

**The Isolated Children's Parents' Association
of Australia**

ICPA (Aust)



2020 Federal Conference

All Motions in One Doc

August 2020

BOARDING SCHOOLS/HOSTELS

A1. Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld (Qld)

CARRIED

“That the Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld Branch ask ICPA (Aust) to pass on thanks to Boarding Schools through the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) for work undertaken by the schools who worked closely with boarder families to deliver online lessons during the COVID-19 Pandemic which resulted in their temporary closure.”

A2. New South Wales State Council (NSW)

CARRIED

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

Explanation:

After the first wave of COVID-19 when schools reopened in June, our survey of 517 people resulted in a finding that 55% of boarders had not actually returned to school. It quickly became apparent that the AHPPC guidelines for boarding students are contradictory, for example, the social distancing requirement in a boarding house under the AHPPC is much more restrictive than say, for example if those children were housed in a private house or accommodation, or compared to the freedoms of a day student. This was noted by the many parents who had to relocate in motel accommodation to ensure their child could at least go to school as a day student when normally they would board. Parents could have other children stay with them in private accommodation, even sharing rooms. This is also the case for schools who have had to out source private accommodation to house students. There are also more broad interpretations from State to State, which adds to the confusion. These guidelines really need to be implemented with the assistance and guidance of stakeholders such as ABSA, who know our families and know boarding.

A3. Yaraka/Isisford Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) closely monitors the introduction of the Religious Discrimination Bills and ensure that rural and remote students are not disadvantaged.”

Explanation:

The second draft of the Religious Discrimination Bill is lengthy and interpretation is not clearly indicated in some areas. Many Boarding Schools and some Residential Colleges are operated as entities of a religious denomination. To ensure the protection of the schools, staff and subsequently students of these bodies it is important ICPA leaves no stone unturned if and when the final draft of this legislation is presented to the Parliament. Any religious body must be able to operate a commercial entity if it so wishes and maintain its identity without fear or favour. Similarly, protection needs to be given to the staff of such facilities who support the religious ethos of the organisation.

F1. New South Wales State Council

CARRIED

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

Explanation:

NSW has been sandwiched between three States during this pandemic and each State has had different rules in terms of quarantining and returning to boarding school. To give one example,

when boarding children from NSW and NT were required to quarantine in Qld for 14 days before returning to school, a combined representation from ICPA resulted in the Qld Chief Health Officer acknowledging that if a student had been on a rural property for 14 days prior to entering Qld from NSW or NT they could go straight back to boarding school without quarantining. A sensible decision that so far has had no negativity. SA on the other hand has been very challenging and difficult, resulting in much fatigue from both parents and ICPA volunteers. ICPA-NSW feels that the only way to give certainty in what is very uncertain times, is to have a Pandemic taskforce at the highest levels of government to ensure isolated children do not miss out on accessing their compulsory education.

COMMUNICATIONS

A4. Queensland State Council (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA Australia thanks NBN Co, Telstra, BIRRR and other communication suppliers for providing data relief and other initiatives such as SMS over Wi-Fi during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Internet Access

A5. New South Wales State Council (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) thanks NBN Co for supplying families with extra data during COVID-19.”

A6. Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

“That the Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld Branch ask ICPA (Aust) to pass on thanks to Better Internet for Rural Regional and Remote (BIRRR) for working with NBN Co and all internet providers to allow an increase in internet data allowances for on-line lessons which have had to be undertaken during this COVID-19 pandemic.”

A7. Tambo Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

“ICPA Hay Branch thanks NBN Co for unmetering of Sky Muster data during the COVID-19 and requests the ongoing unmetering of data to ensure education quality for students in rural and remote Australia.”

Explanation:

The unmetering of video meeting sites such as Zoom, allowed rural and remote students to continue their education during the lockdown conditions. This decision was a significant move towards educational equality.

Results from the Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2019 support the continued unmetering of data beyond the COVID-19 arrangements.

The index provides a national, state and regional level view of digital inclusion in Australia across three dimensions: Access, Affordability and Digital Ability. Scores are 0-100 relative to the perfectly digitally included person.

The Murray and Murrumbidgee Area (in which the Hay Branch falls) has the lowest scores in NSW for Access, Affordability and Digital Ability. With an overall score of just 53, the region has an obvious deficit in comparison to other parts of NSW. The region has the lowest internet data allowance in NSW. This has an impact on the equity for our student’s education. The continued unmetering of data would be a proactive move towards an increase in the digital inclusion index score for our members.

A8. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education and the Minister for Communications and other relevant Ministers to ask for a National directive stating that ‘geographically isolated students attending schools of distance education have the costs of their internet connections including the Education Port, used for education, reimbursed by the respective State or Territory Government.’”

Explanation:

Families should not have to pay for their own internet to facilitate their children’s compulsory, ‘free’ education via a public education system such as School of the Air. For many families this is their reality - wearing the costs of high speed internet connections so their children have access to the face-to-face lessons their children receive as part of the daily distance education delivery, a compulsory component, as outlined by the NT Department of Education.

Some Distance Education Students enrolled at Alice Springs School of the Air (ASSOA) have had internet supplied to them via NT Government 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 that when families are required to provide their own internet for their children who attend school via distance education, they are remunerated for the full cost of the service. We are concerned that children are not able to access adequate data to cover remote lessons, downloading work, uploading work etc. as this involves more data and in turn more costs to the family. Children being educated via distance education should be able to access enough data without placing financial strain on the family budget. We do not want to see limits placed on download, 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.

A9. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, and other relevant political figures to work proactively and cooperatively with companies attempting to bring universal broadband internet to Australia, including alternative satellite-based internet services and technologies, which would improve access to equitable education for all students in rural, regional and remote Australia.”

Explanation:

Internet woes are always high on the agenda for ICPA members. Cheap, universally accessible fast internet with large download limits could be available in Australia within 2 years. This would be a boon to many remote families who struggle with various aspects of their current internet connection. It would be especially welcome to travelling families, for whom there is no current affordable or practical solution for internet provision.

SpaceX’ Starlink system is the most advanced and promising universal broadband internet system. It is anticipated to provide a 480Mbit/sec connection (10x faster than the new Sky Muster Plus

service), with a latency of 35 milliseconds or less for around \$125/month. The download limit is unknown but is anticipated to far exceed Sky Muster's. The connection equipment will cost around \$500 and should be able to be installed by the end user. Additionally, Starlink could be used for 4G and 5G small cell backhaul, allowing cheaper expansion and upgrade of mobile phone networks into remote areas. All this by the end of 2021.

The ACMA recently included SpaceX on Australia's Foreign Space Objects Determination. However, SpaceX must still acquire from the ACMA the appropriate Space Apparatus Licences and licences for using part of the radio frequency spectrum before they can offer a service in Australia. It would be a shame if such a beneficial opportunity was lost to remote families due to red tape and political point-scoring.

SpaceX has had resistance from several fronts. Foxtel, a service which is fast becoming obsolete, has voiced concerns to the ACMA over radio spectrum allocations. Astronomers have been worried about the brightness of the Starlink satellites. SpaceX is also worried that the ACMA will limit Starlink services unnecessarily to remote areas, reducing their potential market share.

All of these issues can be addressed satisfactorily if they do not become political battlegrounds. Frequency allocation should be able to be addressed satisfactorily for Foxtel by the ACMA, but if push comes to shove Australia should be considering whether they want to prop up a dying company just because it's Australian, at the expense of a cutting edge infrastructure that will benefit the Australian economy and remote education. Astronomers are happy with SpaceX's commendable collaborative approach, and Starlink satellites are iteratively improving on that front. It is anticipated that Starlink satellites will not impinge on naked-eye views of the night sky. As for astronomy, SpaceX re-usable rockets and low launch costs are opening up the possibility of a Hubble-like space-based astronomy era. And at the end of the day, should Australia be supporting the probing of galaxies millions of light-years away at the expense of Australian children's education? In terms of limiting SpaceX's Australian ISP market share, surely Australia can find other ways of getting the foreign company SpaceX to contribute to the economy through taxation, local employment etc.

Starlink satellites already have FAA approval in the USA (FAA is the USA's ACMA equivalent). This means Starlink satellites will be whizzing over our heads regardless of what Australia decides to do with them. It would be most unfortunate if remote Australian families couldn't make the most of them for their children's education. A can-do attitude is needed to ensure we do not miss out.

In the ACMA's spectrum management consultation paper, April 2020, they state: "Under current law, specific allocation processes depend on ACMA and, in some cases, Ministerial decisions made during the planning and allocation stages, and reflect other relevant government policy considerations about planning priorities. Information from incumbent and prospective spectrum users about the demand for access to specific bands and the timing of any possible allocation will also provide important input to allocation decisions." The ACMA periodically consults stakeholders on upcoming decisions. It would be great if the ICPA (Aust) could monitor and submit papers into these discussions on behalf of ICPA member families in their quest for affordable and adequate internet. Keeping the perspective of remote families in the ears of politicians and ministers on these matters is also important.

Mobile Coverage/Service

S2. Namoi Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Ministers to obtain a rebate to upgrade equipment (aerials and boosters) to change from 3G/4G to other technologies for rural and remote customers who use mobile broadband for education.”

Explanation:

We feel that with the changing over from 3G to 4G that the cost should not be a further burden on rural and remote customers. In some areas in the North West there are large gaps or distances between towers and some towers have been upgraded to 4G and others are still 3G. If you have old aerials and devices, they do not work on the 4G system. This is not a cheap exercise, and, in some cases, we are doing this just to get some service – not even a great service.

Telephone

A10. Queensland State Council (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA Australia requests that Telstra provide a customer end technology roadmap for the transition from existing mobile phone configurations to country 5G due in 2024.”

Explanation:

Although 2024 seems a long way off at the moment, it is critical for this transition roadmap be made available as soon as possible.

Educators in rural and remote areas depend upon having the latest information readily available prior to purchasing equipment for future planning and upgrading of facilities due to the difficulties of keeping abreast with the latest technological developments when living in isolated areas.

Additional Information and questions to be asked

Will all 3G bases be upgraded with 4GX with a bandwidth upgrade prior to changeover? Will existing 4GX bases be overlaid with 5G bases when 3G is turned off? 3G only Handsets and early Smartphones (No Voice over LTE nor 4GX) will need to be replaced prior to change over. Boosters (most are 3G only), which are compatible with 5G, and single band 3G antennas will not work with 4GX so all antennas (vehicle, fixed etc.) will need upgrading. 3G Telemetry installations will need upgrading. 3G Medi Alerts and the like will need upgrading.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

A11. Queensland State Council (Qld)

CARRIED

“That we thank ICPA Federal Council for their work and dedication around the extension of the Transitional Provisions for the Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) qualifications.”

A12. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant Federal Government Ministers to initiate a separate In Home Care program for rural and remote families who have to provide board and lodging for their educators which would result in reducing families’ gap payments for In Home Care and also ensuring the unique needs for individual families are addressed.”

Explanation:

Child care was free for all families during the current pandemic, including IHC families, although In Home Care families also provide educators with board and lodgings! The Early Childhood Education Care subsidy resulted in around 50% less funding for providers during COVID19. In order for providers to continue paying educators, especially in rural and remote areas where numbers of children receiving child care hasn’t decreased due to COVID19, specific funding was

necessary. Due to the pandemic, the Early Childhood Education Care Relief Package was announced on the 2nd April 2020. This would not have been needed if IHC did not fall under the usual Child Care subsidy funding scheme.

Families in rural and remote areas who rely on IHC educators for their own jobs and livelihoods were significantly impacted by the funding cuts and passionately express the need for a specific funding model for rural and remote families, on a case by case system.

In Home Care providers are currently not easily accessible in all areas of Australia, for example the north western corner of the NT. In one case study a provider in Sydney (Leor) needed to be contacted to cover the remote location, but the cost of paying the educator through the In Home Care provider was significantly higher than employing someone personally, even with the child care subsidy. In Home Care families also provide educators with board and lodgings on top of In Home Care arrangements.

A13. Katherine Branch (NT)

CARRIED

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

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

Explanation:

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

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

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

Example 1: A single mother applies for a station hand position. She is highly qualified and prior to becoming a mother had extensive experience working on remote cattle stations. The owner of the station she has applied to also has a small child and already employs an educator through IHC. There is suitable accommodation for the mother and child but not enough for another educator. By allowing that educator to also care for the station hand's child, the station hand gets a job for which she is qualified for (it is also difficult to find good station hands so expanding the pool of people who could take these jobs is important) and both children have access to good quality child care and a playmate.

Example 2: a guy applies for a station hand position on a remote cattle station. He and his partner have a toddler. There are no child care facilities within 200km. The managers of the station also have a toddler. By allowing the partner to become the In Home Carer (dependent on obtaining

the relevant qualifications etc) the manager's child has access to high quality care, the manager(s) can concentrate on their jobs, the station hand is not separated from his partner and his partner has a fulfilling job.

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

RURAL SCHOOLS/SCHOOL TRAVEL

A14. St George Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies all relevant Australian Government Departments to continue the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP) past 2022."

Explanation:

The School Chaplaincy Program has been a major success and the continuation of this program is important for some students to succeed in school. The chaplains provide support and comfort for students in a safe zone as well as running programs such as "Rock and Water" for at risk students, "Safe Sisters" to provide practical advice on positive relationships and choices for girls; and "Which Way, This Way" for adolescent boys.

A15. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) appeals to the Minister for Education, the Minister for Regional Education and the Minister for Families and Social Services for geographically isolated students who receive Assistance for Isolated Children to have access to corporate travel airfare program discounts, in the same way ABSTUDY student flights are booked by the Australian Government."

Explanation:

Geographically isolated students may travel a long way to attend boarding school, which necessarily means air travel. The cost of travel to and from boarding school can be prohibitive, even when there is competition in service providers. In many regional airports, there are not many choices and airfares are usually always expensive.

ICPA NT understands ABSTUDY Fares Allowance provides a booking service, and in our meetings with Qantas and Virgin in 2018/2019, we became aware that these bookings were made under an Australian Government corporate program, attracting a corporate rate and levelling out price spikes (i.e. school holiday peak periods).

Not only does the ABSTUDY Fares Allowance pay for the cost of reasonable travel, it also provides for additional travel related costs during the trip, such as transport terminal transfers, excess baggage, overnight accommodation and meals. While NT State Council understands ABSTUDY Boarding and AIC are intended for different demographics, we note the cost of travel and related expenses are recognised for ABSTUDY Boarding students accessing education, but not AIC Boarding students accessing education.

This motion requests access to a group booking scheme, attached to a Centrelink CRN number, for AIC students, to assist in levelling out price spikes when isolated students travel to access education.

A16. South Australia State Council (SA)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the relevant ministers increase the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) for students travel to Canberra to enhance their learning in civics and citizenship education.”

Explanation:

The PACER grant to schools is provided to partially offset the cost of travel and accommodation for school students to visit Canberra. To qualify, schools must be located at least 150 kilometres from Canberra. Rebates are paid on a sliding scale with more money paid to schools further away from Canberra.

Distance from Canberra	Funds allocated per student #
150–499 kilometres	\$20
500–999 kilometres	\$30
1,000–1,499 kilometres	\$60
1,500–1,999 kilometres	\$100
2,000–2,499 kilometres	\$150
2,500–2,999 kilometres*	\$200
3,000–3,999 kilometres	\$310
4,000 kilometres and over	\$340

The table above shows the current rebate. Our students living in rural and remote South Australia fall within the \$60 - \$150 rebate. This is an unrealistic contribution given the costs involved for the students to get to Adelaide, let alone Canberra. A trip to Canberra for the older primary students provides them with a dynamic learning opportunity before going on to secondary school. The cost involved in providing such an opportunity for students lies entirely on the parents so further support through the PACER program would be well received.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS**A17. Northern Territory State Council (NT)****CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) urges the Minister for Health and other relevant Ministers to extend and expand the Allied Health Services delivered by telehealth and covered by the Medicare rebate to include all child health related services, including speech pathology, speech-language pathology, swallowing disorders and autism spectrum disorder, and indeed any service necessary for normal educational development of geographically isolated children.”

Explanation:

Families living in geographically isolated regions face significant challenges in accessing diagnosis and treatment of children with learning needs due to a medical problem. Challenges include length of waiting lists to see a specialist for assessment and diagnosis, difficulty in accessing allied health professionals due to availability and the distance and expense to travel to centres and the inordinate expense of these services. One NT family is paying \$8,000/year for speech therapy telehealth sessions, delivered with the assistance of a School of the Air.

During the recent COVID-19 crisis, the Federal Government expedited the inclusion of certain Allied Health Services covered by the Medicare rebate. These have focused to a large degree on mental health services and some autism services. Further there has been an expansion of telehealth in general. ICPA NT State Council would like to thank the Minister for Health for this expansion and request that telehealth be extended past the crisis and expanded to include vital

Allied Health Services required for positive educational outcomes of geographically isolated children.

The highly positive correlation between health and education has been well documented in numerous literatures (Grossman and Kaestner (1997). "Health is assumed to affect academic performance. The probability for an individual to pass or fail a grade depends not only on his academic ability but also on his health. (Estimating Interdependence between Health and Education in a Dynamic Model - Li Gan and Guan Gong* March 2010)¹.

Internationally there is strong support for a population approach to child health and development. The landmark Canadian Early Years Study states that:

"Societies and governments have an obligation to the future to devise systems that ensure effective parenting, support good early child development [32]."²

"When health services are available to all children and families in the population (that is, are universal) the range of developmental outcomes narrows and more children approximate the average, that is, more children attain normal development. In contrast, the targeting of additional services and supports for children at or below the vulnerability threshold for normal development leads to a decrease in the number of children not attaining normal development.

Targeted services focus on children and families or communities who have *additional needs* or increased likelihood of poor health or *developmental outcomes* limiting opportunities to reach their full potential.

Specialist or intensive tertiary services and supports are individually tailored responses to a *particular child* and family situation that often requires high levels of expertise. For example, *specialist allied health and medical services*, paediatric care, mental health, drug and alcohol treatment services or child protection support including adoption and fostering (Adapted from [23, p.19]).²

Further, better health results in more education; healthier students may be more efficient in studying (Perri 1984, Currie and Hyson 1999)

The introduction of telehealth services (not already covered) covered by the Medicare rebate for Allied Health Services can not only assist individuals with special learning needs but will allow them to reach their highest academic potential and hence independence and productivity in their lives.

1. <http://people.tamu.edu/~ganli/academic/interdependence-032010.pdf>
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2. <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/nat-fram-ucfhs-html~background~australia-child>

A18. Yaraka/Isisford (Qld)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Health and Federal Treasurer, to continue the Medicare rebate that has been introduced during COVID-19 to include rural and remote patients wishing to access speech pathology appointments through telehealth deliveries after the temporary exceptions end on 30th September 2020."

Explanation:

During the COVID-19 pandemic the Australian Government added several new telehealth services to the Medicare Rebate, this included Speech Pathology to allow people to continue to have access to this service from their own home, allowing them to isolate. This has been great for families who access this service in rural and remote Australia who are already isolated, but as of October this rebate will end.

We would love this rebate to continue after the temporary date ends, so families in rural and remote Australia can continue to receive this service at an affordable rate.

We need to ensure that our children are not being disadvantaged because of where they live.

Case Study:

We live approximately 65km from the nearest town and our children are educated through School of the Air. Currently my son and daughter require Speech pathology, we have been using a telehealth service. We have an hour and a 45-minute appointment weekly with their therapist, which we have been able to tailor into their School of the Air program.

Having access to telehealth has meant that we have not missed any school time or had to drive lengthy distances to ensure our children are getting the help they need.

But it comes at a cost! We do get some rebate from Private health insurance, but this runs out quickly when you are doing this weekly. Our son's lessons cost \$185 per hour and our daughter's \$155 (45 minutes).

We have only just applied for the Medicare Rebate during the COVID-19 and due to having to take into Medicare, we are unsure of what the rebate will be off the total weekly bill.

A19. Queensland State Council (Qld)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies relevant Federal government departments to permanently extend the COVID-19 Temporary MBS Telehealth Services for rural and remote children to include all telehealth sessions with specialised health services including, but not limited to, Speech Pathologists, Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists."

Explanation:

Rural and remote families have always faced the barrier of distance to access specialist medical services, but the introduction of telehealth services has made access to specialists much easier for rural families as well as allowing for more frequent and consistent sessions. Unfortunately, telehealth services did not attract the Medicare rebate that face-to-face sessions did, further widening the gap between rural and metropolitan families' access to affordable health services.

TERTIARY

A20. Western Downs Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to review the self-supporting criteria for Independent Youth Allowance for Regional and Remote students impacted by 'COVID-19' in 2020. That the 75% of wage Level A earnings be reduced in 2020 to compensate those impacted by being unable to or having reduced work hours, due to Government mandated shutdowns of certain industries."

Explanation:

RE: Independent Youth Allowance 2020 Gap year Students Meeting 75% of National Training Wage Schedule rate due to coronavirus pandemic.

A lot of prospective tertiary students take a gap year and work prior to starting their tertiary studies in order to qualify for independent status to access Independent Youth Allowance. There will be a portion of school leavers on a Gap Year this year (2020) working in hospitality for example, and other industries, who may not meet the threshold of earnings (75% of the National Training Wage schedule rate) to qualify because they could not work during the shutdown period caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

In our case, my daughter took a gap year with the intention of working and earning enough money during this time to qualify for Independent Youth Allowance and attend University in 2021. With both parents PAYG employees she would not qualify for dependent youth allowance as our combined income was above the threshold *\$51 903. She secured 2 casual jobs in hospitality at the end of February, with the shutdown of hospitality beginning on 22nd March. As she had only been employed for around a month, she did not qualify for Job Keeper, nor did she qualify for job seeker based on parental income. Based on a 9-week period of shutdown, she has potentially lost \$8100 income during this period based on \$900 per week earnings. While some venues are beginning to open most are on reduced hours, and as yet my daughter is only getting 1 or 2 shifts per week with one employer and none with the other, so her ability to earn income may continue to be affected for some time.

Possible suggestions could be, a reduction in NTWS rate, annualised and then reduced by the number of weeks of the shutdown, or if a student can prove through payslips their earning capacity just prior to the shutdown, that earning capacity over the period should be added on to the schedule rate on a case by case basis.

The failure of Government to address this issue will have a severe impact on students, in many cases taking away their means to attend University.

S1. Western Australia State Council (WA)

LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Education Minister, Hon. Dan Tehan MP, to review the Government’s recent decision to increase university course fees for humanities, commerce and law.”

Explanation:

When choosing a university course, it is commonplace for students to choose an area of study that interests them. Increasing the fees of courses will only serve to put students into even more debt. Students should not be restricted from studying their degree of choice due to increased financial concerns. It is proven that it is easier to learn and excel in a topic if you are interested in that subject. The best outcomes are as a result of matching disciplines and the talents of those who wish to study them.

Minister Tehan is offering cheaper degrees to students in subject areas where jobs are most needed. “What this is about is incentivising people to look at allied health, to look at engineering, to look at IT,” he said.

What we need are the best people for the job, the people who are passionate about the job, not the people who chose the degrees because they are the cheapest.

Where will we find the teachers for our high schools if they cannot afford to study their humanities degree, before going into teaching and being that specialised teacher at high school? The incentives to encourage students to study subjects that are projected to become employment hotspots should not be at the expense of other areas of study.

TRAINING

A21. Richmond Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to ensure assistance packages/schemes like the Coronavirus Supplement, which are established to support young people through times of specific economic impacts, include rural and remote apprentices and trainees receiving the federal Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA).”

Explanation:

The COVID 19 pandemic has placed a huge amount of financial and emotional strain on rural and remote apprentices and trainees who are living away from home to undertake their chosen career path.

At present, only those eligible for Youth Allowance are entitled to the Coronavirus Supplement. Recipients of the federal Living Away from Home Allowance, which is an allowance for apprentices and trainees to assist with living away from home expenses, are not eligible to receive the Coronavirus Supplement because they are not being paid Youth Allowance. Given that eligibility for LAFHA is an acknowledgement that rural and remote apprentices and trainees have had to move away from home to access their chosen vocation, our branch believes they should also be eligible for the Coronavirus Supplement and other assistance packages and schemes.

In relation to COVID-19, if their employer is not eligible for Job Keeper, these young people face significantly reduced working hours and large wage cuts with no financial support other than what their parents can provide. Apprentice and traineeship wages are already low, and cuts to hours and wages are simply unsustainable when coupled with the living expenses which come with living away from home. An example is a first-year apprentice who had his hours cut from a 38-hour week with ample opportunity for overtime cut back to a 30-hour week with no overtime. This resulted in a gross wage of \$80.00 per day (or \$400 gross per week) for two months at the height of the pandemic restrictions.

The Australian Government needs to ensure that ALL rural and remote apprentices and trainees who must live away from home to access their vocation are supported when an economic crisis impacts their income and working environment. It cannot simply fall to their parents to support them. Given they are living away from home and are on low wages with high expenses already, these young people are incredibly vulnerable. Apprenticeships and traineeships for rural and remote people are hard to source and even harder to secure, and it is crucial that outside circumstances beyond their control do not derail these valuable career opportunities.

Branch Member Case Study

Our son is 18 and commenced an apprenticeship in January 2020. He relocated to his place of employment, 500 km from his family property. He moved into a rental property, which was obviously costly and included purchasing white goods, furniture and general basic household appliances/utensils etc. On top of this was two weeks rent in advance and a bond. My son's weekly expenses include rent, electricity, food, fuel and general expenses that are necessary to live and take care of himself.

Our son didn't qualify for Dependent Youth Allowance due to the parental income test and the fact our company structure includes a family trust. My husband and myself supplement his living costs where we can to assist with his expenses and he also has a very stringent budget! He also does a lot of overtime when the opportunity is available to increase his wage per week, which, as a first-year apprentice wage is very low.

We were successful in obtaining the Living Away from Home Allowance, which is a federal rent assistance payment for apprentices and trainees who live remote and must move away from home to access their apprenticeship or traineeship.

When COVID-19 hit, our son's hours were cut back from 38 to 30 as the company he works for split the shifts, so they had two teams of mechanics to reduce the risk of infection. Our son therefore couldn't do any overtime because the workshop had to be cleaned in between shifts. Therefore his \$513 gross wage for 38 hours per week dropped to a gross of \$80 per day for a 6-hour day.

Because his employer (a large trucking company) is classified as an essential service, and trucks are still moving, they didn't qualify for the Job Keeper payment given their income hadn't dropped by the specified amount.

As our son does not receive Youth Allowance, he was not eligible for the Coronavirus Supplement, even though he IS eligible for the LAFHA, which is a recognition that he has to move away from home to access his apprenticeship.

He was therefore receiving no income assistance and was forced to survive on an extremely low wage for months. As parents, we did all we could to subsidise his living expenses, however, it seems wrong that this becomes the responsibility of the parent to ensure our son could afford to live away from home and continue his apprenticeship during this pandemic.

Our son very nearly did not continue with his apprenticeship because of the lack of financial assistance. He simply couldn't afford to live in Townsville on \$80 per day with rent, food, fuel, electricity and everything that comes with living away from home, and if we as parents weren't able to carry him through, he would have quit. Comparatively, the other first and second year apprentices at his workplace had the option to move home with their parents to save on costs during this time of reduced working hours.

MISCELLANEOUS

A22. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) highlights to the Minister for Education and all other relevant Ministers, that geographically isolated students require ongoing support, to ensure that the interim measures put in place by the Australian Government during the COVID-19 pandemic to assist families in educating their children, will continue now and into the future for students in rural and remote Australia."

Explanation:

This year has been an extra-ordinary year for not only our region, our country but the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many changes to the way in which education has been delivered. The majority of children here in Australia were introduced to Distance Education, a delivery that we live and breathe every day. Throughout the changes nationally to deliver education through remote learning, Governments both State, and Territories as well as nationally put in place measures to assist with this delivery. In order to recognise the ongoing of this delivery of education for our Geographically Isolated students we would like the Ministers to be able to keep in place these measures to ensure the continued success of the delivery of Distance Education for Geographically Isolated students.

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

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the relevant Ministers, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and the Australian Taxation Office to have geographically isolated children acknowledged as ‘in need’ of benevolent assistance for early childhood educational purposes, allowing the Not-For-Profit organisations serving them be considered for Deductible Gift Recipient status.”

Explanation:

Having Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) will allow organisations to be more sustainable and independent in sourcing their funding and allow them to continue to provide equitable service to all geographically isolated children in need. DGR status gives organisations more sustainable fundraising options, including Philanthropic sources, as opposed to being so heavily reliant on State and Federal Government funding.

An example of such a group that would benefit greatly from this is KICS (Katherine Isolated Children’s Services). KICS is a remote mobile playgroup and parent information service that travels across vast distances in the greater Katherine region to bring the joy of play-based learning to socially and geographically isolated children and families. KICS provides targeted educational opportunities for young children who would otherwise be completely missed by the system until they reached compulsory school years.

Under the DGR table of those eligible, there are very limited options for such a group. See https://www.ato.gov.au/Non-profit/Getting-started/In-detail/Types-of-DGRs/DGR-table/?page=5#Welfare_and_rights.

Organisations might be able to access DGR under “Education” but there is no matching category; likewise, maybe “Family”, again nothing. “Welfare and Rights” offers a possible option under PBI (Public Benevolent Fund). When KICS attempted this in 2018 they were rejected because they serviced BOTH indigenous and non-indigenous children. KICS application for DGR status was not supported “because non-Indigenous children living in isolation are not considered to be a group that has benevolent needs.” (Marion Hopkins ACNC 5/06/2018). Race alone does not determine need.

The decision by the ACNC (which is linked to ATO reasoning) that non-Indigenous children living in isolation are not considered to be at a disadvantage contradicts the most recent Australian Early Development Census National Report 2018 published in March 2019 where it clearly documents significant disadvantage to this whole class of young people.

A24. Western Australia State Council (WA)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) investigates the logistics involved in offering Pedals to members in electronic format with the default option being paper format, and make provision in the new website development for the ability of other State and Federal publications to be included at a later date.”

Explanation:

We understand that some members may wish to receive paper copies of ICPA publications. We ask that the option of electronic publications is offered to members. Electronic distribution aids timeliness of information, provides convenient access with handheld devices, cuts the cost of publishing and is an environmentally sustainable option. The cost per publication may increase, due to a lesser volume printed, however the overall cost and reduced postage may result in an overall saving.

AGM

A25. ICPA Federal Council **CARRIED**
“That the Federal membership fee remains at \$22.00 per member family for the 2021 membership year.”

A26. ICPA Federal Council **CARRIED**
“That Corporate Membership be set at \$275.00 per organisation for the 2021 membership year.”

A27. ICPA Federal Council **CARRIED**
“That school corporate membership be set at \$275.00 per school or educational institution for the 2021 membership year.”

A28. ICPA Federal Council **CARRIED**
“That D G Murdock consultant to RJC Evans and Co. Adelaide, be appointed as auditor for the 2020 – 2021 financial year.”

A29. ICPA Federal Council **CARRIED**
“That the 2019-2020 Audited Report be received and accepted.”

A30. ICPA Federal Council **CARRIED**
“That the amended sections of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution as circulated May 2020, be adopted at the 2020 AGM.”

A31. ICPA Federal Council **CARRIED**
“That the amendments to the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) By-Laws updated 26 May 2020, as circulated, be ratified.”

Explanation:

By-Law 19 was expanded to reiterate the need to focus on rural and remote students’ education in conference motions and presents this change for ratification

A32. ICPA Federal Council **CARRIED**
“That the updated Policies of ICPA (Aust), as adopted by Federal Council, June 2020, be ratified.”

A33. Western Australia State Council (WA) **CARRIED**
“That ICPA (WA) hosts the 2022 Federal Conference in Western Australia.”

S3. Queensland State Council (Qld) **CARRIED**
“That in light of 2021 being a celebration of the 50th year of ICPA Australia, Federal Conference be held on the 28/29 July in the regional location of Longreach, Queensland to best reflect the grassroots of our organisation for this significant milestone year.”

Explanation- video