take into consideration that there may be multiple children from the one family boarding away. It is inequitable. ICPA-NSW believes that the scores will not accurately reflect the socio-economic status of the school community.

The funding formula needs to recognise the unique needs of rural remote and regional students whom have limited choice but to board away for secondary education.

ICPA-NSW believes that the Minister for Education should consider inviting ICPA (Aust) to be part of the working group so that rural boarding families and their unique situations are taken into account when finalising the formula.

A11. North West Slopes Branch (NSW)

LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to Government for equal boarding opportunities for rural and remote students.”

Explanation:

In the 21st Century, many from Rural and Remote areas of Australia are still missing out on the opportunity of a better education. This is for many reasons, but amongst those is the financial cost; and also access to a Government-run Boarding school within regional Australia. Research into Government (Agricultural) Boarding Schools/Facilities do not amount to very much, Australia wide. For instance, in NSW, we have Hurlstone (in South Sydney) and Yanco at Yanco (in the South of the state) which offer boarding to both boys and girls and in the North West there is Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School (MAHS), which offers day and boarding for boys, only. This is the extent of boarding options for our state, at a government school. There are a lot of Selective state high schools, however, that does not help families who do not live in the built-up, or major centres throughout Australia.

A lot of families are unable to get access to the AIC scheme Boarding allowance, and this can often be the difference between enabling a young student to get the opportunity of a better education, than a minimal one. With our changing times in Agriculture and many other industries, we need, as a country to be more open to the fact that some of our best business minds are country kids and they are now heading up some major industries. To be able to give these young students with aspirations of a life on the land and beyond, the confidence to run such businesses is a gift that our government should not overlook, and something that we should pursue.

A12. Westmar-Inglestone Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant minister to support employers wishing to assist with education expenses of children of employees who reside in geographically isolated areas, those eligible for current Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) funding, by removing the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) on this assistance.”

Explanation:

Many employers/employees in remote, rural and regional areas find the secondary schooling of employee’s children financially challenging. Many families decide to leave their place of employment to educate their children, causing upheaval for both the employer and the employee. Many employers would like to assist with some of the costs associated with secondary schooling but are hit with the double whammy of the cost of the assistance as well as the burden of FBT. If this FBT burden was removed it would provide a greater incentive for employers to assist with schooling costs.

Rural and remote living is not for everyone. It is for the minority. The families that do so should be supported not penalised. Rural families help make up the communities in the bush and you will find no better evidence of community than in rural and remote Queensland. The removal of FBT would help sustain our small rural communities.

S3. Walgett Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) supports boarding organisations and boarding institutions in seeking the removal of the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) on essential boarding staff “

Explanation:

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

It is obvious that boarding schools must charge fees that cover costs incurred to them. Staff wages is a clear example of expenses that must be factored into boarding school fees. However, if some of the taxes that are currently applied to boarding schools were removed, the fees charged to families could also be lessened. The removal of the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) on residential accommodation for essential supervisory staff could significantly reduce the costs incurred by some boarding schools. The Australian Boarding Schools’ Association (ABSA) estimates that the FBT on the residential accommodation for the boarding schools in large cities adds an average of approximately \$1500 per child. Staff accommodation is a fundamental necessity of a boarding school. Boarding school staff must live on site to supervise the boarders in their care.

Boarding associations and boarding schools have been lobbying for the Fringe Benefits Tax on essential boarding school staff to be removed. ICPA (Aust) supporting this advocacy and assisting in raising awareness of this concern where possible would lend a greater voice to this issue on behalf of rural and remote students.

A13. Kimberley Air Branch (WA)

LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to provide for boarding fees to be a tax-deductible expense for geographically isolated Australian families that are eligible for Assistance for Isolated Children.”

Explanation:

There is no argument that our remote families are in desperate need for further financial assistance in educating our children. Providing tax-deductible education zones in remote Australia would have very minimal effect on the Federal budget overall yet create significant assistance to our already struggling remote families. With the current push to provide for a tax free special economic zone in the North of Australia, we believe the timing is right to re-ignite the tax reform debate and provide for direct assistance to remote Australian businesses in meeting the hefty cost of in educating our children in boarding schools. It is time for our government to come to recognise that for many of our families, sending our children to boarding schools is the only option, not a luxury and assistance and support is needed if we are to continue to keep and attract families to invest in and remain living in remote Australia.

COMMUNICATIONS

Internet Access

A14. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, National Broadband Network Company and Internet Service Providers to ensure that geographically isolated students have equity of internet access which is adequate with regard to speed, quality, capabilities, download limits and cost to meet their educational needs.”

Explanation:

Some Distance Education Students enrolled at Alice Springs School of the Air (ASSOA) have had internet supplied to them via in-house satellite, modem and internet connections, other families supply their own internet connection for students at their own cost. The internet service provided by the NT Department of Education, is managed, monitored and fixed by the Internet Technicians at ASSOA. Alice Springs School of the Air is in the process of having tests carried out on families own internet connections gathering data to ensure when the school internet network is changed over to each families own internet connection, the children will still have enough reliable internet access to ensure speed, quality, capabilities, download limits and cost meet their daily schooling needs.

We would like to ensure there are no limits placed on download limits, speed, and capabilities of internet connections that are used for education for isolated students regardless of the service being provided by the school or a private connection provided by the family.

A15. Katherine Branch (NT)

D/C by A14

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to request the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts to ensure all Australian students have adequate internet access with regard to speed, quality, capabilities and cost of the service.”

Explanation:

We acknowledge and thank ICPA (Aust) and the Better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia for their continuous and effective lobbying of the Federal Government, Telstra, nbn™ and other providers on internet issues in the bush. In particular, the negotiations with nbn™ to provide dedicated ports for education an important breakthrough. The prioritisation of installations required for education is paramount. Many students, however, such as tertiary and training students, students of small rural schools and boarding students’ home on “holidays”. These families are required to use their business/family internet for education. Also, the NT is in flux with regard to internet provision for distance education and so some families are also using their own internet for that.

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

A16. Kimberley Air Branch (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government and other relevant stakeholders to ensure fair and equitable access to Sky Muster for those with genuine need for the service, and access which reflects the residential and educational needs of rural and regional Australia.”

Explanation:

With the heavy reliance on internet access to support distance education and plans to have all Australian government services available online by 2025, it is more important than ever that there is No Australian Left Offline. The current No Australian Left Offline policy focuses on equitable access for low income families and while this is important, we want to ensure that our remote families are secure in knowing NBN satellite installations costs will be met and more affordable access to internet is also available where it is needed most. Whilst it is appreciated that Sky Muster continues to be available for our remote families, the suggestion that there will be no assistance with installation costs from 2020 is of most concern. These costs escalate greatly in providing relevant technicians to our most isolated locations and would limit who can and cannot access the Sky Muster facility into the future.

A17. Western Australia State Council (WA)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies nbn Co that all students enrolled via distance education schools have access to the Sky Muster Education Port.”

Explanation:

In WA, only students studying via distance education and enrolled through Schools of the Air (SOTA) or School of Isolated Distance Education (SIDE) qualify for the Sky Muster Education Port, which the WA Education Department funds. There have been instances where students studying via Distance Education through private campuses have been told they do not qualify for the Education Port from nbn Co and referred on to the State Education Department. ICPA (WA) would like to see access to the Education Port for all students studying via distance education, with the option to fund their access themselves if enrolled in a non-government school.

A18. Northern Territory State Council (NT)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to relevant Federal Government Departments and Ministers to ensure families residing in geographically isolated regions to have ‘unlimited’ data plans, for the Education Port/s for each enrolled student.”

Explanation:

Students in rural and remote areas, whether enrolled in Schools of the Air, distance education, or a small school require significant data and reliable internet to receive their education. Children in geographically isolated areas have very limited exposure to extracurricular interests such as music, drama and social interaction. Good, affordable internet is key to providing these students with some of the opportunities their urban counterparts can easily access.

Some states, such as the Northern Territory, do not presently use the Education Port for School of the Air or distance education.

Access to the Education Port should be granted to all geographically isolated students who have no option for unlimited data plans, to reduce financial stress and help towards equity in access to educational opportunities.

A19. Northern Territory State Council (NT)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) urges nbn™ to ensure education ports on Sky Muster services have multicast capability.”

Explanation:

Wikipedia explains multicast as *'a group communication where data transmission is addressed to a group of destination computers simultaneously. Multicast can be one-to-many or many-to-many distribution ... making it possible for the source to efficiently send to the group in a single transmission.'*

Multicast functionality is an extremely efficient means of data transmission. Northern Territory Schools of the Air (SOTA) have been successfully delivering Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) lessons to their students using REACT, a multicast product, for over 13 years. The stability, reliability and functionality of REACT has often been envied by other distance education communities across Australia. The NSW Department of Education is also using REACT to deliver distance education.

Currently however, Sky Muster Education Ports cannot support multicast transmission. As many families with students do or probably will require the education port for distance education, families, especially in NT and NSW, would appreciate nbn™ ensuring multicast functionality for education ports.

A20. Western Australia State Council (WA)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies nbn Co to ensure that video streaming for educational use is included in future Sky Muster Plus plans for students studying via distance education."

Explanation:

With the prospect of the Sky Muster Education Port being discontinued due to the introduction of Sky Muster Plus, it is imperative that video streaming, including YouTube, that is actively used, be included in the delivery of education programs for rural and remote students studying via distance education.

A21. Westmar-Inglestone Branch (Qld)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Minister for Regional Services, Local Government and Decentralisation and the National Broadband Network Company to extend the current Sky Muster Education Port to include Tertiary students studying online from rural and remote locations."

Explanation:

Many rural and remote tertiary students are choosing to study by external or online methods as this allows them to continue to work and live in rural and remote communities. Currently the Education Port only allows access by primary and secondary students studying via distance education.

Online learning requires tertiary students to log in to streamed, live (and recorded) tutorials /lectures many times each week. Current download data quotas are inadequate, and students are unable to attend necessary online sessions. The Education Port needs to be made available to tertiary students studying from rural and remote locations.

A22. Western Australia State Council (WA)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) investigates the possibility of nbn Co continuing the installation of Sky Muster and its hardware at no cost to rural and remote student households to ensure affordable access for rural and remote students.”

Explanation:

With the likelihood of the Sky Muster free installation and hardware costs ceasing beyond 2020, there is great concern as to what nbn will have in place in regard to geographically isolated students accessing education through distance education at an affordable cost to parents.

A23. Northern Territory State Council (NT)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the relevant minister for the subsidisation of Sky Muster installations to continue past 2020.”

Explanation:

The value of the hardware for Sky Muster installations is reportedly \$6,000-\$7,000. The hardware and the cost of installations are currently fully subsidised by the Commonwealth government for a standard installation. While families in some states use their Sky Muster service and education ports for education, other states such as NSW and NT are still negotiating nbn™ satellite services for the delivery of distance education. These negotiations are likely to continue into 2020 and further installations of new services are likely to be required past 2020 in order for current and future distance education students to access education.

Further, internet is now a necessity and is required to attract families to live, work and therefore deliver education in rural and remote Australia. New installations will always be required to cater for new families or new residences in these areas and if the costs become prohibitive, regions already suffering from a diminishing workforce will further suffer.

A24. Pilbara Branch (WA)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies nbn Co to ensure the Sky Muster installation and hardware with nbn Co remains affordable for rural and remote students.”

Explanation:

Isolated students accessing education via distance education could be financially disadvantaged due to the Sky Muster free installation and hardware costs possibly ceasing after 2020.

A25. Queensland State Council (Qld)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies nbn™ Co to investigate the possibility of remotely identifying Sky Muster sites that are not performing in an optimum manner.”

Explanation:

It has become apparent that some Sky Muster sites are having issues with the performance of their remote site installations. There are increasing reports of dropouts and low fade margins that cause sites to fail while those around them continue to operate. Remote identification of problematic sites would enable issues to be resolved before they have a major impact on distance education students.

A26. Queensland State Council (Qld)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies nbn™ Co and Dept of Communications to provide a more viable alternative than Sky Muster for small towns in the nbn™ Satellite footprint that does not disadvantage access to education for existing ADSL users."

Explanation:

Currently many rural and remote towns who are in the nbn™ satellite footprint have access to ADSL 1 or 2 for internet connectivity. ADSL provides a superior service compared to satellite and many residents are on unlimited data plans. The reliability and quality of service to schools, hospitals and other hubs of the community is highly valued.

Given that nbn™ is now Australia's primary internet carrier, it is probable that ADSL will eventually be retired. For towns in the nbn™ satellite footprint, this will mean Sky Muster Satellite, which will be a significant downgrade from the existing service.

Many of these towns have existing fibre optic cable running past them. Some are owned by nbn™, and some are owned by other provider networks. It is imperative that nbn™ consider utilising other provider networks fibre optic cable to push broadband through the existing exchange, in order to provide equitable broadband services for residents. Co-investment by the Federal Government, State Government, nbn™ and local Councils is crucial. Initiatives such as Fibre to the Node or Fibre to the Curb should be explored.

Providing alternative connectivity solutions for towns in the satellite footprint will ease traffic on the Sky Muster Satellite, thereby relieving congestion issues and enabling a more adequate service (increased data allowances) for customers who have no other choice than Sky Muster, particularly for educational access e.g. Distance Education.

It is imperative rural and remote communities have access to an equitable broadband service for their education, business and health purposes in order for them to remain viable and sustainable into the future. Australia has seen great population decline in rural towns over the last two decades. A downgrade of internet connectivity of this scale will be another death knoll for rural and remote Australia, one that can simply not be sustained.

A27. Queensland State Council (Qld)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies nbn™ Co and retail service providers to advise rural and remote customers with details of suppliers who can provide battery backup units for purchase for mains powered nbn™ equipment plus mains powered retail provider equipment."

Explanation:

The majority of equipment from both nbn™, and other Retail Service Providers that is required to provide service from the nbn™ network is mains powered. The major disadvantage is that any disruption to mains power, however short, will cause the service to fail and then the equipment has to reboot and settle down before it is usable. As well as disrupting any distance education lessons in progress, it may cause the loss of phone service at the most inconvenient time.

A UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply) will keep the equipment going for a short period. As most of the equipment is actually powered from a battery eliminator that supplies 12 volts, the provision of a battery backup system that can stay operational for a number of hours becomes very useful. The use of a battery will also protect the equipment from power variations that could

cause issues with the reliability of the service. This will also allow sites with non-continuous power to maintain communications when the generator is off.

Telephone

A28. Queensland State Council (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby Telstra to ensure priority is given to phone line installations and repairs in rural and remote areas when the purpose is education delivery.”

Explanation:

The digital curriculum has seen a dramatic increase in the direct teaching of lessons by the Centre teacher to the School of Distance Education (SDE) student in their homes. For many regional distance education schools and students, the landline is a compulsory piece of equipment that enables access to these daily lessons. In Queensland for example, in order to fulfil daily timetabling requirements, at least two phone lines are required for multi-age home schoolrooms. The installation and repair times for phone lines in rural and remote areas can be lengthy, at least six weeks in some cases. It is imperative Telstra prioritise these services in geographically isolated locations where it is used for access to education.

A29. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to work with the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts and the relevant Telecommunications Providers to ensure that all rural and remote students have consistent access to continuous and reliable telephone communications through regular maintenance of existing telephone infrastructure and they are:

- 1) prioritised for repair
- 2) a temporary satellite phone be provided to any rural or remote family where a phone fault is not rectified within three working days.”

Explanation:

It is highly important for our children learning via distance education, to have access to their teachers via phone as well as internet. Often Private Lesson Times (PLTs) are carried out on the phone while other children in the schoolroom are using the computer to access their lessons. When phone networks are not working due to any range of issues, we would like to ensure that the access our children have to their class teachers via the telephone network is placed at a high priority. We would like to ask that telecommunication providers are able to place a temporary mobile satellite phone at any site where phone faults are not rectified within 3 Working Days.

Despite best intentions from one of the major telephone providers and this issue being discussed at conference over several years, members are still facing long periods of time with a substandard phone connection. One member has been waiting for nearly 12 months to have their phone fault rectified. Despite several on-site visits by technicians, the phone fault could not be identified let alone fixed. This has had caused great distress and disruption to not only the school room and accessibility the student has to their teacher but also for the family conducting their business and jeopardising connection with the Royal Flying Doctor Service for the children, staff and any other travellers passing through the area. They have been told on several occasions that no fault could be identified and at one point the fault was removed from the telecommunication server list. After over 7 months of reporting the phone fault, they were offered an interim phone service and 2 out of the 3 options required mobile coverage. (This family lives 400km from the nearest town) The 3 option was to have a satellite interim with the side note that when experiencing a long period of overcast weather, the interim service will only provide 15min of calls per day. The

interim service was offered on the 2nd May and the family accepted the offer on the 3rd May. At the time of writing this explanation on the 16th May, they are yet to receive the interim service and the phone fault remains unresolved.

We have heard that there is Round 4 and 5 of the mobile black spot coverage on the table. We would like Telstra to consider families with ongoing telephone issues and not limit the roll out of mobile towers to remote communities. Since this family has moved from the old ADSL tower to the USO connection they have experienced over 14 years of consistent substandard phone connectivity. Since the update to the USO service about 12 months ago, this family has reported an ongoing fault that continues to worsen. They have been told, “next week”, “we are working on it”, “your service can’t be faulted by our system”, etc. While the people in the call centres receiving the faults are sympathetic to the issue, there is a huge gap when looking at rectifying the issue.

A30. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts to ensure the retention and maintenance of landline services in rural and remote areas, until another means of reliable, affordable and appropriate voice service is available.”

Explanation:

ICPA (WA) acknowledge and thank ICPA (Aust) for its advocacy in explaining that families living in rural and remote parts of Australia, due to the nature of where they live, require two separate forms of communications i.e. phone/voice and internet/data as separate services, not relying on the same mode of delivery thus ensuring if one service fails, the other is still available. The Universal Service Obligation (USO) should remain on landline telephony services for those living outside of mobile coverage areas and that these landline services are maintained and upgraded as necessary.

A31. Queensland State Council (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts to direct Telstra and other suppliers to provide backup battery power to at least one Wireless Local Link (WLL) service when a site is converted from another technology to WLL.”

Explanation:

Telstra has committed to migrating 350 services from old technology to WLL (Fixed phone via Mobile technology). Existing radio services have up to 3 days of battery reserve that will likely be lost in the conversion to WLL. It was directed by the Minister that customers fed by nbn™ optic fibre in large built up areas (normally with good mobile coverage and availability of services) would receive a battery backup unit if they chose. This backup gives 5 hours battery reserve to keep the fixed phone operational.

As a minimum, any WLL backup should be at least 5 hours, but preferably 24 hours. Additional backup units should be available for purchase for more than one service e.g. Distance Education home schoolroom requires uninterrupted service.

A32. Queensland State Council (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts to provide guidelines on telecommunications options should fixed lines fail but nbn™ internet is available.”

Explanation:

While VoIP over satellite is not a recommended option for distance education and general telephone use, if the normal telephone (Fixed and Mobile) is not available and the nbn™ satellite is working, a guideline on how to access these services would be appreciated. Voice services that use the available data services, such as VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) voice service, Voice over Wi-Fi, Viber, and other VoIP type apps, will provide some security until normal service is restored. Members have been experiencing extended outages and is extremely disruptive in the Distance Education classroom.

A33. Queensland State Council (Qld)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Telstra to expand the Remote Area Sales and Service Centres to include Rural and Remote Small Business Customers.”

Explanation:

Currently the Remote Area Sales and Service Centres in Adelaide and Townsville only cater for Residential Customers more than 100km from a Telstra store. As a large number of distance education home classrooms are located on sites classed as Small Business, these locations are at a significant disadvantage. They use the same technology and have the same issues as Residential Customers in the same area but do not receive the required support.

Mobile Coverage/Service**A34. Queensland State Council (Qld)****CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Telstra to advise future 4GX upgrade plans for the remaining 3G remote area mobile bases (including increased bandwidth capacity if necessary) to enable the full benefits to be realised.”

Explanation:

There are still 3G mobile sites that have not been upgraded to 4GX. These sites often also have a very limited bandwidth back to the network that restricts the usability for distance education. There are also reports of some sites being upgraded to 4GX, without an increase in the bandwidth to that site. This limits the capability of these sites.

CURRICULUM**A35. Moree Branch (NSW)****LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to place urgency on streamlining the overcrowded national curriculum, particularly in the primary school years, restructuring it so there is a stronger emphasis on deeper understanding of core subjects such as Maths and English.”

Explanation:

Since the national curriculum was introduced to our schools, teachers and students have been overwhelmed and stressed with the enormity of what is needed to be taught and learnt. The foundation years should have a stronger emphasis on literacy and numeracy, our Kindergarten students should not be inundated with such a wide range of content instead focusing on the basics. The enormity of what they are required to learn in a short period of time is unrealistic. In a review of the national curriculum in 2014 the authors stated that experts in early years learning

recommended that Foundation to Year 2 should focus on literacy and numeracy alone (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014). They also wrote that it was pointed out by several different entities that the content expected to be taught by primary school teachers was too large.

Considering this review was undertaken in 2014 the Australian Government response included an admission that “we already knew that many stakeholders had been critical of the overcrowding of the Australian Curriculum and the content being excessive” (Australian Government, 2014) and then went on to include a recommendation for ACARA to “revise the structure of the Australian Curriculum to reduce the amount of content to a narrow core required to be taught, especially in the primary years. Foundation to Year 2 should focus on literacy and numeracy” (Australian Government, 2014) we strongly believe that urgency in getting this process started is required.

References

Donnelly & Wiltshire, *Review of the Australian Curriculum: Final Report*, 2014.

Australian Government, *Review of the Australian Curriculum: Initial Australian Government Response*, 2014.

A36. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) reinforces the importance to the Minister for Education and other relevant ministers, to recognise and continue to support Food and Fibre being taught and integrated into the primary and secondary school curriculum.”

Explanation:

As there are no strong agriculture programs being carried out in Northern Territory schools, it would be appealing to families to enrol their children in NT boarding schools if this was more on hand. There are many topics that fall under the Agriculture heading and members would like to ensure that a broad range of agricultural learnings are implemented when teachers cover Agriculture in their classes. e.g. livestock, cropping, sustainable land management, horticulture, conservation, preservation etc. Whilst Alice Springs School of the Air (ASSOA) and some primary schools include gardening, seed germination and vegetable gardens as a subject/project Agricultural Topics could be more intense, especially in senior years e.g. if Livestock, Aquaculture, Sustainable Land Management, Horticulture, and other Industries that fall under the Agriculture banner were recognised and were also on offer as part of the school curriculum; such as National Park Rangers and Landcare groups. This could possibly mean less families travelling interstate for boarding schools to meet certain children's interests and understanding of the link between education and agriculture / land management.

A37. Tambo Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to ensure that all sectors of Agriculture Production are taught in classrooms.”

Explanation:

For too long now the agriculture component in the curriculum has been focused on limited aspects of agriculture. Whilst it is important to teach students about the environment there is a much bigger picture at play. It is extremely worrying that our urban students are not being educated in the fields of animal husbandry, production and cropping for example. There are too many students who do not know where eggs come from, milk etc. and how do you grow a carrot or a cotton crop. Rural and remote students are also disadvantaged as they only have the knowledge of what happens at home and nothing in a broader sense.

It is disappointing to see so many young people protesting, tying themselves to abattoirs, going on strike and causing great upset due to ignorance and being indoctrinated by the education system.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

A38. CONJOINED MOTION presented by:

CARRIED

Alice Springs Branch (NT), Western Australia State Council (WA), Katherine Branch (NT), Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA), Pilbara Branch (WA), Northern Territory State Council (NT), Kimberley Air Branch (WA) and Flinders Ranges Branch (SA).

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

Explanation (Alice Springs Branch):

An introduction of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA), as financial recognition of the essential work a supervisor/tutor who is often the mother, performs in Distance Education classrooms would help alleviate the pressure placed on remote families whose only option is to home-school their children via Distance Education. In many cases the mother is unable to be a member of the workforce on the property, community or out station where they live due to the need for them to stay at home and teach their children. This in turn strips the family of a second income and places further financial pressure on those families who educate their children via distance education. If in the event the family employs a Home Tutor to deliver the distance education lessons to the children, they are effectively paying award wages for a child to receive a public education. This can amount a family paying a Home Tutor between \$25,000 to \$35,000 depending on salary / wage agreements. On top of the wage a Home Tutor is paid, in many cases, home tutors are living with the family and have all food, board and other sundry expenses such as internet provided by the family.

Explanation (Western Australia State Council):

WA State Council would like to thank Federal Council for its continued efforts in lobbying the Federal Government in establishing a tutor allowance and for highlighting the hard work that Home Tutors throughout Australia undertake daily to provide a suitable education for their students.

It is important that ICPA (Aust) continues to highlight the importance of the introduction of this allowance, especially with the increased budget pressures the five WA Schools of the Air continue to fall under, it is now even more important that home tutors receive this allowance due to increased responsibilities placed on the home tutor due to less support received from their schools.

Explanation (Katherine Branch):

Katherine Branch thanks ICPA (Aust) for its continuing pursuit of this motion and considers the Distance Education Resource Video to be a great resource illustrating the commitment of home tutors to education and the challenges faced by families on distance education. For many young people living in remote regions, their only access to education is to study by distance education. It is clear that distance education provision is provided on the assumption that all children have ready access to a person able to deliver the program in the geographically isolated classroom.

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

Explanation (Goldfields Eyre Branch):

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

Explanation (Pilbara Branch):

The implementation of the education of rural and remote students resides with the families living in these areas, mainly the mother. During this time the mother's ability to multitask snowballs, still remaining an important business partner, farm help and importantly a mother but also undertaking a very important role of delivering the education to the children. The establishment of a home tutor allowance would enable some families to employ or subsidise a paid educator within the home for the purpose of assisting mothers educate their children within the demands of multi-age classrooms, employment outside the home and running their own business. While an incentive exists to claim mileage to attend the nearest school, or to live in the closest town and gain financial assistance for a second home, there remains no financial assistance to stay at the primary family home, as a family unit, for the purpose of children's education. Some families do take on the financial burden and employ someone to assist with the education but not all families are in the financial position to do this.

A home tutor allowance would enable women to continue or gain employment outside the home, continue with study or assist some of the cost associated with distance education and ensure family inseparability and enhance the education outcomes for their children engaged in a rigorous curriculum.

Explanation (Northern Territory State Council):

A Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA), as financial recognition of the essential work a supervisor/tutor performs in Distance Education classrooms, would help alleviate the pressure placed on remote families whose only option is to home-school their children via Distance Education.

In many cases the mother is the home tutor and due to the need for them to stay at home and teach their children, is unable to join the workforce on the property, community or outstation where they live. This in turns strips the family of a second income or necessitates the employment of other staff and places further financial pressure on those families who educate their children via distance education.

If the family employs a Home Tutor to deliver the distance education lessons to the children, they are effectively paying award wages for a child to receive a public education: between \$25,000 and \$35,000 plus food, board and other sundry expenses (such as rent, travel, telephone & internet) because on top of wages, a Home Tutor is in most cases, living with the family.

Explanation (Kimberley Air Branch):

It is time that the government acknowledges the service provided by Home Tutors in the delivering of education to the students in rural and remote Australia who have no choice but to

be educated via the distance education mode of delivery. Home Tutors provide what the government simply cannot and as such should be recognised and remunerated for it. The acknowledgement and support of this important role links directly with government interests in regional development across the country, particularly Northern Australia, and will deliver both social and economic benefits to these regions. The support of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance will encourage young families to live remotely and embrace all the challenges that come with it for the long-term, including the provision of education in a remote setting. This encouragement of people to lay down roots in regional areas rather than the current situation that relies on transient workers, will contribute to flourishing regions. If we want regions to thrive, we need educational support, particularly in remote situations where this relies on distance education models.

Explanation (Flinders Ranges Branch):

Flinders Ranges Branch thank Federal Council for its continuing efforts in lobbying the Federal Government for an allowance to recognise the role of the home tutor and remunerate isolated families for costs associated with the supervision of their children's schooling.

Much of rural Australia has been suffering hardship in recent times and the mental health of isolated families is at the forefront of our minds when asking for the establishment of a DETA. Some families who would normally employ a Home Tutor are unable to afford employees in times of hardship, which forces the mother to take on the Home Tutor role. This is a burden for most, but for some it causes significant mental health concerns. Having an established DETA would give families more choice about managing their children's education.

A39. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education and other relevant ministers to ensure Schools of the Air and Schools of Distance Education remain in their respective regions, regardless of enrolment numbers."

Explanation:

In 2017, the Western Australian Government announced a decision to close regional Schools of the Air and to instead provide a single service from a central Perth (metropolitan) facility. This decision was later retracted, and WA Schools of the Air will remain in their regions, however it highlighted a lack of broader understanding and appreciation for why Schools of the Air are so important to rural and remote communities, causing isolated families to ask 'could this happen to us.' Members will take comfort knowing ICPA are advocating for the benefits of Schools of the Air in the course of our business.

A40. Queensland State Council (Qld)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates for the Federal Government to recognise the unique needs of geographically isolated students by categorising them separately under the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance using existing geographic isolation eligibility criteria."

Explanation:

Let us be reminded of the first major achievement of ICPA as an organisation:

'After intense lobbying by the newly formed ICPA, the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme was introduced by the Commonwealth Government in January 1973. Its purpose was to provide

financial assistance for schooling children who, because of the geographic isolation of their homes, did not have reasonable daily access to government schools offering courses at appropriate levels.'

Guidelines for the Assistance for Isolated Children allowance outline the allowance *'is available for families of primary, secondary and certain tertiary students who cannot attend an appropriate state school on a daily basis because of geographical isolation.'*

In recent years, guidelines for the AIC have been expanded beyond geographical isolation and now include students with a disability or students with special health needs. Whilst ICPA Qld would never begrudge the freedom of choice for families to choose the most appropriate method of schooling for their children, there is concern that the original intent of the AIC, is being compromised.

ICPA Qld believes geographically isolated (GI) students should be categorised separately under the AIC to ensure that adequate and appropriate assistance continues to be provided to students who do not have daily access to face to face appropriate schooling due to distance as per the original intent of the scheme. The needs of GI students, in regard to remoteness, lack of services and related expenses, differ considerably to other categories, which are now included in the scheme.

ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate on behalf of geographically isolated students, however it is becoming increasingly difficult to seek much needed financial increases for these families when the number of recipients does not truly reflect and identify GI students. Let us get back to basics.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Early Learning

A41. CONJOINED MOTION presented by:

CARRIED

Western Australia State Council (WA), Katherine Branch (NT), South Australia State Council (SA) and Goldfields Eyre Branch WA).

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government for all pre-compulsory school students enrolled in a registered distance education program to receive the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance."

Explanation (Western Australia State Council):

Currently, students studying via distance education enrolled in a pre-compulsory program are ineligible to receive the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education component. Most early learning programs require significantly more learning materials than that of older students studying at primary levels, with families having to provide learning resources for these students. If families received this allowance, it would alleviate the cost of suitable learning resources. The majority of children who are enrolled in a pre-compulsory program are found to have better educational outcomes in later years, by forming these important foundations early on.

Explanation (Katherine Branch):

The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program. From the website <https://www.education.gov.au/universal-access-early-childhood-education>, "The Australian Government is providing funding certainty for

preschool, having committed \$453.1 million in the 2019-20 Budget to extend the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education until the end of 2020. This funding ensures that every child will continue to have access to a quality preschool program for 600 hours (15 hours a week) in the year before school. Universal Access [has] a focus on participation by Indigenous children, vulnerable and disadvantaged children in a range of settings in order to meet the needs of working families, and will be accessible to all Australian children, regardless of their location.” If that was actually what was happening in rural and remote areas, this motion would be unnecessary!

Setting up the classroom for distance education delivery for Preschoolers 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 Preschool Program in place for over 20 years and currently (Sem 1 2019) has 12 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.

Explanation (South Australia State Council):

The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program and that children who attend a quality preschool program are more likely to do well at school. With increasing discussion among government of funding the expansion of preschool to 3-year olds, extending the AIC to preschool students in the year prior to formal schooling, would ensure the system is more accessible, affordable and fair for families supervising their own children via distance education, or employing a staff member to do so. For preschooling families that have to cover the cost of setting up learning environments for all aspects of their child’s early development, it would alleviate this cost and lead to better education outcomes in later years, as well as greater equity with their peers.

Explanation (Goldfields Eyre Branch):

Under the current guidelines, part-time distance education students are ineligible for the Distance Education (DE) component of the AIC allowance, which means families enrolled in the 4-year-old program must bear the costs of maintaining and setting up the classroom in that first year of schooling. Our research has shown that this is a costly impost on families.

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

Child Care

A42. Capricornia Branch of the Air (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the appropriate minister that the current transitional provisions using remoteness criteria for In Home Care (IHC) families, be modified to meet the needs of Geographically Isolated families where no other child care is available.”

Explanation:

Currently, IHC recipients need to meet the 'Remoteness ARIA index' criteria in order to qualify for the rural and remote transitional provisions available until January 2020. This is quite different to the Assistance for Isolated Children Geographically Isolated criteria.

For example:

A family lives more than 80kms from their nearest child care service in Rockhampton and further than 55kms from the nearest community of Marlborough. They do not qualify under the Remoteness ARIA index, some other families living many kms away from child care would also not qualify. By contrast a family living within the town of Marlborough with access to amenities and the local school there, would qualify according to the ARIA index. By using this ARIA index, Geographically Isolated (GI) families (designated as GI under the criteria for Allowance for Isolated Children, AIC) requiring child care in any form cannot access it. IHC is not currently meeting the requirement needs for these families.

S4. Clermont Branch (Qld)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education for an extension to the transitional provisions for In Home Care Educators in rural and remote areas to address the lack of qualified Early Childhood Educators available in those areas in line with the recent extensions approved for Early Childhood Teachers."

Explanation:

The recent announcement that some of the transitional provisions would be extended for rural and remote child care teachers is an acknowledgement of the difficulties with finding suitably qualified staff in these areas and this should be extended to the IHC Educator requirements.

Finding suitable Educators to employ for remote families is becoming increasingly difficult. The unique environment in which both employee and employer live and work, is not always an easy one to adjust to for someone relocating to the outback. From 2 July 2018, rural and remote families have been given two transitional concessions to help them access IHC educators until Jan 2020; however, after that educators need to be working towards or have a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). With the new guidelines for qualifications in place, it is and will become even more difficult for those in remote areas to find suitable educators for their families.

S5. Clermont Branch (Qld)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education to consider a grace period for In Home Care Educators working in remote areas before they are required to undertake the qualification requirements currently to be implemented in January 2020."

Explanation:

Finding suitable educators to employ for rural and remote families is becoming increasingly difficult all the time. The unique environment in which both the employee and employer live and work, is not always an easy one to adjust to for someone relocating to the outback. Quite often, taking on a job as an In Home Educator is not the 'Sea Change' that some girls are looking for even though they may initially think it is. In many instances there are issues with educators only realising their unsuitability to this environment after they have arrived and wasted quite a lot of time enrolling in the relevant courses. These 'false' starts are stressful for the children involved

and the entire family; they also have ramifications for the educator. If there was a grace period, in which the educator could work for the family before having to undertake any study requirements to ensure they are suited to the position, this would avoid some of these false starts.

A43. Capricornia Branch of the Air (Qld)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the appropriate minister that the qualification requirements for in Home Care (IHC) educators be expanded so that educators caring for school-aged children may have a minimum of school-aged child care qualifications according to each state, and not ECEC Cert III minimum unless caring specifically for under school-aged children."

Explanation:

IHC provision is for all children aged 0–13 years, and yet the eligibility criteria for educators is targeted only at 0-5 year olds. Where the provision of care is for school-aged children an appropriate equivalent qualification should be eligible. It is almost impossible to find Educators for remote families for many compounding reasons (to name a few: remote location and loneliness, criteria for qualifications, transport limitations, communication/IT limitations, suitability to environment). This inappropriate qualification criteria makes it nearly impossible to find the 'right' person to care for older children.

A44. Belyando/Mt Coolon Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education for the In Home Care Scheme to include the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)'s list of "Approved qualifications for educators working with over preschool age children" as acceptable qualifications (or working towards) for educators employed for "outside school hours care" services."

Explanation:

Currently the In Home Care National Guidelines say, a Certificate III, a diploma or a degree in Early Childhood Education or equivalent qualifications that have a major focus on Early Childhood Education are acceptable qualifications. The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), maintains a current list of qualifications approved under the NQF on its website, with these qualifications being deemed acceptable qualifications for IHC educators.

Although due to the unique situation of child care requirements and lack of access for rural and remote families IHC educators are not simply employed for Early Childhood Care Services. Many families have school aged children and require IHC educators for "Outside School Hours Care" service. These educators may have qualifications or be working towards qualifications of particular interest to them in the area of Education and Care (e.g. Teacher Aide, Speech, Learning Support, etc) within "over preschool aged children", however they do not comply with the IHC requirements of "Early Childhood Education" and therefore are not suitable candidates for employment.

ACECQA also maintains a list of "Approved qualifications for educators working with over preschool age children" (e.g. outside school hours care). We would see it beneficial for both families and educators if the IHC national guidelines included this list as acceptable qualifications for IHC educators being employed as "Outside School Hours Care" educators. These families would have broader employee candidates and educators are able to study their area of interest not forced "Early Childhood Care".

A45. New South Wales State Council (NSW)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Minister for Education change the age criteria of In Home Care from 0–12 years in primary school, to 0–15 into secondary school."

Explanation:

As a result of the continuing drought and thereafter years of recovery families have had to make the decision to keep their children home to complete the beginning of their high school years via Distance Education instead of going off to Boarding school, as the economic conditions rapidly deteriorate for many of our rural and remote families.

Due to both parents being required out in the paddock at all sorts of times or working off farm to earn extra income, the continuance of In Home Care to enable the children to have the supervision and support of an Educator in an otherwise isolated location is vital.

Children aged between 12 and 15 still require some supervision, especially if at home alone in a remote location. The extension of In Home Care to this age group would enable parents to continue working out on the farm or off farm without neglecting their child's wellbeing.

A46. Belyando/Mt Coolon Branch (Qld)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister of Education for the In Home Care Scheme to allow educators who are actively studying Early Childhood Education qualifications to complete a heavily weighted percentage of their compulsory practical placement hours in their current position as an Early Child Care Educator at their place of employment."

Explanation:

The "In Home Care National Guidelines" state that IHC educators are required to have a minimum Certificate III level qualification or be working towards a Certificate III qualification. For those educators actively studying an Early Childhood Education qualification they are required to complete several practical placement hours in an Early Childhood Service as part of the qualification process.

Given that, Rural and Remote families have no alternative Child Care services available, what does the family do for child care while their current educator is away attending practical placement hours? Especially when the practicum period is being extended from 120 hours to 160 hours, of which only 40 hours can be completed in the IHC workplace. With the increase to 160 hours, this 40 hour IHC workplace allowance still does not minimise the disturbance and stress to the family's child care requirements and/or the need for substitute/relief Child Care educators during that time the educator is away, as they still have to complete the original 120 hours (3 or more weeks) outside of their place of employment.

A47. Dirranbandi Branch (Qld)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Minister for Education to acknowledge and respond to the significant barriers to provision of, and access to early childhood services, specifically long day care and Kindergarten, in rural and remote areas."

Explanation:

These barriers have been identified by families, early childhood providers, and professionals: the difficulty of obtaining qualified staff, viability of services where numbers are low, cost of long day care to disadvantaged families and low attendance because of lack of transport.

ICPA would seek to address these barriers through:

- Waiving the high level of qualifications required for long day care service managers where the numbers are small
- Providing financial incentives and support for people living in rural and remote areas to obtain qualifications, including support for accommodation and travel for practical work and residential training
- Accepting a flexible approach to achieving the required qualifications including a longer timeline for this
- Providing a more flexible approach to the application of ratios, for example through allowing mixed age groups in a variety of ways, to enhance viability for providers
- Subsidisation for providers who are willing to set up services in rural and remote areas to meet the needs of isolated families through a Remote Area Allowance
- Subsidisation of fees for disadvantaged families in rural and remote areas, through increased Child Care Subsidy payments, as these are the children who are most likely to gain long term benefits from such a program and these are the communities where economic and social outcomes will be achieved.
- Develop ways that providers in rural and remote areas can encourage and support attendance at long day care centres through the provision of local transport.

A48. Hillston Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Australian Government to reassess the funding to Long Day Care Centres in rural and remote communities that act as the only access to preschool programs for 3-5-year-olds.”

Explanation:

In rural towns where a preschool is not viable, we have Long Day Care Centres. These centres must follow the same Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) as the preschools and are struggling to both stay afloat and find qualified staff.

As with all small communities, child care is a major factor with young families who are looking to live or relocate into rural areas. Birth rates fluctuate and, during dry times, as we are currently experiencing, utilisation rates decrease. During these times when centres are running at a loss, they need to turn to the community to support them through fundraising but the amount of fundraising possible is limited in small communities.

In Hillston, we struggle to find quality trained staff, especially early childhood teachers, as most qualified teachers prefer to go to schools as they are employed for school hours at a higher rate. Long Day Care Centres already struggling to stay afloat are unable to pay the same rate or are only able to employ teachers for the minimum number of hours.

In rural and remote areas there are often great distances for the children to travel to access the Long Day Care Centres. As preschool children are not allowed to travel on School buses, it means that some children are not able to access preschool programs or are only able to attend the centre one day a week due to the extra travelling costs involved. This in turn affects the utilisation rates of the centres. Reassessment of funding to Long Day Care Centres in rural and remote communities is necessary to allow all children in these areas to access this service. If these centres are lost to the communities the children will suffer!!

Mobile Early Childhood Services

A49. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for funding both in the expansion of new Mobile Early Childhood Services and the continuation of these services for all geographically isolated children.”

Explanation:

Early childhood development is increasingly recognised as a key predictor of future outcomes for children. Research has shown that investing time, effort and resources in the early years of a child’s life has significant impacts on their behaviour, learning, health and wellbeing, as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

Mobile playgroups are equipped to service isolated children, however isolated children in some states have no access to early childhood services at all. For example, in the NT there are two mobile playgroups. Both service the top end, neither reach the lower half of the Territory. In the lower half of the Territory, remote Aboriginal communities receive playgroup services but isolated children outside of these communities have no access to a mobile playgroup service at all.

In the Northern Territory, in our discussions with the Territory Government, we have not been able to identify state government funding for such services. We understand the existing services are funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services or Prime Minister and Cabinet. We appeal to all governments to fund early childhood programs that reach all isolated children.

A50. Katherine Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate for sufficient funding for the continuation of rural and remote mobile Early Childhood Services under new funding models.”

Explanation:

The Katherine Isolated Children’s Services (KICS) has been operating since 1988 and is a highly regarded provider of supported playgroups for children who are socially or geographically isolated, employing a mix of Early Childhood Teachers and experienced staff and covering 760,000 sq km of the Katherine Region, NT. In 2018, KICS transitioned to being funded through the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) Office through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funding stream. Funding has become uncertain and inadequate with the contracts due for renewal in December 2019.

Organisations such as KICS must be able to continue to operate and to be funded at levels commensurate with their needs.

Early Childhood Education and Care – Other

A51. Queensland State Council (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Minister for Education to create a standalone Rural and Remote Early Childhood Branch that encompasses all areas of child care and child care funding.”

Explanation:

Presently, Playgroups, Mobile Playgroups, In Home Care, Preschool and Day Care are all administered and funded by different Departments within the Government creating confusion and time delays. Having a standalone Rural and Remote Early Childhood Branch would create greater access to information, funding and care for providers and families.

A52. Western Australia State Council (WA)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government, and supports each State ICPA organisation with their lobbying, to implement a nationally recognised and administered Working with Children Check (WWCC).”

Explanation:

WA State Council fully support the implementation of a nationally administered police clearance, specifically for children and thank Federal Council for their continued lobbying on this issue. Currently a person who wishes to obtain a WWCC for work purposes, are checked nationally, then it is administered at a state level. Employees that move interstate and who already hold a WWCC from the previous state they were working in, are expected to reapply for a WWCC in the new state they are applying for employment in. This process causes lengthy delays in employing staff of up to eight weeks, causing disruptions to students and families.

A53. Alice Springs Branch (NT)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, and the Minister of Education to continue working with other states and territories to speed up implementation of a nationally consistent approach to Working with Children Checks (WWCC) including mutual recognition across the board.”

Explanation:

It is reported that a backlog of Ochre Card applications at the beginning of 2019 is causing problems throughout the NT schools, including the Alice Springs School of the Air (ASSOA). This backlog has been confirmed with SAFE NT, who says that one of the factors for the backlog is implementation of the National scheme, which is causing teething issues and more work in the short term. However, they say, once it is implemented properly it will save time and streamline the process. Anything to streamline and reduce the complexity of WWCCs will be helpful. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse’s “Working with Children Checks Report” 2015 (WWCC Report) states: “A national approach to WWCCs would help to facilitate compliance with WWCC laws by streamlining and reducing the complexity of the current schemes” (p.50).

A nationally consistent approach will be better at protecting children. “We are of the view that the level of protection children receive from WWCCs will be equalised and enhanced across all jurisdictions if these benefits are realised and a nationally consistent approach is achieved” (WWCC Report, p.48) Staff of ASSOA also work across state and territory borders, so mutual recognition of WWCCs across borders would be helpful. Additionally, across the territory, when teachers, governesses and other staff who work with children are recruited from interstate it would be helpful for them not to have to apply for an Ochre Card if they have a nationally-recognised WWCC from another state or territory. This would allow them to commence work in the Territory without unnecessary delay upon arrival. This has been confirmed by SAFE NT, who state that once the national scheme is completed, interstate recruits would not have to apply for an Ochre Card immediately, but only once their current card expired.

The WWCC Report also states:

“We are of the view that implementing a combination of the models outlined above is needed to achieve an adequate national approach to WWCCs. This will harmonise the WWCC schemes, better integrate the eight schemes, improve information sharing, improve portability and enhance continuous monitoring. To achieve this national model, we have recommended that state and territory governments amend their schemes to include consistent standards across key

aspects of the schemes and allow WWCCs to be portable. Further, we have recommended that the Commonwealth Government facilitate and manage a national model for WWCCs by establishing and operating a centralised database; streamlining the recording of WWCC decisions, ensuring they are visible and accessible to all jurisdictions; and improving the continuous monitoring of WWCC cardholders' national criminal history." (p.55)

Reference:

https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_working_with_children_checks_report.pdf

RURAL SCHOOLS/SCHOOL TRAVEL

A54. Moree Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) supports the states in their lobby to implement the following recommendation made by Professor Dr John Halsey in the 'Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (IRRRRE) – Final Report' to "reduce the impact of administration on workloads to create more time for teaching and leading learning" (Halsey, 2018, p.37)" with urgency."

Explanation:

In our small schools we have witnessed our teaching principals being bombarded with training and administration duties, taking them away from the classroom and the important task of teaching our students. Professor Doctor John Halsey noted that "in a small school in particular where principals have a large teaching load, there is little time left for focussing on leading learning. Scaling back of the administration workload needs to happen to create more time for leading learning to be done and done well." (Halsey, 2018, p.35)

Small school students require stability and continuity of learning just like their larger school counterparts and though we do not doubt our small school teaching principals are doing their utmost to ensure this occurs the amount of time out of the classroom is noticeable and disruptive. Time out of the classroom includes but is not limited to professional development, training and also the challenges that only a small school principal experiences such as co-ordinating trades people conducting maintenance, technical difficulties with information and communication technologies, break downs in equipment such as water pumps and important phone calls that require immediate attention. All of these responsibilities that are usually shared by many in a large school are only shared by two in a one teacher school. Planning, teaching and assessing students is a fulltime job! How does one person realistically do all of that as well as the added workload of a teaching principal? Teaching should be the main focus and administration tasks should be minimal and easy to achieve.

References

Halsey, Prof. Dr. J, *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education – Final Report*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2018.

A87. St George Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

"That ICPA Federal Council lobbies the Australian Government to continue funding the Chaplaincy Program in schools."

Explanation:

Students face a myriad of challenges in their day-to-day life that can impact on their education. School chaplains play an important role in the school communities assisting students who are struggling with issues of self-doubt, bullying, peer pressure, anxiety, family breakdown, impacts of family drug and alcohol use and more.

Due to the tyranny of distance, Guidance Officers are not as easily accessible for rural and remote schools and this is where the Chaplaincy Program is incredibly valuable.

School Chaplains assist students through programs such as:

- Rock and Water (focusing on managing emotions and reactions)
- Love Bites (focusing on building healthy relationships)
- Bella Girls program (teaching girls about their value, beauty and purpose)
- Strength (teaching boys about resilience and their purpose)
- Lunchtime activities
- Individual support and mentoring.

A55. Alice Springs Branch (NT)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to support efforts for an affordable ‘Student Concessional Fare’ for students attending educational institutions within Australia who need to travel between their home residence and the educational establishment they attend.”

Explanation:

This includes, bus, train and aircraft providers. Members whose children board away from home are often in the predicament of paying well above the standard ticket price when selecting airfares. While it is easy for airfare providers to tell families to book children’s flights twelve months ahead because they know the school term dates, this is often not a reality and can end up costing families more in the long run when they need to change flight details / dates.

The Northern Territory has limited boarding options which necessarily means our isolated students will often attend boarding school interstate. Airfares to and from Northern Territory airports are typically expensive, more so because students travel during school holiday fare periods, when the fares are almost always more expensive again. Student Travel Concessions are a State Government responsibility, but in the case of airfares, travel is across jurisdictions, meaning State Government concessions don't apply. The Northern Territory is not unique in this respect. A National Student Concessional Fare would help all isolated students who travel across jurisdiction for education purposes.

A member’s child who boards in Adelaide recently lost his uncle and the family had to fly him home to Alice Springs a week before the school term ended. They were faced with a \$360 increase to their ticket price, for booking at last minute, of a one-way flight.

For example, using real flight booking information offered by QANTAS on 16th May 2019: booking a one-way flight in advance from Adelaide to Alice Springs you can purchase tickets for \$324 on Friday 2nd August. If at last minute, travel plans change, the family would have to pay the increased price of a ticket. At the time of writing this explanation the same airfare ticket, in 2 days’ time, would cost \$1023 on Friday 17th May. That is an increase of \$699 for a One-way airfare – Adelaide to Alice Springs.

For many families, having to pay these increased airfares is a reality. So, we are asking that when booking tickets for students travelling to and from school, they are exempt from the huge increases to tickets when purchased close to the time of travel. Having access to the airfare prices if you booked in advance for the 12-month calendar, would be a huge financial relief for many rural and remote families who rely on these services each year.

A56. Pilbara Branch (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests QANTAS Airways to continue their Residents Fares Scheme to regional areas as well as including students who rely on air services to travel home when accessing education.”

Explanation:

QANTAS has now introduced a Residents Fares Scheme in Western Australia which allows passengers from certain regional towns to access up to a 30% discount on their return airfares to Perth. At present, these return discounted fares are not available from Perth to these regional town airports so therefore regional children attending schools in Perth are unable to access these cheaper flights home.

Pilbara Branch would like QANTAS to review this scheme so that regional children who are attending school in Perth have access to cheaper flights when they return home for school breaks.

A57. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that QANTAS Airways review the criteria for their Residents Fares scheme to include special conditions for students travelling home for boarders’ weekends and end of term breaks.”

Explanation:

QANTAS introduced a Residents Fares scheme two years ago, that included a 12-month trial period with 4 return trips per year. The scheme has now been extended and entitles passengers who qualify, to 12 return trips per year. There have been instances for ICPA members unable to book using the Residents Fares due to their originating departing point not being from their registered home airport. We have seen some members needing to book their children’s travel home to Broome having to pay up to \$1100.00 return due to the increased demand for fares from tourist travellers.

ICPA (WA) would like to see QANTAS review its criteria and make allowances for students who are travelling home during compulsory Boarders weekends and end of term holidays to be able to depart from ‘place of study airport’ i.e. Perth - return and still qualify for the 30% discount.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS

A58. Kindon Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Health and Federal Treasurer to extend the Medicare rebate to include patients wishing to access speech pathology and paediatrician appointments through telehealth deliveries.”

Explanation:

Currently Medicare rebates for telehealth are available for patients accessing a variety of specialist appointments when they live in rural and remote Australia. These include mental health services, psychologists, occupational therapy and social workers. Unfortunately, speech pathologists and paediatricians are not included on this list and we believe that these are vital services that many rural and remote students access via telehealth and a Medicare rebate should be allocated. Making these appointments more accessible through a telehealth option keeps families in their home town and children in school instead of incurring the costs of travel and accommodation to attend sessions.

Research has proven that speech pathology is just as effective via telehealth as one on one sessions. The government would do well to remember a dollar spent now on early intervention for children with specific education needs could well save thousands of dollars in health care in later years. Firstly, because education is the greatest predictor of health, but also because lesser education will affect employability.

CASE STUDY

We live in a rural area, a 1.5 hour-drive from Toowoomba, 3 hour-drive from Brisbane. Three of our four children have special needs.

Our 5-year-old son requires speech therapy which I would like to access through an online service. Medicare does not cover online speech therapy at the moment. We've applied for an NDIS plan which could fund these therapies. However, this process has taken months and is still not finalized. Furthermore, my understanding is that to be eligible for an NDIS plan, the child must have multiple needs/delays. Therefore, if my son were to just need speech therapy, he would not be able to access NDIS funding for this therapy online. Neither NDIS nor patient travel schemes will cover travel and accommodation for specific education needs either. So, we are caught between a rock and a hard place.

Our 10-year-old daughter is seeing a Developmental Paediatrician, in Brisbane - the closest city that offers this service. We just made an appointment to have a follow up "teleconference appointment" with the paediatrician for next week. The paediatrician's office told me that there would be a \$57 charge for the telehealth appointment that would not be covered by Medicare.

Our 5-month-old daughter, diagnosed with Down syndrome, has an approved NDIS plan and has a need for occupational therapy, speech (for feeding issues) and physiotherapy. Very few therapists are able to come out to our home. Therefore, we are traveling to Toowoomba for the various therapies. The travel costs for the various "NDIS-funded therapies" are not covered by NDIS nor Medicare. These are NDIS-funded therapies and it's our travel costs (not the therapist's) that are not covered by NDIS nor Medicare. We hope to eventually be able to access some of these therapies via Telehealth, however in-person therapy is more suitable at this young age. Again, Medicare rebates for appropriate telehealth consultations would be very helpful for our family.

TERTIARY AND TRAINING

Access Allowance

A59. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Families and Social Services for the introduction of a Tertiary Access Allowance (TAA) to enable rural and remote students to attend

a tertiary institution of their choosing and have the financial ability to successfully complete their studies.”

Explanation:

WA State Council acknowledges and thanks Federal Council for its continued lobbying for the establishment of a Tertiary Access Allowance and their efforts at aligning this with the Relocation Scholarship which is primarily targeted towards dependent students on the basis that they are relocating temporarily away from home, and their parents assist with support while living away from the parental home. Tertiary education should be available and accessed by all students throughout Australia. As well as living away from the family home, the added costs such as relocation, travel, accommodation and living costs incurred on rural and remote students to access their chosen course, severely reduces the equality of opportunity compared to metropolitan students. Having access to this allowance would give a student financial assistance independently of their parents’ income and would help increase rural student numbers that are currently grossly under-represented.

A60. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

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

Explanation:

Currently only recipients of dependent Youth Allowance are eligible for the Relocation Scholarship although some independent Youth Allowance recipients with special circumstances are also eligible. This is inequitable as all students who need to move away from home to access tertiary education incur the same costs. The government cannot simply say that just because a student has worked hard to qualify for independent Youth Allowance, they are deemed to have already moved out of the family home and cannot therefore relocate. It is very simple to find the family home address of an independent Youth Allowance recipient. It has to be recorded on the Youth Allowance application to prove that the address is in an inner regional, outer regional, remote or very remote area and to prove that the student lives more than 90 minutes away by public transport from the tertiary institution of their choice.

A61. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

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

Explanation:

The meaning of relocate is “to move or to establish in a new place”. Regardless of whether a student is eligible to receive certain student allowances, they are still relocating. This scholarship was established to ensure students who had to undergo a process of relocation would not have the unfair financial burden of a move compared to those who are able to live and study from their family home. It would actually appear less just as they are not only unable to access Youth Allowance but are also ineligible for the Relocation Scholarship.

Youth Allowance

A62. Tambo Branch (Qld)**WITHDRAWN**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Families and Social Services that geographically isolated students currently receiving Youth Allowance are able to receive rent assistance during tertiary placements throughout the duration of their course."

Explanation:

Where tertiary students are undertaking a course, for example physiotherapy that has a significant placement component in various locations, which requires regular moving that the minister recognises the need for rent assistance. These placements are full-time unpaid work, therefore no capacity for supplementing their income to cover their costs.

A63. Katherine Branch (NT)**CARRIED**

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

Explanation:

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

Katherine Branch thanks ICPA (Aust) for its advocacy and the Minister for Families and Social Services for raising the parental threshold from \$150,000 to \$160,000 from 1 January 2019 and taking into account other dependent siblings. However, these rural and remote students who qualify for Independent Youth Allowance under the above conditions must surely be considered Independent full stop. Parental income should not enter into consideration at all. Rural incomes are so fickle, even being given three financial years of parental income to choose from cannot always give these students a fair assessment of the ability of this family to support a tertiary or training student. These students clearly demonstrate independence through working for a least a year and leaving home to study. They take a gap year because they need to be financially independent but that can also place them at risk of being one of the statistics: students who take gap years are less likely to continue to further education. Any hurdles to these rural and remote students qualifying for Independent youth allowance, such as Parental income thresholds, threatens their tertiary education.

A64. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) urges the Minister for Families and Social Services to change the criteria for receiving independent Youth Allowance so that those rural and remote students who are not eligible for dependent Youth Allowance, and who have to live away from their family address to access tertiary studies, are eligible for the Youth Allowance as an independent at the higher rate as soon as they commence the tertiary course of their choice."

Explanation:

Students from rural and remote areas have no choice except to move away from home to access Tertiary studies. Once these students move away, they, of necessity, become independent of their parents as home can often be hundreds of kilometres away. Families struggle and find it very difficult to cope with the financial costs of supporting their children while they study and work to

gain independence. The eligibility requirements to gain independent Youth Allowance place significant obstacles in the way of students and their families, particularly the required parental income limit of \$160,000 plus \$10,000 for each eligible sibling. Rural and remote students who live more than 90 minutes by public transport, if such a thing even exists, from the tertiary institution of their choice should be able to access Youth Allowance as an independent at the higher rate from the time they leave secondary school.

A65. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

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

Explanation:

Students who are unable to access Youth Allowance due to the Parental Means Test are having to support themselves until they prove they are independent. The Parental Means Test is not indicative of what income is available to support the family. Commodity prices and sale of stock due to drought can exaggerate figures. Consideration needs to be given to the fact that most income goes back into the running of the farm or into Farm Management Deposits for restocking and/or taxation reasons because of the forced sale of stock. We are not wanting to include students moving out of home because they feel like moving. The students we represent have to move hundreds of kilometres to major regional centres or cities and pay inflated rent and utilities for accommodation near their university.

Having to move so far away from the family home and set up a second home is a fair indication that these students are the very ones that should be eligible for independent Youth Allowance. These students should be focusing on studying their chosen degree. It is great if they find part time employment however finding a job in a new environment and supporting themselves is a major concern. It leads to high dropout rates and increased stress and anxiety on individuals.

A66. Springsure/Rolleston Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) urges the Minister for Families and Social Services to review the Liquid Assets Waiting Period to address the penalisation of students, particularly rural and remote students who have fulfilled the self-supporting criteria for Youth Allowance as an independent, by the liquid assets waiting period.”

Explanation:

Many students whose parents may appear asset rich, are actually money poor, and these students must work to make themselves eligible for government assistance. Currently the Liquid Asset Waiting Period means that if an applicant has more than \$5,500 in liquid assets, payment will be delayed by a week for every \$500 over \$5,500 limit. We feel that this discourages rural and remote students from taking initiative, planning ahead and doing all they can independently to set themselves up for the expenses they will incur during their future years of study, particularly the high cost of relocation which needs to be paid upfront.

A67. New South Wales State Council (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Families and Social Services and the Department to allow students to upload a signed copy of a student’s identification, witnessed by a Justice of the

Peace (JP), rather than having to travel huge kilometres to identify themselves at a crucial point in their application for the Youth Allowance.”

Explanation:

The cost of travelling for these students just to identify themselves is excessive. In many cases it is hundreds of Kilometres of travel, and often at a time when there are lots of public holidays or skeleton staff, for example in the December/January period. In country areas during holiday periods, these centres are not open all the time and generally operate with skeleton staff and reduced office hours. It is therefore difficult to ensure if you drive these kilometres you will get the assistance you need. If students were able to get local JPs to verify their identification document, they will actually be using Services from local people. We are always looking at how we can use our local services to the fullest.

It is important that the Minister recognises that these students cannot move forward with their online application until this identification has been done. Some students start at University in January and this identification process can be prohibitive to their application.

A68. Kindon Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government to ensure well trained staff are employed in the Centrelink Call Centre to answer questions and assist recipients who are enquiring about Youth Allowance.”

Explanation:

We are grateful that there is a dedicated Youth Allowance hotline (132 490) available for students who are seeking financial assistance while undertaking tertiary study.

However, ICPA (Aust) is aware of members who have had difficulty while trying to access and clarify information to do with their rural and remote application. This has caused a great amount of stress and we do know of families who have given up while applying for Youth Allowance due to it being “too hard”.

CASE STUDY

Our eldest daughter was due to apply for Youth Allowance, so I thoroughly studied the information for independent, rural and remote applicant in the January 2019 Pedals. It proved to be invaluable. I was extremely well-informed heading into the application process. Our daughter graduated in November 2017 and worked 4 jobs from December 2017 until current. She quickly earned the required 75% of Wage level A of the national training wage scheme (\$25,704 in 2018) making her eligible as an Independent, rural and remote customer.

We submitted her application on 12th February 2019 online. It was rejected on 7 April 2019. I called Centrelink on 12 April to see why. I was told that it was because she hadn't worked continuously for an 18-month period. I know that this meant she had not been assessed as a rural and remote applicant and told them our home address and that she was applying as a rural student. He then asked me to submit all of her payslips, showing she had earned the required 75% of Wage Level A. We had already done this, uploading the payslips up to the required amount, however I agreed that I would now submit every single payslip she had to date. I uploaded the payslips, gave it 2 days and called Centrelink. I could not reach them on the 132490 (youth allowance) or 136150 (Centrelink) number, both numbers giving a user busy signal. I call the Centrelink complaints number and they were eventually able to transfer me to Youth allowance. I was then told the payslips were not received and I also had to complete a Form A2115,

Parent/Guardians additional details. There was no mention of this form before now. I was also told that our parental income details HAD to be for the 2017/18 financial year. I knew that as a rural and remote student we could use one of three years, either the tax year that ended before the students 14-month self-supporting period (PRE_GAP) (which we chose to use), or the next year (BASE YEAR), or the current tax year (POST_BASE). I read this information to the consultant from the Pedals magazine. She advised me that she was a supervisor and knew that it HAD to be the 2017/18 year only, not 2016/17. By this point I was quite upset and frustrated at being given the incorrect information. She put me on hold to check the legislation. She returned to humbly say that I was correct.

We then went on to complete the required A2115 Parent additional details form. Question 7 was very unclear. I had contacted ICPA (Aust) previously with details of our troubles so I contacted again for help and they were quick to clarify this question for me. I had also contacted our local Community support centre who has direct contact with Centrelink and I was given the wrong information from them again. I then went on to complete the A2115 form and uploaded it to Centrelink along with payslips. I gave it a few days and tried to call Centrelink to ensure it had been received and to ask that it be re-assessed. Once again, I could not get through via the 132490 (youth allowance) or 136150 (Centrelink) number. I once again called the complaints number to be put through. The consultant looked at the application and I was once again told that there were gaps in our daughter's payslips, and she had not worked consecutively for 18 months. This once again told me that she was still not being assessed as rural and remote. I was also once again told that I had provided parental income for the incorrect year, that it had to be the current year. I asked to be put through to someone who specialised in rural and remote applicants. I was told she was a supervisor. I asked her to check the legislation. She did and confirmed that I was correct in that I could use the pre-gap year for parental income. I left the call with her saying she would get someone from Rural and remote to contact me. Two hours later I received a call to say that her application had been approved. This whole process was extremely frustrating to say the least and I could easily see how applicants less informed would simply give up due to the difficulty as it is truly upsetting. I was fortunate enough to have support from ICPA and to be well informed, with absolute certainty that our daughter was eligible, otherwise I do not think I would be been able to successfully complete the application.

A69. Blackall Branch (Qld)

D/C by A68

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Families and Social Services to train Centrelink staff in Youth Allowance for students and apprentices."

Explanation:

Youth Allowance helpline appears to be understaffed and unable to deal with the volume of calls. Wait times to speak to YA helpline for students and families can exceed 1 hour. This adds extra stress and worry to students when their time is precious given the climatic circumstances of many areas in Australia. Allowing Centrelink officers to have training in Youth Allowance for students and apprentices would be of major benefit to these students and families and would free up the YA helpline for those students that aren't able to access a Centrelink Office.

S6. Yaraka-Isisford Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Department of Human Services to put in place a call back service for Centrelink related Call Lines such as Assistance for Isolated Children and Youth Allowance, so that callers can hold their place in the queue and receive a call back when they reach the top of the queue."

Explanation:

Everyone has or knows of a case where rural Centrelink customers have endured lengthy wait times on hold when telephoning Centrelink. Sometimes customers can be left waiting on the phone for more than an hour at a time. Centrelink does not currently offer the option to hold your place in the queue by giving your contact details so that the next available operator can call you back once you reach the top of the queue. Wait/hold times could be reduced/avoided if the option to leave contact details and receive a call back when an operator was available. Many large businesses now offer this function successfully as it reduces the amount of time (and frustration) people spend on the phone and still gives customers piece of mind that their enquiry will be responded to.

A70. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) urges the Federal Government to find a solution to unreasonable waiting times to make contact with Centrelink staff when making or needing information regarding allowance applications.”

Explanation:

Students and families have found themselves waiting ridiculously long periods on the telephone to speak to staff at Centrelink to enquire, chase up and submit information. The majority of these families live hundreds of kilometres from Centrelink Offices. One parent from our branch waited 50 minutes, 40 minutes and then 71 minutes before she was finally able to speak to a staff member. The parent advised that although she had tried to submit information online, the site did not accept the exception for rural and remote students. The local Centrelink office does not have expertise/not permitted to answer Youth Allowance questions, hence the need for confirmation by telephone. We also have several instances where staff have not been able to liaise with applicants as they are friends of the family in the local community.

Tertiary – Other

A71. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) urges the Minister for Education to remove the eligibility criteria ‘the Scholarship Applicant must not have already commenced their Eligible Course of Study’ for Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships.”

Explanation:

NT State Council would like to thank the Minister for Education for the November 2018 announcement of an expansion of the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship Program to provide more places and to include health and agriculture.

One grateful scholarship recipient in an ICPA family said, “How would I have even known about these scholarships if it weren’t for ICPA?” That same student is very worried about some of her rural post-grad medical program cohort dropping out solely because of financial pressures. They did not know about the scholarships when they began their course; a demanding course incompatible with part-time work.

The scholarship program was introduced to ‘improve access to educational opportunities for regional students. Initially, support for access to tertiary education for rural and remote students is very important, but equally important is support for retention of students. Reasons for students not applying for the scholarship prior to the commencement of their course could range from not

knowing about it to changing circumstances related to drought or other natural disasters and rural economies, family situations, accommodation options or....

Removal of the eligibility criteria 'the Scholarship Applicant must not have already commenced their Eligible Course of Study' would support retention of financially struggling regional tertiary and training students.

A72. North West Branch (SA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to ensure that recipients of the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship are paid their scholarship money in a timely manner."

Explanation:

We welcome the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships Program which improves access to and assists recipients to complete their tertiary education courses by providing financial assistance in the form of a scholarship up to the value of \$18,000 over 4 years. Successful applicants are required to enter into a legally binding Scholarship Agreement with QTAC and once completed the QTAC website states that "QTAC will make the first study assistance payment no less than four weeks after the Scholarship Recipient commences study."

Members are requesting a definitive timeframe of payment. Payments in both 2018 and 2019 seem to be made in a very ad hoc manner, with recipients unsure of when their payment will be received. There needs to be a clear guideline of when the payments will be made, as this is a scholarship for young adults who are for the first time financially independent.

Due to the lack of a clear payment date, a current student in receipt of this scholarship is now experiencing financial hardship and has no idea when the first payment will be made. This causes strain on the student emotionally and financially and also the family unit, which is especially difficult when they are trying to live independently.

A73. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)

LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to reintroduce incentives for the up-front payment of university fees and for the early repayment of debt in the Higher Education Contribution Scheme – Higher Education Loan Program (HECS-HELP)."

Explanation:

Up until 1 January 2017, the Federal Government offered incentives for students to pay their university fees up front and for graduates to repay their HECS-HELP debt early. Currently, there are no incentives for either of the above, so students and graduates will not make payments or repayments any faster than they are required to. If the government is serious about recovering HELP debt from graduates, then providing incentives to encourage early repayment must be considered.

A74. Moree Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to ensure that universities providing teacher training include a standalone mandatory unit on Autistic Spectrum Disorders in their curriculum."

Explanation:

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

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

Educating teachers at the undergraduate level would be more cost effective than having to provide post graduate training during the first few years of teaching. This could also reduce the amount of time teachers need to take out of the classroom for Professional Development. In some rural areas, teachers are simply unable to take time out for such training because there is a lack of relief teachers available to allow for this, or they are required to travel considerable distance to attend training workshops which is often not an option for them.

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

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

Training**A75. Moree Branch (NSW)****CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) supports the states in their efforts to stop the impending closure of Agricultural Colleges such as the Queensland Agricultural Training College (QATC) campuses in Longreach and Emerald."

Explanation:

"Ensuring ready access to quality education and skills development provides important career paths for young people at a time when efforts are being made to encourage them to remain in regional areas, decreasing population drift and ensuring sustainability." (Media release, ICPA QLD).

"Farmers Feed the World," and with the ever-increasing population and ever shrinking viable farming land area it is vital that young farmers are trained with the right skills to manage the land and sustain the environment at a time when land and water management are crucial to our future food security.

Many young people who are passionate about agriculture struggle to focus and learn in a conventional school environment and schools often do not have the facilities or the opportunities to offer these students the ability to follow their passion, learn and become productive, contributing members of society; which makes Agricultural Colleges in regional areas a vital part of these students' educational opportunities.

Once these colleges are closed the valuable land associated with them will be sold and the ability to purchase the same area of land in a populated area, close to facilities, required for farming skills to be taught in the future, could be unattainable for the government, we cannot afford to lose this valuable land and training facilities because they cannot be replaced.

MISCELLANEOUS

A76. Queensland State Council (Qld)

CARRIED

"That the proposed location of Federal Conference be the joint decision of the hosting State with the ICPA (Aust) Federal Council."

Explanation:

There needs to be flexibility and understanding to allow each state to decide on the best location to host a Federal Conference and not be restricted to only being in a major city. More freedom in the decision allows a more 'personalised feel' to Conferences and ensures the "I" in ICPA is at the forefront of attendees' minds whether they are a Member, Politician, School Representative or Departmental Guest and why don't we think of the 'A' as "adventure."

An example of this would be to host the 50th Annual Conference at a location that is at the heart and soul of ICPA at the beginning, now and into the future. We need to keep in our minds that Australia is a big country. Adelaide is a capital city; however, some members have still had to have 3 flights to get here. We need to be able to have the flexibility to of being able to go to the home of ICPA.

The hosting of a conference in a major centre does not always ensure the best cost effectiveness with venues, catering and accommodation nor does it guarantee attendance from invited guests.

AGM

A77. ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) introduces a school corporate membership category to facilitate the membership needs of some school organisations."

Explanation:

ICPA (Aust) welcomes school interest in the issues and concerns of our members and supports schools becoming members of ICPA. Since the establishment of Federal Corporate Membership, a few schools have requested to join ICPA at the corporate level. Corporate Membership was originally introduced to offer a means of membership to national organisations/bodies who wish to receive publications from all states in order to keep abreast of issues for our members across the various states. Some schools have students from several states and also wish to receive material from all states. ICPA (Aust) offers School Corporate Membership (SCM) as a means of

meeting the needs of those schools who wish to receive publications from all states while retaining membership of their State Lone member Branch.

Schools are not obligated to be a School Corporate Member (SCM). Schools can join/continue as members of ICPA as ordinary members or members of a Lone Branch. In states that have a "Friends of ICPA" category, a school can continue to be a Friend of ICPA if they prefer. The School Corporate Membership category would allow those schools wishing to have a corporate membership and receive all state and federal publications the type of membership they are requesting while allowing other schools to continue their membership unaffected.

Schools are valuable members of a number of the ICPA Lone and other Branches and the offering of School Corporate Membership will not lessen this important involvement. As it is proposed, School Corporate Members would be noted as School Corporate Members, receive all state and federal publications, and in addition, they will also remain/become members of the Lone Branch (or another Branch if they request) in the state in which they are located. States would gain/keep a member in their Lone (or other Branch) with each School Corporate Member. The three tier membership will be distributed to Federal Council and the relevant State Council/Branch for any school that becomes a School Corporate Member, along with respective publication fees paid to each state to cover the cost of publications for School Corporate Members.

Schools can choose annually which category of membership they wish to renew for the upcoming membership year.

The School Corporate Membership fee, reviewed annually, will be set at an amount that covers the Lone Branch membership fee to be paid to each state and the cost of the state and federal publications being received.

A78. ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

"That the amended sections of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution updated May 2019, as circulated, be adopted."

Explanation:

Amendments to the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution include several small edits and the introduction of School Corporate Membership.

A79. ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

"That the amendments to the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (Inc) By-Laws updated 22 May 2019, as circulated, be ratified along with an additional amendment made to By-Law 8 School Corporate Membership which reads:

'Rule 6. A school may be an ordinary member of a Branch or Lone Branch and is not required to be a School Corporate Member.'"

Explanation:

Federal Council has adopted a number of changes and added several new By-Laws in order to assist with administrative and purposeful procedures essential to the effective running of the organisation.

Federal Council now presents the following changes for ratification.

The following By-Laws have been updated:

- By-Law 4 (Use of the ICPA logo)
- By-Law 5 (Branch Dissolutions, Recess and Closures)
- By-Law 6 (Payment of Subscriptions for Branch and State Life Members) and
- By-Law 7 (Federal Corporate Membership)

New By-Laws include:

- By-Law 8 (School Corporate Membership) with noted addition:
6. A school may be an ordinary member of a Branch or Lone Branch and is not required to be a School Corporate Member.

A80. ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

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

A81. ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

“That Federal Corporate Membership be set at \$275.00 per organisation.”

A82. ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

“That School Corporate Membership be set at \$275.00 per school member.”

A83. ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

“That D G Murdock, as consultant for RJC Evans and Co. Adelaide, be appointed as auditor for the 2019 – 2020 financial year.”

A84. ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

“That the 2018-2019 Audited Report and the 2018-2019 Regional Student Engagement Strategy 2016 – 2019 Grant Acquittal Audited Report be received and accepted.”

A85. ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) hosts the 2020 Federal Conference in Hobart, Tasmania on 5-6 August 2020.”

A86. Queensland State Council (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA Queensland hosts the 2021 Federal Conference in Queensland.”