



State Conference Motions

2022

South Australia Isolated Children's Parents' Association Inc.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Motion 1. Flinders Ranges Branch

“That SA ICPA requests the Minister for Education, as a matter of urgency, take into consideration the complexities that the online NAPLAN testing presents for small rural schools and School of the Air families and that alternative delivery methods and supportive resources be made available to ensure data from these rural and remote students are captured.”

Explanation: The move to the online delivery of NAPLAN testing was clearly the next obvious step forward in the world of digital education platforms, but as with all things digital, a high speed and reliable internet connection is paramount for it to successfully work. For the majority of students, the online NAPLAN will bring advantages, however for students in rural schools, access to such reliable and high-speed internet along with the resources, including computers and staffing to deliver this online testing is not always guaranteed.

There is a suggestion that testing may take place over a two- or three-week period, so for School of the Air or Open Access College geographically isolated distance education families, the option to sit the tests at home is likely not going to be an option. This would mean a family would have to either relocate to a town, for example Port Augusta, for the two- or three-week period for the child/ren to sit the online tests, or they will have to travel in and out of town up to three times over the period of two or three weeks. This is going to be a very costly and impractical exercise for remote families to undertake. If these families choose not to be involved due to the complicated logistics and cost, then this critical data set will be missing from the NAPLAN testing.

We are asking the Minister for Education to ensure that there are alternative processes and resources in place that will allow rural and remote students to have their data collected in the event that they cannot participate in the NAPLAN online.

Motion 2. North-East Branch

“That SA ICPA State Council support ICPA Federal Council in seeking the establishment of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA), to recognise the ongoing out of pocket expenses families incur to educate their children via distance education.”

Explanation: The role of the distance education tutor is vital to the education of young, remote children studying via School of the Air, who have no other option than to attend school via distance education. The role of tutor often falls to the mother, who is required to manage this along with an already busy schedule, with no recompense. The hours are generally the same as paid teaching staff, yet with little to no recognition.

Some families employ a Distance Education Tutor, which comes with an additional cost to the family. Families must decide whether to pay a wage to a tutor, or the mother must somehow find more time to take on the role. The Distance Education Tutor Allowance would go some way towards recognising the important role the tutor plays and compensate the family in a small way for the high cost of educating their children.

Motion 3. Port Augusta Branch

“That SA ICPA requests the Department for Education to provide a state Distance Education Teaching Allowance to recognise geographically isolated distance education home tutors (usually mothers) who take themselves out of the workforce, their businesses and their normal daily lives to administer daily compulsory education to their children in the home schoolroom.”

Explanation: Currently there are less than 50 families that would be eligible for this allowance, who meet the criteria of geographically isolated and teach their children via distance education.

The Gross Regional Product per capita for the Outback Communities Authority (OCA) region in which these students reside is \$417,000. This compared to the Gross State Product of \$62,100 per capita highlights the fact that inhabitants of the OCA area contribute well above the state average towards the finances of the state.

Unemployment for the OCA region is lower than both state or federal levels. This highlights the fact that there is not a lot of scope for taking on the extra workload involved in supervising. Often families seek an additional employee to supervise schooling. However, without financial support the reality is that many families cannot afford this option and the family must absorb the added work load and responsibility themselves. This continues to be a huge contributing factor to the reason many families leave the bush.

Motion 4. Marla/Oodnadatta

“That SA ICPA requests the Department for Education to increase the amount provided to School of the Air specifically to assist with travel for families to attend face to face events.”

Explanation: Face to face events are imperative for children educated through distance education as they provide an opportunity for children to meet their teachers and interact with their peers as well as extend their experiences and knowledge past what is offered at home. The cost of attending these events is increasing given the increasing cost of fuel with families have large distances to travel and many have to take time off paid-work to attend. Currently families are reimbursed 28 cents/km which is far from the current rate of 93 cents provided to government employees. This rate has not been increased for many years and it is important that families are supported to attend these events as families might choose not to attend which would be detrimental to their child’s learning.

Motion 5. Flinders Ranges Branch

“That SA ICPA requests the Department for Education to consider developing a new accommodation and classroom building at the Port Augusta School of the Air campus, within the Augusta Park Primary School grounds at a location that would see the School of the Air buildings in close proximity to each other.”

Explanation: The Outback Centre, which is SOTA’s current accommodation and classroom facility that is located on the opposite end of the APPS grounds from the SOTA teacher office and administration building and has provided the SOTA students and families a place to stay and be educated in during times of face to face activities for over 20 years. As it has always been located away from the main SOTA building, at times it has been logistically difficult for students, families and staff to undertake

certain tasks easily. With the introduction of strict COVID rules regarding parents and supervisors not being allowed on site, the distance between the buildings has become glaringly obvious and increasingly difficult to manage.

The development of a new building located in close quarters to the current SOTA administration building would allow for the SOTA community to have their own space within the APPS site, be fenced off and accessed appropriately by SOTA staff, students and families and it could even see that the R.I.C.E. building be included in the facility. Things like an interactive garden, SOTA specific playground, parking facility and evening access to learning resources located in the admin building would really expand and enhance the experiences students and staff would have while they are attending face to face activities would all be possible with such a designated facility.

Motion 6. North-East Branch

“That SA ICPA request the Minister for Education consider a new, stand-alone facility that would accommodate Port Augusta School of the Air (SOTA) and RICE (Remote & Isolated Children’s Exercise) on their own premises.”

Explanation: Currently, the Port Augusta School of the Air and RICE have a campus on the Augusta Park Primary School grounds. They have the use of three separate buildings, located in different areas on the Augusta Park grounds. SOTA conducts face-to-face weeks each term in Port Augusta and the SOTA students have to share the school facilities with Augusta Park students. This includes the requirement of SOTA teachers seeking permission from Augusta Park to use the school gym, oval and playground. The two SOTA buildings are not located next to each other meaning teachers have to carry resources over to the Outback Centre, located on the other side of the school grounds.

It would be beneficial if both SOTA and RICE could share their own premises, not another school’s campus. This would allow students, families, educators and the outback education community to have their own facilities and create their own school campus, ethos, values and unique space that directly relates to their distinctive learning and living style. This would have a direct and very beneficial effect on the mental health and well-being of our outback families. In addition, the current facilities are outdated and badly in need of repairs, so a new, stand-alone facility would very quickly make much better financial sense.

Motion 7. North West Branch

“That SA ICPA work with the Department for Education, Open Access College and School of the Air, (SOTA) Port Augusta to prepare and provide a review of the current school buildings and grounds with the ultimate aim to provide safe and inclusive facilities, essential infrastructure and an environment suitable for the teachers and geographically isolated students of SOTA.”

Explanation: The current buildings and grounds do not provide students with an educational facility of a suitable standard and are in dire need of improvement and relocation. Currently the campus for SOTA is located within the Augusta Park Primary School (APPS) grounds. These grounds do not provide a physically nor visually suitable premise, with the teachers, staff and students not comfortable in the setting. Facilities matter because they make a concrete contribution to student, staff and community wellbeing. The trending concept of ‘schools as socially connecting community hubs’ is a far cry from the reality of the unfriendly teaching and learning workspace the current facilities provide for SOTA staff and families.

Contrary to current standards provided to teachers and students nationwide, the SOTA teachers are expected to work in inadequate conditions. A common space is provided that lacks essential soundproofing for effective lesson instruction, creating much frustration for both teachers and students. The little access to light and ventilation in the windowless interior workspace creates a claustrophobic atmosphere, with teachers having loudly voiced their discomfort in this setting. It is greatly frustrating to SOTA families that it is reasonably foreseeable that the high turnover of staff is largely due to these unfriendly workspace conditions.

The current SOTA facilities are unable to create a sense of identity, ownership or belonging for its students. A brief glimpse of the APPS grounds sets the scene with the omnipresence of litter and rubbish. It is SOTA's duty to provide suitable facilities and equipment for sporting and play areas and due to the school having to share the APPS grounds, they are unable to satisfy this. In addition, the SOTA buildings are awkwardly situated on either end of the APPS compound. This poor planning has created difficulty for adequate supervision and the confusing split locations makes it unclear for our students on their school boundaries.

A recent survey highlighted genuine safety concerns regarding the Outback Centre. The Outback Centre was constructed to provide SOTA families with accommodation and social connection but has for some time sat unused by families due to the high incidence of damage to vehicles and belongings and personal safety concerns. Interaction between geographically isolated children is essential for positive development and social wellbeing, but when personal financial circumstances limit access to paid accommodation it seems unreasonable that this interaction is limited by the unsafe conditions of the Outback Centre.

Minister John Gardner said the development of the new Whyalla Secondary College showcased the "world class", modern learning environment that the Whyalla students deserved. "World class" is the standard set by the Department of Education, that reflects students "hopes and aspirations". Providing SOTA students with a "world class" educational facility will attract and retain families that live and work in the outback, ensuring an equitable access to education that is currently forgone.

A state-of-the-art complex for SOTA in a new setting is essential for the progression of the school. A new "world class" SOTA will provide confidence for both the parents and teachers of the students, that their children have a suitable school that can reflect the hopes and aspirations of all involved, leading to a sense of pride and belonging.

Motion 8. Marla/Oodnadatta

"That SA ICPA request the Department for Education to investigate the possibility of the Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise (RICE) and School of the Air (SOTA) to have their own combined stand-alone site in Port Augusta."

Explanation: A major challenge for schools and centres in regional, rural and remote communities is meeting the diversity of learning needs, interests and aspirations of all students, while at the same time, developing and nurturing social cohesion and harmony. The key challenge is ensuring, regardless of location or circumstances, that every young person has access to high quality schooling and opportunities.

For the outback community, RICE and SOTA are critical institutions that ensure families can live and work in outback areas without sacrificing their children's education. With the shortage of skilled workers in the agricultural industry, what the government does to attract workers to the outback matters.

RICE and SOTA's current facilities are comparatively inferior to many kindergartens, childcare centres and schools in metropolitan and regional SA. As RICE and SOTA are situated in the

Augusta Park Primary School (APPS) compound, the facilities which appear as a 'granny flat' at best, do not provide a safe or sound trajectory for lifelong wellbeing outcomes. Whilst RICE and SOTA staff put thoughtful consideration in to their planning and teaching, the current facilities often hinder their efforts.

As stated in the Governments Wellbeing Framework for Learning and Life, *'Learning and wellbeing are closely linked. Children and young people with good wellbeing are more engaged and successful learners. Likewise gaining a good education is a key contributor to positive lifelong wellbeing outcomes.'*

A new 'world-class' facility would allow for integrated practices and facilitate collaboration and coordination between the different agencies relevant to our geographically isolated children. It would build protective factors and provide resilience to help respond to the adversity that our students, staff and families face on a daily basis and underpin the key principles of the government's wellbeing framework; Child-centred, Strengths-based, Learning Success, Relationships and Inclusion.

RICE and SOTA need their own home to strengthen parents' confidence that their children have a world class school, and students can feel a sense of pride and belonging for their school. Our children live in priority circumstances and we believe whole-heartedly that the wellbeing and resilience of our children will be promoted through the facilitation of a site they can call 'theirs' which would further engage, inspire and empower them.

Facilities do matter as they make a tangible and concrete contribution to the overall student, staff and community wellbeing.

Motion 9. Port Augusta Branch

"That SA ICPA requests the Department for Education to provide a standalone all-inclusive building for School of the Air (SOTA) and Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise (RICE) services in Pt Augusta."

Explanation: Currently there are three separate buildings situated across the grounds of Augusta Park Primary School that house SOTA, RICE and the Outback Centre. We believe the benefits of having one site, for kindergarten, primary school, the community and play will far out way the costs and will be beneficial for the education and wellbeing of all involved.

Improved facilities would increase the sense of belonging for students, staff and the wider community. Improved access to these buildings for educational activities and support services is vital for the safety of our children.

Motion 10. Marla/Oodnadatta

"That SA ICPA, on behalf of its School of the Air members, thank Port Augusta School of the Air Head of Campus for her dedication to her role in placing an emphasis and ensuring that both students' academic progress and wellbeing needs are being met at a high standard."

Explanation: We would like to thank Lai Kuan Lim and her dedicated team for getting School of the Air back on track after a number of tumultuous years with Head of Campus and staff changes. In particular, Lai Kuan has worked with the SOTA community and has a strong focus to improve outcomes for our children. We also thank Open Access College Principal Julie Taylor, for allowing the SOTA HOC greater autonomy to make decisions based on our campus rather than the whole of OAC. The hard work and dedication from all parties does not go unnoticed.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS

Motion 11. State Council

“SA State Council would like to move a motion of thanks to both the Indulkaninna Foundation and Sandy’s Memorial Trust for supporting rural and remote SA ICPA children through their generous donations.”

Explanation: These donations have allowed SAICPA to provide bursaries that have supported a range of educational opportunities for students of SAICPA members. A large portion of this funding was directed to SPELD SA so that eligible students could receive ongoing literacy support.

TERTIARY

Motion 12. Marla/Oodnadatta

“That SA ICPA advocate the relevant bodies to look into the feasibility of the provision of an Agricultural Program/College in South Australia that provides vocational learning opportunities in the pastoral industry for high school students.”

Explanation: It is vital that students in their secondary years have an opportunity to attend an agriculturally based learning program/college. The sustainability of the agricultural industry has never been more important than of recent times with the ever-expanding world-population and the need to feed the world. Hands on, practical learning pathways that provide opportunities for both country and urban students to gain valuable skills that put them in good stead to finding employment in the agricultural industry is vital for our state’s future. With the cessation of both the Longreach and Emerald Colleges in Queensland, there are few opportunities for young school-based students to pursue an agricultural career should they choose where they can attend and live on site.

BOARDING SCHOOLS AND HOSTELS

Motion 13 Flinders Ranges Branch

“That SA ICPA requests the Minister for Education and the Chief Public Health Officer to ensure the adoption of the National Code for Boarding School Students which was endorsed by National Cabinet in September 2021.”

Explanation: Unfortunately, since the States and Territories of Australia endorsed the National Code for Boarding School Students in September 2021, South Australia, along with the other States and Territories have been reticent in their adoption of the code. While the opening of South Australian borders relieved some of the cross-border travel issues ensuring most children could travel between their place of residence and their chosen school without issue, moving forward we certainly do not want to see a repeat of the chaotic and draconian scenes faced by students and their families in 2021 where many were left without seeing their families, or their school depending on the individual situation, for many months at a time. It is important that we hold the South Australian Government to their pledge for unity across borders should the need arise again.

Motion 14. Flinders Ranges Branch

“That SA ICPA requests the Minister for Education and the Chief Public Health Officer consider the unique boarding school environment when updating the COVID 19 SA Health Advice for Boarding Schools, including revisiting the definition of a ‘close contact’ specific to the boarding school environment and to consider classing boarding school staff as ‘critical staff’ with relation to the provisions for return to work.”

Explanation: Currently the guidelines that have been produced by SA Health regarding Boarding Schools and how they manage COVID are being interpreted by each boarding school in very different and some in an overly cautious way. This is making it very difficult for students and staff to settle into some sort of routine that is seen as ‘normal’. There is no continuity across different boarding houses, and it seems that ‘one size does not fit all’ when it comes to the interpretation of these guidelines. While we commend boarding leaders and staff for trying to keep our children safe it is becoming glaringly obvious that the guidelines SA Health have asked schools to follow are making the life of a boarder even more difficult than it already is. The ‘close contact’ definition does not consider the logistics of trying to isolate a student or in some situations a whole group of students or wing of a boarding house. There is also no consideration for the thousands of kilometres families would have to travel each time a student has to vacate their boarding house if they cannot isolate safely or become infected with COVID 19. Add in the ‘classroom contact’ guidelines and it leaves students with little freedom to try and make the boarding house a home away from home.

Currently staff of a boarding house are not considered ‘critical staff’, which means that if they become a close contact, they cannot attend their workplace until their isolation period is over, regardless of testing or symptoms. The boarding school has to apply to the Department for Education to request a ‘provision for return to work for critical staff’ to SA Health for that individual staff member. The impact on a boarding house with a small pool of staff is immense. Not only does it put pressure on other staff to fill in, but it can have a negative effect on students who become to see staff as a friendly face and a ‘soft place to fall’ when in times of need. We would like to see all boarding staff considered as ‘critical staff, so that when they are a close contact, have a negative PCR test and no symptoms, they can continue to work within the boarding house following critical staff guidelines. The boarding school will then notify SA Health, via the Department for Education that that staff member is working under the critical staff provision.

Rural and remote boarding students are already a vulnerable cohort even before they get to boarding school, they need our support. The impact on students’ mental health needs to be considered in all of this and a serious reason for SA Health to have more inclusive discussion with boarding heads, school wellbeing staff and even the families of students being impacted and come up with a set of guideless and definitions regarding contact that better reflect the needs of our boarding students.

Motion 15. North West Branch

“That SA ICPA work with SA Health, the Department for Education and SA boarding schools to provide and implement a realistic and strategised ‘Return to Boarding School Plan’ with regards to state COVID restrictions.”

Explanation: In the event of ongoing long term COVID safety measures being required at the beginning of each term, a well-planned and staged entry for boarding school students must be put in place.

Currently there is an unrealistic expectation placed upon new and returning boarding students to unpack and settle themselves without any family support. The long-term mental, social, emotional and physical implications these restrictions will have on boarding students should not be dismissed. With the commencement of year 7 as the entry year for middle school, it will be common for the entry age of a boarding student to be as young as 11 years old. It is important to note that a percentage of

interstate boarding students may be unable to return home to their residence throughout the school year due to state restrictions. It is unreasonable that the SA Health guidelines recommending 'limiting extracurricular activities' extends to and limits the settling in of a boarding student.

It is imperative that an allowance for one parent/support person being allowed on site to help unpack and settle students into the boarding facility, within a realistic time frame, be made for the emotional and mental wellbeing of the student and their family.

Motion 16. North West Branch

"That SA ICPA work with SA Health, the Department for Education and SA boarding schools to ensure children's mental, emotional, social and physical health are carefully considered when implementing the SA Health Advice for Boarding school document within the boarding house setting."

Explanation: The current SA Health guidelines for boarding school situations are unrealistic. The precept of 'limiting extracurricular activities' in the boarding house environment and the definition of a 'household' situation extending to the wing of a boarding house, among other guidelines, are misplaced and must be amended.

To explain the situation further currently the definition of a 'household' situation extends to the wing of a boarding house (if the wing contains a kitchen unit), this places a huge burden on the boarding house and its students. It is unrealistic to place entire wings under isolation when one student receives a positive COVID test. This potentially opens the wings to constant isolation as a wing can house up to 20+ boarding students. To explain the scenario, we pose two circumstances:

1. One student in the boarding house receives a positive test to COVID, the entire wing the student resides in undergoes isolation. Upon completion of the week of isolation the student's bedroom buddy then tests positive. Groundhog Day for the wing of students as they are consequently placed into another week of isolation.

2. One student in the boarding house receives a positive test to COVID, the entire wing the student resides in undergoes isolation. Students from that wing then return to school only for one of the students from that wing to then catch COVID from a classmate. The entire wing is back in isolation for another week, Groundhog Day.

It is not fair or reasonable to think these students will be able to administer their own schooling throughout these stints of isolation. Ultimately, the student's mental and emotional wellbeing are being jeopardised regarding their education and freedom. It is understood that changes to rules for household contacts could lead to increased transmission, but the shift is pragmatic considering the high vaccination rate and increasing booster rate.

The current guidelines have been made without giving thought to the fact that these boarding students are already spending extended periods of time in their rooms with harsh restrictions placed on any personal leave. Indeed, the strictness of quarantine requirements and the 'limiting of extracurricular activities' involve a trade-off between the need to ensure positive cases are not out in the community and the intention to minimise the number of students stuck in the boarding house not participating in daily life. We can see that other State Governments are now accepting a different risk threshold for the potential of spread and hope that South Australia follows suit.

Valid suggestions to remedy the above situations are as follows:

- A review of the definition of a household in relation to a boarding house, as the present definition creates too large a scope.
- To include a boarding parent body in the panel writing these guidelines, thus enabling a realistic student perspective.

Motion 17. SA Lones

“That ICPA SA State Council are thanked for their tireless advocacy on behalf of boarding students and their families during the COVID-19 border restrictions and SA Health advice for Boarding Schools”

Explanation: The situation of border restrictions and boarding house restrictions regarding boarding school students has been often confusing and inconsistent causing great anxiety to families during the COVID-19 pandemic. ICPA SA State Council has put great amounts of time and advocacy into this issue

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & CARE

Motion 18. North-East Branch

“That SA ICPA State Council continue to work with Federal Council towards having the AIC extended to children attending Kindergarten by distance education.”

Explanation: Currently, students studying Kindergarten via distance education are ineligible to receive the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance. If families received this allowance, it would alleviate the cost of providing an educational experience for their children. The majority of children who are enrolled in a distance education Kindergarten program are found to have better educational outcomes in later years, by forming these important foundations early in their educational journey.

Motion 19. Marla/Oodnadatta

“That SA ICPA request Services Australia to provide Remote and Isolated Children’s Exercise (RICE) with an exemption to qualify for the In-home care (IHC) solely for the Outback Childcare Program in order for families to receive the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) when utilising this service.”

Explanation: Currently, the RICE Outback Childcare program enables families to receive short-term childcare in the family’s’ homes when they are in need of respite/emergency care. Outback Childcare does not attract any government support or funding resulting in RICE funding this program through other sources of income such as donations and families incurring an hourly fee for the service. The childcare subsidy scheme (CCS) can only be received when a child is enrolled through a centre-based childcare centres or through the IHC scheme which is unavailable to families due to provider limitations within SA. Families are therefore required to pay a fee per hour of care in their home and receive no rebate. Some families living in rural and remote need support and have no other option of care. This service needs to be affordable for families but viable for RICE and if families could access the CCS through the IHC program, then the service would be more affordable and provide for families in times of need.

Motion 20. Marla/Oodnadatta

“That SA ICPA work with the Department for Education to provide families enrolled in a kindergarten program, via Distance Education, funding to purchase essential items for these children to complete the program successfully.”

Explanation: Currently children enrolled in kindergarten through the Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise have 5 online lessons per week with the kindergarten teacher who is based in Port Augusta. The family is expected to provide a computer, printer and set up the kindy learning environment as well as attend up to 4 essential face-to-face weeks throughout the year. The purchase of resources along with the travel and accommodation involved in attending face-to-face events adds up and places additional pressure on families. A positive kindergarten experience is imperative to setting the foundation for future learning.

Currently 8 children are enrolled with RICE in 2022 - \$2000/child (\$500 for technology/resources and \$1500 for face-to-face) = \$16000.

This is not a huge outlay of government resources and given kindy children do not qualify for the AIC allowance, a small contribution would stand up to the Government of SA's position statement in their *Wellbeing for Learning and Life Framework* and show that they are committed to giving every child every chance to have the best start in life.

TRAVEL

Motion 21. Port Augusta Branch

"That SA ICPA liaise with Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT), Road Maintenance – Regional North & Outback highlighting how vital having a functional road system is to our members to ensure access to educational opportunities."

Explanation: Roads provide an essential link to education for families that are remote and isolated. It is essential that unsealed roads are maintained sufficiently to allow safe access to education. In some cases, students need to travel to and from school each day or weekly. Educational supplies need to be able to be delivered through the mail in timely fashion. For example, after the recent deluge of rain, school supplies to a SOTA student, which included computer equipment were unable to be delivered by mail due to impassable roads and the lack of road gangs to fix the roads, causing a 3-week delay.

We would like to see the roads maintained sufficiently to support us accessing education.

Motion 22. Port Augusta Branch

"That SA ICPA lobbies airlines servicing the northern areas of SA to provide a student fare."

Explanation: Boarding students returning home during term are faced with the dilemma of long bus journeys that greatly erode available down time or huge airfare costs. Families are faced with the situation that they need to cut a long weekend short to allow for the two days travel via the bus because the cost of air fares precludes families from being able to utilise them which was.

ADMINISTRATION

Motion 23. North West Branch

"That the North West Branch host the 2023 SA ICPA state conference."