



Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia

Advocating for equitable access to education for students in rural and remote Australia

MEDIA RELEASE – CHILDCARE DESERTS

26 APRIL 2022

The plight of rural and remote families who have no access to early childhood education other than by distance education in their own home continues to be a grave concern for ICPA (Aust) members across the country and we appeal to all parties in the upcoming federal election to address this paradox.



ICPA (Aust) welcomes the research conducted by the Mitchell Institute raised in its recent report, Deserts and oases: How accessible is childcare in Australia? which clearly demonstrates failures and disparities in the current centre-based childcare system and particularly highlights that rural and remote children and families are especially disadvantaged by the lack of childcare available in their communities.

For the cohort of children in geographically isolated areas of Australia who have no access to centre-based childcare, this disadvantage is even more pronounced. Many students rely on distance education programs alone to access early childhood education and a lack of financial support for families to facilitate these programs is extremely problematic.

ICPA (Aust) continues to emphasise the need for an extension of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance to 3–4-year-olds studying an approved early childhood education distance education program to support critical access to affordable distance education early childhood programs for geographically isolated children who have no other options.

The recommendation was also made in the 2021 Report into Education in Remote and Complex Environments for this to be implemented to improve outcomes for remote students. ICPA (Aust) estimates this measure would cost less than \$1.2 million per year yet would make a meaningful difference to the ability of geographically isolated families to provide high-quality early childhood education to their children.

It is well known that access to quality early childhood education is essential to future educational outcomes of children. With the election just weeks away, ICPA (Aust) seeks a guarantee from all parties of this funding commitment as a matter of urgency to ensure Australia's most remote cohort of children receive equitable access to early childhood education.

Furthermore, ICPA (Aust) is alarmed by funding and process failures across early childhood education and care options, including In Home Care and Mobile Services, which are impractical and, in many cases, simply unworkable. The needs of rural and remote families continue to be unmet as the Federal Government fails to take into consideration unique geographically isolated contexts.

Quality early learning is not available to many rural and remote children, leaving them with a disadvantaged start to their formal education. ICPA (Aust) implores Governments to conduct a comprehensive review of the entire early childhood education system across rural and remote Australia to ensure these children are equipped to make the most of the opportunities provided once they're at school.

Read ICPA (Aust)'s complete Federal Election requests at [Federal Election Media Release | ICPA](#)

Further information and comments please contact:

Alana Moller, Federal President T: 07 4983 5353 E: FedPresident@icpa.com.au

Suzanne Wilson, Federal Publicity Officer T: 0418 830 214 E: FedPublicityOfficer@icpa.com.au

www.icpa.com.au

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Instagram](#)