



ICPA WA



Isolated Children's Parents' Association
Western Australia Inc.

History

Since 1918, education in isolated areas of Australia had consisted of correspondence lessons provided by the government. On remote properties across the country mothers were expected to teach their children on top of the many other jobs that came with living on the land. Most were untrained; many struggled with the responsibility; some had children with learning difficulties, for which there was no support.

In the late 1960s families living on remote properties in Western Australia found it difficult to educate their children. Although School of the Air had commenced about ten years earlier, it was not available to all, was fraught with problems and there was no support for children with learning difficulties.

Beginnings:

In 1971 at Bourke in NSW, in response to the closure of the privately owned hostel for isolated children.

A local mother named Pat Edgley was so alarmed at the inadequacy of government care or assistance for isolated education that she called a public meeting. ICPA was formed, with Pat as Secretary. Branches formed quickly in NSW, QLD and SA.

WA's First Branch:

Margaret Lacy, a pastoralist from Polelle Station, Meekatharra district, had been trying to raise the issue through the Meekatharra P & C and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association (PGA). Finally, she convinced the PGA to form an education sub-committee to lobby for:

- Free and compulsory education
- Subsidized hostel accommodation for post School of the Air students
- Provision of government hostels in regional areas
- Improvement to the School of the Air system for primary children.

On attending a Rural Regional Education seminar at the University of Western Australia in 1971, Margaret Lacy learned of a fledgling association, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, which had formed in Bourke to tackle problems in isolated education in NSW.

Communication between Mrs Pat Edgley MBE and Margaret Lacy via telegram stated that permission to form a branch of ICPA in Meekatharra was "gladly granted". The inaugural meeting of the Meekatharra Air Branch was held via the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) network on **1st October 1971** at 2.30pm. Twenty-two people tuned in – a measure of the frustration being felt by isolated families at that time.

The word spread quickly through the pastoral grapevine and by the end of 1971 ICPA branches had formed at Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie, Yalgoo and Derby.

ICPA (WA) met for the first time on 8th February 1972 in Perth, where some members met with the WA State Minister for Education.

The inaugural State conference was held at Pastoral House on 22nd August 1972 in Perth where all five branches were represented and the first State committee was elected:

President:	Mrs Margaret Lacy (Meekatharra)
Vice President:	Mr David Fitzgerald (Leonora)
Secretary:	Mrs Olive Henwood (Gascoyne-Ashburton)
Treasurer:	Mrs Val Jensen (Meekatharra)
Liaison Officer:	Mr George Savell (Pastoralists & Graziers Association)

A levy of \$3 per family was agreed upon, to be divided equally between the branch, state and federal councils.

Other Branches:

- Gascoyne Ashburton & Kalgoorlie Air (71),
- Yalgoo (72),
- Kimberley Air (73),
- Murchison & Fitzroy Crossing (75),
- Mt Magnet, Lones, Binu & Cue (76),
- Southern Gascoyne & Port Hedland (77),
- Southern Districts, Mullewa, Lakes District & Fitzgerald Jacup (78),
- Stirling, Esperance & Eneabba (79),
- Hyden (81),
- Norseman (84),
- Nullarbor (85),
- Laverton & Kalbarri (86),
- Kalannie (87),
- Pilbara (Tom Price) (90),
- Kondinin (91),
- Mt Marshall & Regions (later Bencubbin) (92),
- Central West Wheatbelt (97),
- Midwest (98).

In its forty nine year history in Western Australia, ICPA (WA) has lobbied for:

- The establishment of Chidley Point Remedial Centre in 1976, a residential school for rural and remote students who were experiencing learning difficulties. When this eventually closed its doors in 1998, funds were allocated to each of the SOTA's for a specialist teacher to assist students within the schools.
- Pre-school education for isolated children commenced in 1976.
- The upgrading of existing correspondence courses and the establishment of an Isolated Student Matriculation Scheme for years 11 and 12. (Correspondence had previously ceased at Year 10.)
- Improvements in mail and telecommunication services.
- The establishment of the Rotary Residential College at Kent Street Senior High School in 1991, which enabled hostel accommodation for isolated, gifted students.
- The establishment of a Conveyance Allowance in 1977.
- Increases to the Boarding Away from Home Allowance.
- Home tutor seminars commenced in 1977.
- The establishment of the Retired Education Volunteers for Isolated Students (REVISE) in 1992.

- Reversal of the State governments decision to close Schools of the Air in 2018.
- Improvements to Country Residential Colleges and access for students from non-government schools.
- Improvements to distance education courses and infrastructure.

WA State Council:

Members are encouraged to nominate for council at the AGM which is held at the Annual State Conference in March each year. ICPA WA is comprised of 11 councillors: President, Vice President, Immediate Past President (1 year), Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Officer, Lones Officer, Committee (3 – 5).

Branches are encouraged to raise issues which are debated at the annual state or federal conference. Any motions which are passed by a simple majority, become the policy focus for the year. The council informs members on news concerning education within the State, as well as nationally. At the State Conference, council aims to provide members with an array of relevant presentations and the opportunity to meet and network with other members, politicians and stakeholder guests.

Conclusion:

For ICPA in WA it has been a remarkable journey.

That such a small group of disparate people, separated by such vast distances and with no financial backing, could form themselves into a formidable organisation that demanded (and received) the attention and respect of State and Federal governments, is truly awe-inspiring.

In just five decades they have achieved astonishing success. Success could also be measured in terms of prevention - without ICPA WA's constant monitoring of and feedback to government departments; directions on aspects of country education services and resources would be steadily eroded.

And so, the journey continues.