

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

ICPA (Aust)



2022 Federal Conference

MOTIONS

3 & 4 August 2022

BOARDING SCHOOLS/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME

A1. Lakes District Branch (WA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Education and the Minister for Social Services for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance, to help ease financial pressures incurred as a result of increased fees charged by boarding facility providers."

Explanation:

Members from WA have continued to be impacted by the reduction of the State-provided Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) and any increases to the AIC in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is being eroded annually by the increased fees charged by boarding facility providers.

An increase in the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance would aid in relieving some of the financial liability geographically isolated families incur when educating their children.

A2. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED - D/C A1

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Social Services and all other relevant government departments for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance, to help alleviate financial pressures incurred as a result of increased fees by boarding facilities."

Explanation:

The cost of boarding in Western Australia continues, on average, to increase by 3% per annum. With the reduction of the WA State Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) by \$785 per child to the 2010 level, families are continually experiencing increasing financial pressure as the cost of boarding continues to rise. An increase in the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance would relieve some of the financial burden placed on families to pay for their children's education.

A3. Nyngan Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Minister for Social Services increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance to more closely reflect the real costs of educating isolated students."

Explanation:

Boarding school fees continue to rise at a greater rate than the CPI. The Assistance for Isolated Children Boarding Allowance, an equity allowance, needs to be updated constantly to reflect the increasing financial burden being placed on isolated families by the Government to educate their children. There is an underlying problem of an ongoing erosion of this benefit as an allowance, as boarding and tuition fees increase at a greater rate than the allowance. If our Government is serious about providing the world-best educational opportunities to equip children with the skills they need, this equity allowance needs to remain equitable, giving rural children an education equivalent to their city counterparts.

A4. Walgett Branch (NSW)

LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Federal Ministers to expand the current Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) criteria to include the following reason for receiving the AIC Boarding Allowance, under the Special Education Needs criteria:

- The only rural and remote local high schools Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) percentile is 2."

Explanation:

ICSEA, created by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), is a scale that identifies the socio-educational advantage of a school.

Key factors in students' family backgrounds (parents' occupation, school education and non-school education) have an influence on students' educational outcomes at school. Data on these factors, as well as the Aboriginal status of students and geographic location of the school is utilised in the calculation of the Index.

The higher the ICSEA value, the higher the socio-educational advantage. The lower the value, the lower the socio-educational advantage.

Walgett Branch has lobbied for greater flexibility in the AIC guidelines to allow families living in or near our remote community access to the AIC allowance, for many years. The impact on our small community is devastating, as families leave seeking suitable secondary education that gives them some level of continuity. While State Governments can add schools to the Limited Programs list, New South Wales apart from listing two schools, offers a Statement of Support process which acknowledges remoteness and subject choice. This process does not recognise the broader issues that impact on the education in some remote schools.

Without access to the latest national ICSEA data, it is difficult to calculate the number of schools that fall into the 1 percentile range, representing schools with extremely disadvantaged student backgrounds (more educationally disadvantaged than 99% of schools in Australia). However, information on the My School website indicates that the number of schools in the 1st percentile range would be 5 - 10 (many of whom are already on the Limited Programs list) nationally.

For example, Walgett Community College has a score of 1% which means we are 99% more disadvantaged than the average school in Australia. The number of students in Walgett that don't meet the current criteria within the AIC guidelines amounts to only a handful of families. The positive impact of receiving this allowance would be significant for this remote community.

A fair and decent education must be available to all students, without the whole family needing to relocate from their home, workplace and community.

A5. Walgett Branch (NSW)

LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Federal Ministers to expand the eligibility criteria of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) to allow students living in Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) mapped 'Remote' and 'Very Remote' locations who are currently ineligible to access the AIC due to the distance criteria, be deemed eligible to receive AIC."

Explanation:

Most families that live in 'Remote' and 'Very Remote' areas are already eligible to receive AIC, but those that live within these small towns such as Walgett or just outside are not. The families living and working in these remote and very remote communities are police, nurses, teachers, agricultural workers, tradies and other essential service providers. These services are vital to the survival of these small towns.

Access to allied health services such as Speech and Occupational Therapists are essential for some children to reach educational outcomes. These services are severely limited or non-existent in areas such as Walgett.

Families in larger regional towns have a choice of at least one and sometimes multiple schools in their residential zone, whereas families living in rural and remote towns only have one local school. Not all schools can provide a safe and nurturing environment that can meet the needs of individual children.

Whether it be a child with special needs or one who is gifted and talented in a certain field, they all should have the same access to AIC as their peers that live a certain distance from a remote town. If their

residential address falls within the ARIA mapping of 'Remote' and 'Very Remote' locations they should not be excluded from receiving the AIC. They are all isolated.

ARIA is an unambiguously geographical approach to defining remoteness that could be applied to the AIC criteria. It is a simple way to determine one's eligibility for AIC in these isolated areas.

A6. Wentworth Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to request the Federal Government and relevant Departments separate the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) into two categories – Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) and Assistance for Geographically Isolated Children (AGIC)."

Explanation:

AIC is provided to many students for many valid reasons. The number of families receiving AIC continues to increase, yet our number of geographically isolated families continues to decrease.

Geographically isolated students are the minority, yet we are campaigning to increase the payment for all recipients which requires a significantly larger investment by the Government.

Geographically isolated children are unique in that there is no option to access a mainstream school close by. The cost for these families is different. If we can successfully separate the payments, then requesting an increase to AGIC will take a much smaller Government investment and may be much more achievable.

A7. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) brings to the attention of the Federal Government the impacts the new 'Direct Measure of Income' funding model may have on geographically isolated students who attend boarding schools when lobbying for increases to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC)."

Explanation:

In 2022, as part of the Quality Schools reforms, all non-government schools completed the transition from the previous area-based socio-economic status (SES) methodology to the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) to determine the capacity to contribute (CTC) for most non-government schools.

The DMI is based on the median income of parents or guardians at the school (that is, the family income that sits in the middle of the range of incomes at a school). The median family income is translated into a DMI score by comparing the median family income of a school against the median family income of other non-government schools. Adjusted taxable income (ATI) is used to calculate the median income of the parents and guardians of a school community.

As a result of using the Direct Measure of Income parameters, many schools throughout the whole of Australia will receive a cut to their funding. This is a major concern for boarding families. Many schools will see their funding reduced anywhere from \$1,000,000 to \$4,000,000 per annum, equating to \$3,000 plus per student. Members are concerned that to bridge the gap in the reduction of funding from the Government, schools will increase their fees. The cost of boarding is already increasing at an alarming rate and certainly in advance of CPI, without these additional charges.

The proportion of boarding families in schools is often such a minority so will have little impact on the DMI, but families could be forced to pay more in order to access an equitable education.

A8. New South Wales State Council (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Federal Government to consider boarding school staff as Essential Supervisory Staff at all times."

Explanation:

With the current pandemic some health authorities have not declared that all the boarding school staff are considered as essential workers. Boarding schools are very different school settings and need more than teachers to be operational. All teachers are considered essential workers, but not all the other staff such as boarding staff, kitchen staff, cleaning staff. Without all these members of staff, boarding schools are unable to operate.

A9. Broken Hill Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for rural and remote boarding school students and their immediate families to be classified as ‘Essential Travellers’ in emergency management plans.”

Explanation:

We greatly appreciate that State borders are, for now, open, yet families live with the worry that this could change. Many families who had a child studying interstate during the pandemic faced heartbreaking decisions regarding education and these decisions often resulted in long periods of family separation. We would appreciate ICPA (Aust) continuing to work with the relevant authorities to classify students who attend school or university outside their state of residency, and their families, as Essential Travellers under emergency management plans. This would help ensure that students would be able to access their place of education with relative ease. It would also mean that families could transport students to and from school and be able to see their children, avoiding unnecessary and heartbreaking periods of family separation.

A10. Balranald Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that relevant authorities create a standard essential traveller exemption for rural and remote boarding school students and their parents and tertiary students that live in a different State to their educational institution, should border closures occur in the future.”

Explanation:

During 2020/2021 COVID-19 pandemic, many rural and remote boarding and university students and their families were placed under undue stress when State border closures prevented students returning home or back to school or university, preventing them from being able to access their education, and maintain their emotional well-being. Some students were unable to return to school for months, without structured remote learning as other students at the school had returned to face-to-face learning. Others had to undergo 14 day quarantine alone, many more than once. Then there were the ones who were separated from home for up to six months, just to attend school. We are still seeing the mental and educational cost of these experiences today. Late in 2021, a National Code for Boarding School Students was created by the Federal Government, with all States agreeing to adopt the principles of the Code and implement it in each State. Overwhelmingly, few States implemented the Code in such a way that it benefited students and their families, only adding to the stress and uncertainty of travel and education plans. There appeared to be no federal body able to hold the States to account on this. A clear and transparent plan for boarding students and their families in the event of further border closures will allow for informed decision making and greater assurances into the future.

A11. Balranald Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to request the relevant authorities consider the emotional well-being of boarding students when implementing COVID-19 management plans in boarding houses.”

Explanation:

With school returning in 2022 during the Omicron wave of COVID-19, State Governments again gave differing guidelines to boarding houses and hostels to accommodate and care for students upon return.

Many boarders commenced boarding with a ‘drop off’ where parents were not allowed on school site and students were unable to leave school premises for any reason, including medical appointments.

Many of these boarders share classes with day students who return home daily with freedoms to come and go from school.

In many cases, it would seem boarding students are being isolated on school grounds to avoid isolation in the future. This could become detrimental to the emotional and social wellbeing of students if it is to continue for prolonged periods of time, as well as effecting their ability to perform academically.

The lack of consistency around these requirements has led to confusion and stress for many families and children. Some state health authorities have defined all boarding students within a boarding institution as close contacts of each other, while others have different rules. Some are allowed to have students isolate within the boarding house, while others have been told they cannot do this, and any child who is unwell, deemed a close contact, or positive with COVID-19 must be collected immediately. This obviously presents logistical problems with many families unable to make a return trip from home to school safely without needing to stay overnight along the way due to distance, but unable to do so with a student with COVID-19. These scenarios present constant concern and worry for boarding staff, students and family, causing building stress and worry for all involved, while the wider community returns to a greater sense of normal while living with COVID-19.

The gap is widening for the rural and remote students accessing education through boarding school. With ICPA (Aust) continuing to advocate for these students, their wellbeing can be at the forefront of the relevant authorities.

S1. Bollon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continue to raise awareness directly with Boarding Schools and the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) about the important role they play in affordability and access to education for geographically isolated (GI) children.”

Explanation:

Members are very grateful for the financial support which many Boarding schools and Government provide to GI families. Without this assistance opportunities for our children would be much more limited. Bollon Branch would like to see ICPA (Aust) continue working with ABSA and Boarding Schools directly to highlight the unique challenges faced by our GI families. It is important that schools continue to contribute to keeping education affordable and within reach.

COMMUNICATIONS

Internet Access

A12. Katherine Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to request the Minister for Communications ensure all rural and remote 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 is an important breakthrough. The prioritisation of installations required for education is paramount. Many remote families are using the internet provided by the family business or are having to pay for it themselves if educational internet data is not part of their employment package. This includes tertiary and training students, small rural schools and boarding students who've returned home for a period of time.

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.

A13. Lakes District Branch (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate Government and telecommunications providers to ensure all geographically isolated students have appropriate and affordable internet access.”

Explanation:

We acknowledge the work ICPA (Aust) has undertaken in raising concerns regarding communication services across rural, regional and remote Australia for the purpose of educating students.

Members still feel disadvantaged and left behind in the ever-changing world of technology and the services available to them. Data speeds, plan sizes and service reliability are frequently improving, though our members have concerns about the affordability, data allocations in plans, reduced connection and additional expenses incurred when they exceed their plan limits.

With many of our members continuing to have students at home in COVID-19 isolation and those who educate full time from home undertaking their education via remote learning, it remains apparent that the ratio of Mb/\$ between rural and remote areas of Australia and urban areas is significantly higher thus further heightening the internet divide.

A14. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) seeks an assurance from nbn that the installation of a Sky Muster service and its hardware will continue at no cost to rural and remote student households, to ensure affordable access to education for geographically isolated students.”

Explanation:

Currently, all equipment and a standard installation are provided free of charge to consumers and is covered by the nbn. Should this situation change in the future, we would like an assurance from nbn that the standard installation remains free of charge for geographically isolated students. As a result of COVID-19 and online learning, a greater number of members have installed a Sky Muster service. There are however members who are yet to install a Sky Muster service due to the lack of requirement for large data allowances. We want to ensure that any future uptake of a Sky Muster service is affordable for parents of rural and remote students.

A15. Mount Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to satellite internet providers to develop an affordable product (hardware and data packages) that can be accessed for the delivery of education by families who live and work in rural and remote areas for the majority of the school year away from a permanent place of residence.”

Explanation:

Following the successful Sky Muster satellite mobility trial conducted by nbn with the help of participating ICPA families in 2021, it has been shown that transportable satellite internet kits can be set up by families and provide a quality connection to help families who work and live in remote camps and areas of Australia and move regularly due to their work. These units help families access schooling and other data needs. In December 2021, Retail Service Providers launched the newly developed transportable satellite internet products to customers. However, the cost of these units is prohibitive for the average rural and remote family with equipment cost in excess of \$25,000 to purchase and the ongoing data costs in ranges of \$500-1000 per month. ICPA (Aust) has been requesting transportable internet systems for families requiring access to online schooling in remote areas for a number of years and this has now been successfully developed. It is essential that these units be offered at a reasonable cost to families who will rely on them for their children’s education. With Distance Education in all States being delivered mainly

online, students miss major sections of their study if they do not have internet, and for those families in remote camps, which move regularly from place to place, transportable satellite units are the only means for their children to keep up with their schoolwork. We ask ICPA (Aust) to encourage RSP's to offer an affordable transportable internet solution for families who live and work remotely and depend on internet for the education of their children.

Example: A family in our branch run a fencing contractor business and they move from one remote area to another as they complete each job and move on to the next - often being in far northwest Queensland or the Northern Territory, many kilometres from any homestead or internet source. In order for their children to have internet to access the online components and work for their Distance Education lessons, the family has recently signed up for a transportable internet system with a purchase cost of over \$30,000 and a monthly data plan of \$600 – just so their children can have access to the same schooling opportunities as other distance education students.

A16. Mount Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Government for a subsidy, or other assistance, to reduce the cost of satellite internet (both hardware and data packages) to make these services more affordable to families who rely on transportable satellite internet solutions for the delivery of their children's education due to living and working in rural and remote areas for the majority of the school year away from a permanent place of residence."

Explanation:

There are a number of families across Australia who live and work in remote areas out in camps (e.g., stock camps, fencing camps, earthmoving businesses) or other situations away from permanent residences during 'the season'. These families often have their children with them and undertake schooling via Schools of Distance Education or Schools of the Air.

The bulk of distance education schooling is now done online, and it is essential for students studying through distance education to have good internet service. Acquiring internet is extremely difficult for families who move from remote area to other remote areas regularly due to the nature of the work they do.

Transportable satellite internet units have recently been developed and are now offered by a few Retail Service Providers (RSPs); however, the cost of these units is extremely high for the average family trying to connect internet for schooling purposes. We've given the example in another motion, where a member family in our branch has recently set up one of these transportable internet products at a cost of over \$30,000 and a monthly plan of \$600.

There are currently no subsidies, grants or assistance to help with the costs of these transportable units for schooling. For customers who do live in a permanent dwelling, the Sky Muster hardware that satellite internet customers have installed in their homes comes at no cost thanks to assistance from the Government.

We ask that families, who move regularly due to their type of work in geographically isolated areas and who are living in some of the more remote areas of our country during the school year, also be given some form of assistance by the Government to set up transportable internet so that their children can access their education without a huge financial burden being placed on their family.

A17. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED - D/C by A16

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the relevant ministers and departments to ensure that internet costs for working, travelling families of geographically isolated children enrolled in distance education have access to subsidised, transportable satellite internet and all associated costs involved with purchasing these kits are also subsidised."

Explanation:

There are currently minimal kits and internet plans available in Australia for families who frequently travel and move due to work commitments. The kits that are available at present, which is only ONE, cost in excess of \$18,000 and internet plans start from \$300 per month.

A18. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED - D/C by A16

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to satellite internet providers to develop an affordable product that travelling families can access for the delivery of education.”

Explanation:

Currently for travelling/working families, there is only one satellite internet company that caters for frequently moving working teams and as this is the only option, they can and do charge high amounts of money for their service as there is no other option in Australia at present.

Mobile Coverage/Service

A19. Kindon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications, Minister for Education and relevant bodies, for rural and remote schools to continue to be a priority in future Mobile Black Spot Program rounds and that mobile coverage solutions, when implemented, work well and extend beyond school grounds.”

Explanation:

This motion was tabled at the 2021 ICPA Federal Conference in Longreach and unfortunately mobile reception in our small school area is even worse than it was last year. The mobile reception cuts from 3G to 4G, the landline has poor connectivity and the satellite phone can only pick up signal outside in the middle of the grassed area which means that the lack of mobile coverage is detrimental to all those on the school grounds.

As mentioned last year, our small school is located along the busy Gore Highway, Queensland in an area with inconsistent to no mobile coverage. The school community, like others in similar situations, has purchased and put in their own booster to enable some mobile coverage at the school to meet the broadband needs of the students and staff. However, there are numerous interruptions to the school day and staff's home life due to people coming onto the school grounds to use the school's mobile signal, which the school is providing themselves.

It is essential that small rural schools are considered priorities for mobile coverage under future Mobile Black Spot Program rounds and that these services once installed work adequately and provide coverage beyond the school premises.

This was the explanation to the motion last year which we have included for more background information:

Rural and remote schools right across Australia are the hub for many communities and often the first port of call in many situations. They are the place that people gather too when an emergency happens in a district. Some schools are so isolated that they are the desired place to house defibrillator machines as they are the 'go-to' point during a crisis. While these schools have the task of overseeing such important life saving devices, many do not have the mobile service to ensure adequate medical advice is received in such an emergency.

With minimal or no mobile coverage for areas outside of some schools they find themselves often in situations where motorists come in for help asking to use the school phone which pulls teaching staff away from classrooms to identify and record who is on school property or even on-site Principals in adjacent

residences woken at all hours with demands for assistance. To entice and maintain valuable school staff to remote small schools is difficult. It is imperative that they are provided with not only a safe and secure workplace but also for privacy in their home.

Some schools are going to the extraordinary length of purchasing their own mobile booster hardware out of their school or P & C funds to ensure that mobile service is available on the school grounds. However, this privately supplied coverage usually does not extend beyond the school fence. Communities and those travelling past these schools with private signal boosters soon learn that they can access some limited service at the school. In attempting to get connection from the mobile boosters at rural schools, people are entering school grounds in order to make calls. Schools usually require records of who is on school grounds, contact details etc and also ensuring the purpose of being on the grounds is known. Handling extra visitors who merely want to use phone service uses up valuable time for teachers and staff. The interruption to school routine could be minimised if rural schools had more general mobile coverage. The footprint for this coverage needs to extend beyond the school perimeter and sufficient infrastructure needs to be in place to ensure this can happen.

Rural and remote schools need to continue to be considered as priority for mobile coverage under future Mobile Black Spot Program rollouts and ensure that when mobile coverage is installed the coverage reaches outside school grounds.

A20. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications and telecommunication providers, to investigate the reliability and capacity of backup power on mobile towers to ensure a consistent and uninterrupted delivery of educational programs to geographically isolated children and rural and remote schools."

Explanation:

The issue of the reliability of the backup battery on mobile towers during extended power outages is widely known. There needs to be a better system of identifying this failure and replacement of expired batteries. We request that ICPA (Aust) continues to raise this issue when in meetings with telecommunication providers highlighting that without a reliable mobile and communications network, student learning is being impacted.

Telephone

A21. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

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

Explanation:

The Universal Service Guarantee (USG) should remain on landline telephony services for those living outside of mobile coverage areas and these landline services should be maintained and upgraded, as necessary.

Currently there are ICPA members who rely upon their landline as their only means of reliable and affordable voice service due to poor mobile coverage, so it is imperative that the landlines are retained and maintained.

ICPA (WA) acknowledges the advocacy by ICPA (Aust) for families living in rural and remote parts of Australia who require two forms of communications, due to the nature of where they live, i.e. phone/voice and internet/data/voice - each as a separate service not solely relying on the same mode of delivery and thus ensuring if one service fails the other is still available.

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

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Communications to ensure fault restoration and entitlements for geographically isolated students and their families occur within the Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) Standards.”

Explanation:

The CSG Standards for repairs in remote service locations is 3 full working days after reporting. It has been acknowledged by Telstra that the existing copper landline service is old technology and sometimes the sourcing of parts can be difficult. ICPA (WA) acknowledges that if eligible, there are CSG financial entitlements when repairs cannot be completed within the CSG Standards. However, the timely repair of the service is of great importance to members, especially for those without an alternative voice service, and the focus needs to remain on meeting the CSG Standards.

A23. Alice Springs Branch (NT)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Australia Post and relevant government departments to ensure that geographically isolated distance education school materials are classified as essential mail and as such, their delivery is prioritised during mail disruptions, such as a natural disaster.”

Explanation:

In January 2022, flood waters between Glendambo and Coober Pedy SA caused serious damage to both the Stuart Highway and North/South Railway line which made both the road and rail impassable for weeks. During this period of road and rail closures Australia Post proceeded to process 'express post' mail to the Northern Territory but held all other mail packages in Adelaide until the railway was repaired and running again. Many families across the Northern Territory were left without access to their mail for almost three months. Due to it being the start of the school year this also meant home schoolrooms went without vital education resources and supplies. Australia Post's delivery procedures SHOULD BE reviewed to ensure all ESSENTIAL mail is delivered in a timely manner during natural disasters no matter where people reside.

CURRICULUM**A24. Mount Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)****CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and other relevant bodies for geographically isolated students to continue to be offered practical choices/alternatives for sitting National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing.”

Explanation:

In light of NAPLAN moving to an online format, our branch is concerned that the options for geographically isolated students to complete the tests have been restricted particularly for those families who:

- are unable to travel to their school to participate in the NAPLAN testing due to distance/family work etc,
- do not have suitable internet connection to access the tests from home/place of schooling, or
- have incurred limitations on students being allowed to complete the testing where they reside.

We also understand there may have been inconsistencies across schools as to the options available, with some schools providing differing information to families.

Options for sitting NAPLAN need to remain in place for geographically isolated students who may have difficulty in getting to a school for testing due to distance, and others may have difficulty in accessing NAPLAN in an online format due to being in a remote area without internet. Families need to be clearly informed of their options and these options offered consistently.

Examples:

A family living and working in a fencing contractor camp situation in remote Northern Territory and enrolled in a Queensland School of Distance Education, asked if their children could sit the NAPLAN online at their camp. They have recently set up a transportable satellite internet unit at a huge cost to their family which would allow them to do the testing online. Their school of distance education put in a request for all students enrolled at the school to sit NAPLAN at home if required, however, this family was one of eight families in the school that were not granted permission. The family was advised that the children would need to go to the closest school to sit NAPLAN in person as they were considered to be too close to a school for them to receive permission to participate from home. The closest school for the family at the time was located more than 200kms away at Borroloola NT and it was not possible for the family to attend at this school due to work commitments on the property that they were on.

Another family that our branch is aware of also lives and works in a camp situation in NW Queensland. This family did receive permission to conduct NAPLAN at 'home' however they were out in camp and did not have internet facilities available to them for their children to participate.

A25. Mount Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) works with Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) and other organisations to raise awareness among boarding schools that some rural and remote students are unable to participate in National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing and other external examination programs due to geographic isolation reasons, and this should not impact on their eligibility for enrolment at boarding schools."

Explanation:

There are students living in rural and remote areas who have difficulty accessing examination programs such as NAPLAN, ICAS and ACER due to the distance they have to travel in order to be at a testing centre or lack of adequate internet (or any internet) where they reside for most of the school year. Some boarding schools ask for NAPLAN results, ICAS, ACER and other external examination information to be submitted during enrolment processes. Geographically isolated students who are unable to sit these types of examinations should not be penalised if they are unable to participate due to where they live or lack of internet service. We ask ICPA (Aust) to help raise awareness with boarding schools of the situation that some geographically isolated students are in and for schools to take this on board when considering these students for enrolment, so that there is no detrimental effect on these students who are unable to sit those types of examinations.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

A26. CONJOINED MOTION presented by:

CARRIED

Katherine Branch (NT), Western Australia State Council (WA), Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA), Alice Springs Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate the Federal Government to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) in recognition of the role the Home Tutor plays in educating geographically isolated students via distance education."

Explanation Katherine Branch (NT):

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 Western Australia State Council (WA):

Recently, it was suggested that the States need to lobby for this at a State level. Whilst we absolutely support the intention of DETA and would embrace its introduction WA members feel that dealing with this at the State level could detract from the importance of such an allowance and potentially leave a situation where some States have a version of DETA and others do not.

The argument from the Federal Government is that the deliverance of education is a State's responsibility. That responsibility is being borne by the State through the deliverance of education utilising distance education and School of the Air.

Each eligible child, who boards away from home, is afforded a federal allowance (AIC) from the Federal Government to assist with the cost of boarding, as boarding is a necessity for those children to have equitable access to an appropriate education. Children who access distance education through School of the Air are no different. Instead of boarding away from the family home, these students, due to their age, are reliant on Home Tutors as a necessity for equitable access to an appropriate education.

We feel that Federal ICPA representing all States on this issue will, if DETA is adopted, support ICPA members fairly across Australia.

Explanation Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA):

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 Alice Springs Branch (NT):

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 turns 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 to a family paying a Home Tutor between \$25,000 to \$45,000 depending on salary / wage agreements. On top of the wage a Home Tutor is paid, they 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.

A27. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Federal Minister for Education does table, at a forthcoming Education Ministers Meeting, a national approach to financially assisting distance education tutors in their delivery of public education in geographically isolated home schoolrooms; and to provide outcomes of this meeting back to ICPA (Aust)."

Explanation:

We appreciate that work is in progress for this motion. We thank ICPA Federal Council for your efforts thus far and wish to advise that the issue is still relevant and ongoing.

Australian, State and Territory Government Ministers responsible for education attend the Education Ministers Meeting (previously COAG/Education Council). In addition to early childhood education and care, international and higher education, the Education Ministers Meeting is a forum for collaboration and decision-making on school education.

In previous years, our motions have asked ICPA (Aust) to advocate for a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA), and we appreciate that ICPA (Aust) continues to do this.

We also understand that in early 2020, the Federal Education Minister advised that the lobby for a DETA should be directed to State Education Ministers.

NT State Council have gained the support of Northern Territory members to advocate to our State Education Minister for a DETA, however we believe that until there is willingness from all levels of government to recognise the value and necessity of distance education tutors in geographically isolated schoolrooms, our chances of individual success, State by State, are diminished.

In this motion we call for Australian, State and Territory Government Ministers to have a collaborative discussion, in a forum that has the collective power to bilaterally appreciate and agree that distance education tutors in geographically isolated schoolrooms are critical to the delivery of public education in rural & remote Australia, and indeed the cost of delivering this public service should be carried, or at least shared with government, not carried by the family alone.

A28. Broken Hill Branch (NSW)

LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) requests Services Australia to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) for geographically isolated students undertaking secondary education via Distance Education.”

Explanation:

As students reach the secondary level of their schooling through distance education, their needs become greater from the primary years. Currently, the AIC allowance is the same for secondary students studying via distance education as primary students. Once a student reaches Year 7, they more than likely need to change schools. This means extra cost of setting the student up for the school year. Changing schools encompasses new costs such as uniforms, appropriate furniture, educational resources, technology devices and access to satellite internet. With students moving into secondary schooling through Distance Education, it quite often means that the school is a much further distance from their home. This makes travel and accommodation expenses higher for students to be able to attend residential events.

For example, many ex-Broken Hill School of The Air (BH SOTA) students are continuing their education into secondary through Dubbo School of Distance Education (DSODE) or ECalrossy. As students move on from BH SOTA, they need to return all furniture, resources, and access to satellite internet to the school. Another example are White Cliffs and other students who live in a town which has access to primary school but not secondary schooling. These students will be studying via Distance Education for the first time which means students need to be set up for their secondary schooling including new appropriate furniture, learning resources and new uniforms. With more demand on technology for student learning the families need to set up access to satellite internet and have the appropriate devices to carry out their schoolwork. Dubbo and Tamworth are a much greater distance from students in Far West New South Wales which adds to travel and accommodation costs for students to have equal access to educational experiences at the student’s school. All these expenses are the responsibility of the student’s family.

Some approximate costings:

Annual costs to a family include internet, furniture, uniforms, resources, fuel and accommodation for travel. Families need to travel for their student to attend compulsory residential requirements, excursions and sporting events. This can require travelling 2000km up to 6 times a year. Accommodation is then also required due to the vast distance from their home. These costs don’t include the ongoing costs of uniforms and additional resources.

An example of approximate average annual costs to geographically isolated parents within our branch with a student studying secondary education via distance education :

Fuel:	\$4800
Accommodation	\$1800
Satellite internet:	\$ 960
Furniture:	<u>\$ 500</u>
	\$8360

A29. Capricornia Branch of the Air (QLD)

LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) lobby the relevant government departments to outline within the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Guidelines the impact on AIC payments for geographically isolated students enrolled in Schools of Distance Education, who have been medically certified 'unfit' to engage in their usual full-time course and have been granted a medical exemption by the School of Distance Education."

Explanation:

Given the incidence rates of Post COVID-19/Long COVID-19 within the community, it is imperative that students who are medically certified to have Post COVID-19/Long COVID-19 be acknowledged as a valid medical reason to be absent from Full-Time study without losing the eligibility of AIC. More clarity is required within the AIC Guidelines to assist those working in the AIC call centres to help field the questions of AIC eligible families when faced with this issue and any other lengthy illness that students contract.

Case Study:

A geographically isolated distance education student who has been deemed medically unfit by a medical practitioner to participate in their usual full-time school program due to the effects of Post COVID-19/Long-COVID-19. The child has been granted a Medical Exemption by the SDE and therefore is still enrolled at the school but due to the cessation clause within the guidelines they have had their AIC payments cancelled. The family were diligent in notifying the AIC of the students change in circumstances, not being able to participate in the Full -Time course but due to their Term 2 instalment being paid 1 week prior to the notification they now have a debt to repay. They have received notification from AIC to say that their child has 'Ceased attending school on a Full-Time Basis' but they are still in fact enrolled with the school

Since the diagnosis, the family have had to travel to larger regional centres to undergo specialist medical tests which has added a large degree of travel and expense. It could be argued that the cancelled AIC payment could be used to cover these medical costs in a bid to assist the child to get back to full time study in the shortest possible timeframe.

A30. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Australian Government to review and expand eligibility criteria for geographically isolated families claiming Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) through Centrelink to make it more accessible."

Explanation:

Many families are having their Application for Assistance for Isolated Children denied because their place of residence is considered too close to a town school. When reviewing applications Centrelink is not taking into consideration the student's or family's individual set of circumstances. Perhaps the closest school isn't the most appropriate due to the family's work requirements, the student's learning needs, location of where they reside, educational outcomes or safety. It is a decision that is not taken lightly and greatly impacts the family financially.

A31. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to ensure that Schools of the Air (SOTAs) are not overlooked in the Governments' *Student Wellbeing Boost*."

Explanation:

The Labor Government announced pre-election that *‘every Australian school will benefit from Labor’s Student Wellbeing Boost, which will mean more school counsellors and psychologists, and extra funding for camps, excursions, as well as sporting and social activities that improve kids’ wellbeing. The average school will be \$20,000 better off this year’.*

When allocating funding to schools, it is imperative that SOTAs are included. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many camps, sporting activities and excursions have been cancelled. This has resulted in these students having either limited or no opportunity to engage with their teachers and peers in a face-to-face capacity. For students who are isolated by virtue of their geographical location, access to support services and the opportunity to reconnect with their peers is imperative for their mental health and wellbeing.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE***Early Learning*****A32. Western Australia State Council (WA)****CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government for geographically isolated pre-compulsory school students enrolled in a registered distance education program to receive the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance where they meet other eligibility criteria.”

Explanation:

The AIC Distance Education (DE) Allowance is designed to assist families to set up and maintain the schoolroom. Currently, part-time distance education students are ineligible, therefore families enrolled in pre-compulsory programs must bear the costs. 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 assist with 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. Full-time or part-time, every child needs a schoolroom.

A33. Katherine Branch (NT)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate the Federal Government for the AIC Distance Education Allowance to be extended to include all geographically isolated pre-school students enrolled in a distance education program.”

Explanation:

The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program. From the website 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 pre-schoolers 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 Pre-School Program in place for over 20 years and currently (Sem 1 2022) has 16 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.

A34. Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

CARRIED D/C by A32

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

Explanation:

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 programme 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.

Childcare

A35. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to review the In Home Care (IHC) Scheme to provide better provision for geographically isolated families to access affordable childcare."

Explanation:

The current In Home Care Scheme does not adequately meet the unique circumstances of geographically isolated families. The scope of the guidelines when accessing this scheme needs the flexibility to address the varying situations and differences that are associated with accessing childcare in remote locations.

A36. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to impress upon the Minister for Education and the Minister for Early Childhood Education, the need to prioritise a review of the In Home Care (IHC) program, to improve its ability to suitably deliver a child care program for rural and remote families."

Explanation:

We appreciate that work is in progress for this motion. We thank ICPA Federal Council for your efforts thus far and wish to advise that the issue is still relevant and ongoing.

In Home Care is the only subsidised Government child care program available to geographically isolated families who cannot access mainstream child care. As it stands, the design of the program is not a 'good fit' for families living and working in remote areas.

We believe a review, with input from key stakeholders including ICPA Federal and States, will highlight the improvements necessary to ensure this vital program continues to support rural and remote families in their workforce participation and child care requirements.

Importantly, we are not asking for an increase in funding, rather a review of policies which currently restrict families' ability to recruit and retain skilled educators in remote areas.

A37. Katherine Branch (NT)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Minister for Education amend the In Home Care (IHC) 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 would solve 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 childcare. 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 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 childcare 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 childcare 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 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.

A38. Westmar-Inglestone Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies relevant authorities to ensure that graduates with a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education, or equivalent, who are less than the age of 18 years are eligible for positions of employment through the In Home Care (IHC) program, regardless of their age, but rather commensurate with their education qualifications."

Explanation:

Students in rural and remote areas who attain their early childhood qualifications but who do not meet the 18 year old age requirement to work through the In Home Care program are disadvantaged from taking positions. This IHC criteria prevents highly educated and qualified young people from taking positions of employment. This in turn disadvantages families in need of early childhood education and care options, especially in rural and remote areas.

Case Study:

A current Year 10 student commenced a Cert III in early childhood education and care and will be working within a school-based traineeship in a kindergarten setting for the duration of her studies. She was able to commence the Cert III in Year 10 at high school as she had clear career aspirations to work within a rural setting as an in-home educator or carer. This student will not be 18 years old for approximately six months after the completion of Year 12, thus meaning she will be ineligible to obtain an IHC position and be disadvantaged in pursuing her career for this period of time.

A39. Capricornia Branch of the Air (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant government departments to immediately introduce guidelines to regulate the service fees that are charged to families by In Home Care (IHC) Service Providers."

Explanation:

Currently there are no guidelines in regards to how much fees can be charged to a family by an IHC Service Provider.

It is unconscionable that the In Home Care Service Providers can charge any given amount of fees to a family with no regulation. Potentially, this means that the parent is left with a bigger out of pocket expense each week. Given that there are no guidelines for Service Providers to set their fees by, this can allow services to charge exorbitant fees which can mean families requiring crucial care for their children may not be able to afford to access necessary care.

A40. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant government departments to immediately introduce guidelines to regulate the service fees that are deducted from educator's pays/wages by In Home Care support agencies."

Explanation:

Currently there are no guidelines in regards to the fees that can be deducted from an educator's fortnightly payment. CCS is given to families to help pay for having their child in either a day-care facility or having an educator through In Home Care (IHC). It is unconscionable that the In Home Care support agencies can deduct any given amount of CCS money from the educator's payment. Potentially, this widens the gap payment and means that the parent is left with a bigger out of pocket expense each week. CCS is there to benefit the child not the IHC support agency. Additionally, some IHC agencies have recently chosen to use eHarmony software to keep track of educator's hours worked and payments. eHarmony also attracts an additional fee for which is, in many cases, being charged to the educators by IHC support

agencies. Given this is a business-based choice made by the IHC agency, this fee should be paid for by the IHC agency, not passed onto the educator to be deducted from their payment each fortnight.

A41. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant government departments to undertake a review of the current service fees that are being charged to educators by In Home Care (IHC) support agencies."

Explanation:

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is a payment from the Australian Government that is designed to assist parents with the cost of childcare. In the recent years, fees that are being deducted from educator's fortnightly pays are increasing rapidly. In 2021 alone one particular IHC Service Provider increased their fees three times in a nine month period without any warning to the educator. The fees that are deducted from an educator's pay by the agency eat into the CCS funds that are allocated to the families to subsidise the cost of caring for their children. Making the out-of-pocket costs for families greater through unregulated and unrestricted fees/charges wrought by IHC service providers.

Early Childhood Education and Care – Other

A42. Wentworth Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Early Childhood Education review pay rates and incentives for Early Childhood workers in rural and remote locations."

Explanation:

For many years Education Departments have been aware of the need to provide pay and incentives to attract and keep teaching staff in rural and remote locations. We now need the same attention paid to attracting and retaining staff in the Early Childhood sector.

We are losing university trained early childhood educators to the school system where the pay and conditions far outweigh that of long day care centres, yet we know how important those early years are. These educators are with our children during their years of greatest development, yet we are not prepared to pay or reward them accordingly.

In very remote areas, access to housing or subsidised housing can mean the difference between having an operational centre or not. Rural and remote areas need assistance to attract educators because our children deserve a 'good start' too.

A43. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the relevant Federal Ministers for funding to be sought to address Early Childhood Teacher pay parity between teachers working at an Early Childhood Education and Care centre and a teacher working in early childhood education in a school."

Explanation:

Pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers is a significant issue. An Early Childhood Teacher completes a four year degree course. If they elect to work in the public school system in a rural and remote location, the additional benefits they would get compared to working as an Early Childhood Teacher would include:

- Additional 7 weeks of annual leave (approx. \$10,000pa)
- Significantly shorter contact hours per week
- Approx. \$20,000-\$30,000 additional salary
- Professional mentoring by other teachers
- Structured Professional Development programs (\$10,000 pa)
- Access to teacher housing (at a 70% discount on market rates in Bourke) (\$10,000 pa).

Early Childhood services are significantly limited in their budgets. It is important to find long term solutions to address pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers in rural and remote locations.

A44. Cunnamulla Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Early Childhood Education and the Minister for Education to immediately prioritise re-establishing early childhood educational programs in recognised highly vulnerable rural and remote locations.”

Explanation:

We would first like to acknowledge the work that Bush Kids have done in providing necessary health services and support in our kindy and wider community.

However, it is an ongoing issue that playgroups and other early childhood programs are not being provided and sustained in our communities.

- 2021 AEDC data indicates that 47% of children in Cunnamulla & surrounds start school developmentally vulnerable.
- Cunnamulla is still one of 5 locations going backwards and is recognised as a QLD state early childhood priority with ECEC launching the Connect 4 Children strategy in Cunnamulla in 2021. Through the Connect 4 Children strategy, communities in Queensland are developing unique plans to help improve the wellbeing of children prior to school (from birth to 5 years old). Each Birth to five plan is created locally by the people who are invested in, and care deeply about, the future of that community and its children.
- There has been zero contact from ECEC in community in the last 8 months. Previous contact came to 1 meeting in Dec 2021.
- Keeping Early Years in the Spotlight was developed through the Cunnamulla P-12 State School, with the support of all other education providers in the Paroo Shire, to support early childhood programs through the employment of an early childhood teacher 2 days per week. However, this position has remained unfilled since July 2021, only recently being filled at the end of July 2022.
- The Paroo Contact Children’s Mobile, including a fully equipped Toyota Landcruiser utility and trailer, remain idle in Cunnamulla unfunded.
- PCCM needs sustainable support and funding to immediately recruit staff to supply regular mobile playgroups to Eulo, Cunnamulla, Wyandra, Quilpie and Thargomindah.

Noorama is a small community 100kms outside of Cunnamulla who are currently running their own playgroups with volunteers and have been actively searching for funding to provide a qualified educator. With a total membership of 10 core families and 20 children.

The main issues this playgroup hopes to address include:

- Access to quality educators that can help parents learn how to interact with their children at home and identify developmental needs. If required, they could assist with pathways to support services.
- Ensure funding and services are reaching remote children
- Provide socialisation, education, and support for both parents and children.
- Prepare families and facilities/services for Distance Education, which will be required in the near future.

A45. South Australia State Council (SA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Minister for Early Childhood Education and the relevant departments for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services, to consider the unique needs of rural and remote families when it comes to the eligibility criteria for funding and benefits such as the Child Care Subsidy (CCS).”

Explanation:

In South Australia, the Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise (RICE) provide an Outback Childcare program that enables families to receive short-term childcare in the family home when they are in need of childcare during busy times or if they need respite or emergency care. Currently this program does not attract any Government support or funding, resulting in RICE having to rely on community donations or asking families to pay an unsubsidised, full rate hourly fee for the service.

The Childcare Subsidy Scheme (CCS) can only be received when a child is enrolled through a centre-based childcare facility or through the In Home Care (IHC) scheme which is currently unavailable for RICE member families due to provider limitations within South Australia.

The cost to access childcare without the CCS is an unaffordable option, leaving families to try find other ways to manage childcare needs. Families living in rural and remote areas have no real option of childcare like community creches, nearby centres or family or friends who could step in. Living on a remote cattle station 1000km from Adelaide makes asking your mum, sister or best friend to step in and help for the day unpractical and often impossible.

With the recent report that indicated the Federal Electorate of Grey (which encompasses 90% of South Australia, including all of its rural and remote areas) has the worst access to childcare in the country, just finding a facility, let alone accessing it, is a difficult undertaking in itself. The Outback Childcare service needs to be made affordable for families as well as being viable for RICE to manage and administer.

If the criteria for eligibility for the CCS was to consider the needs of rural and remote families, therefore allowing them to access childcare through the IHC program, then the RICE based Outback Childcare and similar services would become more affordable and accessible for families in times of need.

A46. Western Australia Council State (WA)**CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to implement a nationally recognised and administered Working with Children Card (WWCC)."

Explanation:

WA State Council fully supports the implementation of a nationally administered police clearance, specifically for children. Employees who move across State borders are required to reapply for a WWCC when applying for employment in a new State. This process can result in lengthy delays when employing staff of up to eight weeks, causing disruptions to students and families. Currently, a person who wishes to obtain a WWCC for work purposes is checked nationally, which is then administered at a State level.

RURAL SCHOOLS/SCHOOL TRAVEL**A47. Alpha Branch (QLD)****CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby relevant bodies 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:

Regional airfares are increasing in price all the time and students are sometimes paying exorbitant prices which are sometimes unaffordable when they are trying to compete with the prices mining companies and other business travellers will pay. A university student flying to Emerald left booking until two weeks before to fly home for Easter. The flight one way was \$712 which is unaffordable for a university student.

The bus and rail fares are also increasing and the number of these services being offered in regional areas are decreasing

A48. Walgett Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Federal Ministers and the Education Ministers Meeting to implement a national funding program that would guarantee no young geographically isolated children are left on school or childcare buses by installing sensor devices that sense sound and movement, to detect and alert drivers if young children have been left in the vehicle.”

Explanation:

Despite numerous incidents occurring over the years of children being left on school/childcare buses, this continues to be a major issue. These incidents occur on a far more regular basis than reported to the public. These incidents have caused distress and heat exhaustion but have also caused major physical injury and unacceptable death.

Whilst thoughtful Policies and Procedures are continually put in place in schools and childcare centres, there needs to be a procedure implemented to counteract unfortunate human error.

A Sensor Device that monitors sound and movement just like a home monitoring device could be set during the hours that the bus wouldn't ordinarily be transporting children. Alerts could be made to the bus drivers and centres or schools by mobile phones should the sensor detect anything.

Human error is inevitable, we urge the Government to act on implementing movement monitors as a matter of urgency on all school and childcare centre buses.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS**A49. Bourke Branch (NSW)****CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Federal Government for a permanent Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item number for telehealth consultations to be assigned to telehealth Allied Health Services, specialists and consultations, including but not limited to Speech Pathology, Paediatricians and Psychologists, where they aren't already available, to support the specific educational needs and learning difficulties of geographically isolated children.”

Explanation:

Many Allied Health Services are unavailable to rural and remote families.

Barriers are:

- that people have to travel long distances; sometimes to have the appointment cancelled
- people have to join lengthy waiting lists to access practitioners located in the metropolitan areas
- little or no access to allied health services, particularly for children with special needs and developmental delays (often on more than one domain)
- financial hardship caused by travel and accommodation costs while accessing treatment
- low socio-economic families living in rural and remote areas do not have the means to travel for treatment
- rural and remote people are often unable to find their way around or unfamiliar with metropolitan areas in order to access treatment
- most people needing National Disability Insurance Scheme plans are unable to navigate the system and without access to services they are unable to utilise their plans
- we are aware of many families rejecting National Disability Insurance Scheme plans due to lack of access to services.

Utilisation of telehealth services can be of great benefit to families in geographically isolated locations, who would otherwise have to travel considerable distances or encounter lengthy delays to access face to face consultations with relevant health professionals.

Students with developmental difficulties require frequent and timely consultations and these can be enabled via telehealth services for many families otherwise unable to access allied health professionals due to living in rural and remote areas.

Some specialist consultations, such as speech pathology, can be satisfactorily delivered using telehealth services where the technology is available. These services are already providing improved access to health services for some children in geographically isolated areas. The cost to families to access such services should also be equitable.

A50. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to Private Healthcare Australia (which is Australia’s private health insurance industry’s peak representative body) to ensure the rebates provided by private health insurers extend to allied health services delivered via telehealth, including speech pathology and indeed any allied health service necessary for the normal educational development of geographically isolated children.”

Explanation:

We appreciate that work is in progress for this motion. We thank ICPA Federal Council for your efforts thus far and wish to advise that the issue is still relevant and ongoing.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Federal Government expedited the inclusion of certain allied health services covered by the Medicare rebate, and since then there has been an expansion of telehealth generally. However, some private health insurers do not cover telehealth appointments, or if they do, they cover at a reduced rate compared to the in-person appointment.

In this motion, we are asking private health insurers to recognise the importance of telehealth appointments for geographically isolated children, and to remove the financial penalties of using a telehealth appointment instead of an in-person appointment.

A51. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) urges the Federal Minister for Health and other relevant Ministers and agencies to ensure that federally funded health clinics across Australia are accessible to all Australians, so all geographically isolated children can receive a diagnosis and ongoing treatment of medical issues that impede their ability to learn and thrive.”

Explanation:

We appreciate that work is in progress for this motion. We thank ICPA Federal Council for your efforts thus far and wish to advise that the issue is still relevant and ongoing.

Northern Territory ICPA members frequently report being turned away from their local public, albeit remote, health clinics because they ‘do not meet the criteria’ (to access the public health clinic).

Remote families have no other ‘local’ health clinic alternative, but if they ‘don’t meet the criteria’ and are refused treatment, they necessarily must travel vast distances to access treatment for what could have otherwise been dealt with closer to where they live, at their closest remote health clinic, serviced by rostered doctors, specialists and allied health providers.

It is not acceptable that publicly funded health facilities discriminate on race, demographic, or on any other basis, let alone in a situation where there are no other local alternatives for rural and remote families to ‘conveniently’ access.

Case Study: Mum of four-year-old enrolled through SOA with a stutter and some speech problems, went to local remote clinic wanting to book an appointment with a speech therapist that travels to the local clinic on occasion, during the year. Mum was told, “I’m sorry, you do not fit the criteria, you will have to

make an appointment in Darwin". Mum gets hold of the same speech therapist that travels to the local clinic, still told "No, I can't see you in XXXX (971km from Darwin), but I can see you in Darwin anytime". The speech therapist tells Mum that the first thing she must do is get a hearing test for her child, "Most local clinics are able to do a simple hearing test". Back to XXXX clinic and told yet again, sorry, you don't fit the criteria. Mum has had to travel 971km to Darwin for hearing tests and an initial consultation with a therapist; the rest of the appointments were done over Zoom. Mum reports "Zoom is ok, but certainly made it harder with the delay to be able to fully show the mouth positioning and sounds. It would be helpful to see the therapist at our local clinic once in a while, to make sure we are doing the right thing."

A52. Alpha Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Government to implement financial assistance and incentives to attract qualified health graduates to rural and remote areas to ensure the availability and accessibility of adequate specialist services for rural and remote children with specific learning needs."

Explanation:

Rural and remote areas are struggling for health workers – Doctors, Nurses, Speech Pathologists, OTs etc. All which are necessary for children who need these services in rural and remote areas. The turnover is huge, often a lot of the consultations are done over telehealth. Health workers are FIFO in a lot of rural communities. They are flown in by agencies and paid wages above the rates by health departments, as well as a huge fee going to the Agency who organises the workers. I have seen a health worker flown from Western Australia to rural Qld for a 10-day contract. If we could somehow get a system where these health workers are employed by the local health services and then, could get – and just guessing, \$1000 deducted from their HECS debt for every 6 months of service, it may help encourage and retain workers. This reduction would need to be dependent on the positive work review from their manager.

We talk about early intervention being the key to child development and positive outcomes. Often in rural areas issues are identified early, and referrals are done to Speech Pathology, OTs and various Specialities. The wait for these services can be months and crucial time is being lost with these young children, which then has a flow on effect, as developmental issues are unresolved by the time they get to start school. They then, in rural areas, have issues accessing the services they need through the education system. This often leads to many families with children with such needs relocating from the rural and remote areas to metro areas where they are able to access the services for their children.

In the last two years the shortage of health workers has increased. I know the HECS for some health degrees has been reduced, and this is a great start. We now need to work on getting these graduates to the rural and remote areas and then keeping them there.

TERTIARY

A53. Kindon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies all relevant Federal Government Ministers to significantly increase the Dependent Youth Allowance parental income limit to reflect the actual cost for rural and remote families who support dependent students at a tertiary level."

Explanation:

The current parental income limit to access Dependent Youth Allowance is far too low. Rural and remote students have no other choice than to move away from home to access university due to distance and the cost for families supporting these students is high. The parental income limit at its current level means that many rural and remote students are denied access to Dependent Youth Allowance.

A54. Bourke Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Federal Government to change the criteria for gaining Independent Youth Allowance, so that rural and remote students who have to leave home to study at tertiary level and are not eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance, are eligible for Independent Youth Allowance as soon as they commence the tertiary course of their choice.”

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 move hundreds of kilometres to major regional centres or cities and pay inflated rent and utilities for accommodation near their university. Moving so far away from the family home to 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.

A55. Bourke Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Federal Government to change the eligibility criteria for Independent Youth Allowance, so that those rural and remote students who choose to save or invest their earnings during the working period prior to attending university, are not disadvantaged by the Liquid Assets criteria.”

Explanation:

Students who choose to save their earnings during their gap year should not be deemed ineligible or disadvantaged due to the Liquid Asset Waiting Period. Many students work hard to save their earnings but instead must use their savings to support themselves and pay rent while attending university.

The Liquid Asset Waiting Period applies if the applicant has more than \$5500 in liquid assets prior to application for Youth Allowance and means waiting a number of weeks based on the amount of liquid assets. It tapers from \$5500 to \$11,500 meaning there may be a maximum 13 week waiting period before Youth Allowance payments begin.

Fellow students who earn the amount required to be considered eligible for Independent Youth Allowance but spend everything they earn, are eligible for the allowance straight away but those who have saved and have money in the bank are not eligible for the allowance until after the required waiting period, and therefore not eligible for Rent Assistance either until payments begin.

A56. 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 the 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. The current parental threshold is \$160,000 reducing by \$10,000 for other dependent siblings.

Parental income should not enter into Independent Youth Allowance criteria 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.

A57. Louth Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Minister for Social Services to increase Centrelink rent assist payments for rural and remote students who need to relocate from home to access their chosen pathway.”

Explanation:

Regional, remote and very remote children need to factor in rent to their study plans. Rent is the biggest component of a student’s costs. For example, to study in a larger city this may mean that a student has to work so much that their course suffers.

Fortnightly:

If a student is over 18 years of age, has no children and is single, Youth Allowance is \$304.60. Rent Assist varies according to your rent. If a student is paying \$124.60 in rent, they will receive a maximum of \$93.07 Rent Assist.

Approximate average fortnightly costs based on single basic room:

- Charles Sturt University Orange - \$400 without board
- Port Macquarie’s Charles Sturt University - \$480 without board
- Coffs Harbour Southern Cross University - \$400 without board
- Women’s College Sydney University - \$1200 with board
- University of New England - \$350 without board
- Sydney rented share accommodation - \$600 without board
- Larger regional NSW town/city rented share accommodation - \$320 without board.

A58. Lakes District Branch (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government to review the criteria for the Relocation Scholarship to include all students from geographically isolated areas who must relocate for the purpose of undertaking a university pathway and who do not qualify for Dependent Youth Allowance; and for this to be a standalone allowance.”

Explanation:

Currently, the Relocation Scholarship is only for a tertiary student who is in receipt of Dependent Youth Allowance. A significant number of students from rural, regional and remote areas in Australia are deemed ineligible for Dependent Youth Allowance as they do not meet all of the guidelines to claim this allowance under the current criteria.

To continue their chosen academic pathway students must assume the cost of relocation expenses and the ongoing cost of accommodation. This is an expensive exercise when moving long distances and should not be a barrier to pursuing further education due to geographical location. Rural and remote students deserve to be given equal support and opportunities to excel. Distance should not mean disadvantage.

A59. Walgett Branch (NSW)**CARRIED – D/C by A58**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Ministers to change the criteria for the Relocation Scholarship to include all students from regional or remote areas relocating who do not qualify for Dependent Youth Allowance.”

Explanation:

Dependent adults need financial help in relocating to university. In some instances, students have not had an opportunity to work and earn an income due to the isolation of their family home. These students are moving from remote or very remote areas like Walgett to the city or possibly even interstate and this is a substantial burden on the financial circumstances of their family.

The Relocation Allowance would give them the opportunity and time to move, settle and commence studies before having to seek employment to subsidise their cost of living away from home.

A60. Bourke Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the relevant Federal Ministers to change the criteria of the Relocation Scholarship so that tertiary 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:

Tertiary students who are eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance are also able to apply for the Relocation Scholarship which is a welcome injection of funds for any student having to leave the principal place of residence and set up a new place to live to attend tertiary studies. However, it is not available to students who are deemed independent or not eligible for any other allowance. 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 appear less, as they are not only unable to access Youth Allowance but are also ineligible for the Relocation Scholarship.

A61. Western Australia State Council (WA)**CARRIED - D/C by A60**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government review the criteria for the Relocation Scholarship to ensure all geographically isolated students who must relocate from their usual place of residence for the purpose of undertaking post-compulsory studies are eligible.”

Explanation:

In the primary school years assistance for access to education is offered through the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance and a conveyance allowance to access a school bus service or drive directly to school. In the secondary years, the AIC – Boarding and Second Home Allowances assist with the significant financial cost incurred when children are living away from their primary residence to access education. Yet, for many of these families when their children commence tertiary studies there is no assistance unless the child qualifies for Youth Allowance, which is very few.

It is recognised across all levels of government that geographically isolated children face barriers in accessing an appropriate education, and to overcome these barriers involves significant financial contribution. But when it comes to post-compulsory tertiary education our children are not sufficiently catered for.

Having incurred the initial cost of relocating, the ongoing costs associated with living away from home can become unmanageable for many families. Rental properties in Western Australia are at a premium and it is extremely difficult to find any shared accommodation below \$200 per week plus utilities.

This equates to \$13,000 per annum urban-based students do not have to fund. Students often seek employment to supplement the cost of living, which can become difficult to navigate with university timetabling, and as a result of the financial burden, many rural and remote students fail to complete their studies.

The requirement for a student to be receiving Youth Allowance to access the Relocation Scholarship is disadvantaging rural and remote students. Receipt of the AIC should also be deemed a component of the qualifying eligibility criteria.

A62. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) seeks clarification from the Federal Government and Services Australia to confirm that to be eligible for Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) the qualifying course can start either Semester 1 or Semester 2 in the study year immediately following year 12 and for this information to be clearly visible on the website.”

Explanation:

The Tertiary Access Payment commenced on 1 January 2021 and is available to eligible students who meet the eligibility criteria. One of these criteria is:

- studying a tertiary course at Certificate IV or above *in the next available study period after year 12 with no gap year.*

Discussions with Services Australia have confirmed that a six-month bridging course does not qualify for the TAP; the course is required to have a duration of at least one academic year. A student who then commences a qualifying course in Term 2 should be eligible for the TAP as they have not taken a gap year. Although technically it is not *in the next available study period after year 12*, without the TAP applying to Semester 2 the criteria immediately discriminates against those students who do not meet the entry requirements for their chosen course and are required to complete a bridging course or other necessary qualification in order to be accepted into their course of choice.

Clarity is extremely important to avoid confusion based upon whom you speak to at Services Australia.

A63. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government and Services Australia include the words ‘with a minimum duration of one academic year’ to the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) study rules students need to meet on the Services Australia website.”

Explanation:

Currently on the Services Australia website to get the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) students must be studying one of the following:

- university course
- Vocational Educational and Training (VET) course
- other higher education course.

Discussions with Services Australia have confirmed that to receive the payment a person must be studying one of the above courses with a duration of at least one academic year. This is a Services Australia internal ruling that is not advertised on the public website.

This is an important factor that families should be made aware of before applying for the TAP and we feel it would be beneficial under the **Study rules you need to meet** section of the website for it to read:

To get the TAP payment you must be studying one of the following:

- *university course*

- *Vocational Educational and Training (VET) course*
- *other higher education course*

with a minimum duration of one academic year.

A64. Lakes District Branch (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government to review the criteria of the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) for all rural and remote tertiary students.”

Explanation:

The Tertiary Access Payment commenced on 1 January 2021 and is available to eligible students who meet all of the following:

- an Australian resident
- meeting study rules
- from an inner regional, outer regional, remote or very remote area
- moving to study at a tertiary education provider that’s more than 90 minutes away from your family home by public transport
- have completed year 12 or equivalent
- studying a tertiary course at certificate IV or above in the next available study period after year 12 with no gap year
- 22 or younger on the day you start your tertiary course
- have parents or guardians whose income is under the current combined parental income limit of \$250,000.

Our branch is very appreciative of the establishment of this allowance but strongly feels the need for some amendments to the criteria:

- That the criteria ‘*studying a tertiary course at certificate IV or above in the next available study period after year 12 with no gap year*’ be amended to allow students who commence study in semester two to be deemed eligible. Students who complete a bridging course or Certificate IV course in semester one prior to the commencement of their chosen course are deemed ineligible for this payment.

A65. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to ensure regional universities are included in the proposed improvements as mentioned in the ‘*Your Education Policy - A stronger university system*’.”

Explanation:

The Labor Government announced pre-election that their “*Future Made in Australia Skills Plan will also deliver up to 20,000 new university places*” and that “*places will also be prioritised for universities offering more opportunities for under-represented groups such as people in regional, remote and outer-suburban areas, those who are the first in their family to study at university, and First Nations Australians*”.

For many students from rural, regional and remote areas who have faced varying disruptions and challenges in accessing an education over the past three years, the prospect of continuing to be distanced from their families is influencing their decision to continue with their post-compulsory education.

Statistically, rural and remote students are underrepresented in post-compulsory education. Increasing places at regional universities would offer students the ability to study within the regions, remain connected to their communities and help to improve the academic outcomes for this cohort.

A66. Louth Branch (NSW)**LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Minister for Education to consider ways to condense tertiary training, such as at Marcus Oldham Agricultural College.”

Explanation:

Several member families at Louth have expressed concern about the ‘time wasted’ when their young adult children are completing a tertiary qualification. Students who live in a very remote context such as Louth, Wanaaring, White Cliffs, Hungerford, and other places our members come from, by necessity relocate many kilometres away to access training and study.

In most instances, the training/study institutions’ destinations are expensive places to live. Isolated students are entitled to access Independent Youth Allowance once they have proven their independence.

The Youth Allowance rates allow for rent and living costs, leaving very little if any at all once they are deducted. Accessing extra part time work prevents students from receiving the full Youth Allowance rate. Thus, it is often a frustrating time, and the reality is that remote parents need to financially assist their children whereas peri-urban and urban families can arrange accommodation which is cheaper or free.

These stresses could be alleviated if the courses were able to be completed in a shorter time frame, such as provided at Marcus Oldham. Louth Branch would like to see public universities considering offering that flexibility to condense their courses too.

Louth Branch would like to see that remote students have access to (some of whom find study more difficult) an accommodation institution at which they study on a daily basis from ‘nine to five’ (40 hours/week) so that they finish their courses at a speedier rate. We have mentioned Marcus Oldham as an exemplar of education delivery, not because of its agriculture courses, but rather because its model is based on high student contact hours, small class sizes and devoted lecturers.

Another benefit would be students possibly returning in a shorter time frame to their remote communities with their skills.

S2. Katherine Branch (NT)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) raises awareness to the relevant Ministers and administrators of the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships (RRES) program of the hardship caused by unacceptably late payment of some Semester 1, 2022 instalments.”

Explanation:

In order to qualify for a Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship, a student has to prove their need for financial assistance. In 2022, the first 6-monthly instalment for the year in some cases was not paid until late May causing undue anxiety and financial duress for students qualifying for and relying on this assistance. These students have had rent obligations and study and living expenses since January (if not since the previous year) and are trying to book flights home for mid-year breaks. Such a late payment of the valued scholarship is distressing.

TRAINING**A67. Western Australia State Council (WA)****CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to ensure regional TAFEs are included in the proposed improvements as mentioned in the ‘Your Education Policy - TAFE Technology Fund’.”

Explanation:

The Labor Government announced, pre-election, that a *'\$50 million TAFE Technology Fund will improve IT facilities, workshops, laboratories and telehealth simulators across the country'*.

It is important that our regional TAFE campuses continue to grow, develop and offer a broader/enhanced range of opportunities for the betterment of all rural and remote students.

Statistically, rural and remote students are underrepresented in post-compulsory education. Improving facilities at regional TAFEs would offer students the ability to remain within the regions and may reduce the financial barriers faced by rural and remote students.

MISCELLANEOUS

A68. Bollon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) allocates funds each year to an external professional consultancy to advise and mentor on how to best gain traction on some longstanding lobbies."

Explanation:

Bollon recognises the outstanding work that ICPA volunteers do every day for our rural geographically isolated students and families. We understand that other rural advocacy groups (for example AgForce) pay professional advisors and we believe it is time ICPA (Aust) also employed professional, expert advice to support our volunteer efforts. We recommend this be allocated and budgeted for annually.

A69. Yaraka-Isisford Branch (Qld)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust), on behalf of all ICPA Branches, acknowledges, thanks and appropriately recognises the out-going editor of Pedals Magazine, Mrs Raelene Hall, for the outstanding job she has done as editor of Pedals Magazine since October 2005."

Explanation:

Our branch is aware that Mrs Hall has also been the publisher of Pedals Magazine so this has been, in part, a commercial venture for her. Notwithstanding this, she has devoted countless hours to the complexities of editing a national magazine. The quality of Pedals has been exemplary and we are sure that branch members from all over Australia would wish to see Mrs Hall's efforts duly appreciated and recognised.

A70. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) Federal Council accepts our collective gratitude for the work you put into not only advocating for members but also for the depth and quality of information you develop, make available, and share with stakeholders, State Councils, and members in the course of your advocacy on a national level."

Explanation:

ICPA (Aust) has always done an incredible job advocating for members, but in this motion, we'd like to acknowledge Federal Councils' consistently high standards for the benefit of our members. From your submissions to national inquiries, to the new website, the federal BB, your portfolio briefings, and motion updates, your collective efforts are always the highest quality and for this, we thank you for representing ICPA nationally in a most professional and esteemed way.

S3. Yaraka-Isisford (QLD)

LOST

"That ICPA Australia investigate options to partner with a nationwide accommodation provider or hotel chain in offering a member discount loyalty program to help ease travel costs incurred by ICPA Members needing to access education and essential services in major centres and capital cities."

Explanation:

At some point, the majority of ICPA members across Australia will need to travel to a major centre or capital city for education, medical care or to access essential services not readily available in regional and remote areas. Membership loyalty discount programs are successfully run by other organisations such as RAV groups around Australia, meaning that a mutually beneficial agreement with a suitable accommodation provider or hotel chain, has the potential to benefit ICPA by:

- Helping to reduce out of pocket travel expenses for existing members.
- Attracting new members and boosting diversity within Branches.
- Raising the profile of ICPA in major centres through marketing campaigns of such a partnership.

This initiative is also an opportunity for a suitable hotel or accommodation provider to be recognised as a valued supporter of rural Australia and geographically isolated families. It is proposed that any agreement reached would be eligible only to financial ICPA members.

AGM**A71. ICPA Federal Council****CARRIED**

“That the Minutes of the 2021 AGM be accepted.”

A72. ICPA Federal Council**CARRIED**

“That the 2021 - 2022 Audited Report be received and accepted.”

A73. ICPA Federal Council**CARRIED**

“That the Federal membership fee remains at \$22.00 per member family for the 2023 membership year.”

Explanation:

ICPA (Aust) is currently in a strong financial position due to generous sponsorships/donations and reduced cost basis due to limited face-to-face meetings and delegation travel during COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions. Federal Council appreciates the past two years has been difficult for many members and considers that any increase in general membership fees should be in small increments with sufficient notice. Taking into account growing inflationary pressures and the need to adequately cover the costs of Federal publications, we expect to recommend a small fee increase next year, however in appreciation of the current climate, ICPA (Aust) would like to propose the Federal membership fees remain static for the 2022-23 membership year.

A74. ICPA Federal Council**CARRIED**

“That Corporate Membership be set at \$275.00 per organisation for the 2023 membership year.”

Explanation:

With growing inflationary pressures, Federal Council understands the need to increase Corporate Membership fees to adequately cover the costs of information delivery from all State and Federal publications and to be more reflective of the benefits of membership. All memberships will be reviewed following discussions with the incoming Pedals Editor and Publisher and in consultation with State Councils in the coming Federal Council year. We expect to recommend a fee increase next year however until those steps have been completed ICPA (Aust) would like to propose the Corporate Membership fees remain static for the 2022-23 membership year.

A75. ICPA Federal Council**CARRIED**

“That School Corporate Membership be set at \$275.00 per school or educational institution for the 2023 membership year.”

Explanation:

With growing inflationary pressures, Federal Council understands the need to increase School Corporate Membership fees to adequately cover the costs of information delivery from all State and Federal publications and to be more reflective of the benefits of membership. All Federal memberships will be reviewed following discussions with the incoming Pedals Editor and Publisher and in consultation with State Councils in the coming Federal Council year. We expect to recommend a fee increase next year, however until those steps have been completed, ICPA (Aust) would like to propose the Corporate Membership fees remain static for the 2022-23 membership year.

A76. ICPA Federal Council

CARRIED

“That Queensland Audit Services be appointed as auditor for the 2022 – 2023 financial year.”

A77. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA NT hosts the 2023 Federal Conference in Darwin on Wednesday 26 and Thursday 27 July 2023.”

A78. New South Wales State Council (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA-NSW hosts the 2024 Federal Conference in New South Wales.