



Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia

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

POST-CONFERENCE MEDIA RELEASE

Wave of Outback Dust Hits the Gusty Perth Shoreline

8 August 2022

The 2022 Isolated Children's Parents' Association Annual Federal Conference, aptly themed "Outback to Ocean – Growing Member Connections" brought together more than 160 delegates and guests from all over Australia to the banks of the beautiful Swan River, Perth, Western Australia. Wet and windy weather could not dampen the enthusiasm of what was a spirited conference.

The 51st Annual Federal Conference was convened on Wednesday 3 and Thursday 4 August 2022 the achievements and advocacy of ICPA (Aust) in the previous year were highlighted along with robust discussion and debate on 73 motions from 34 Branches and 5 State Councils from across Australia. Motions raised both long-term and more recent issues.

ICPA (Aust) Federal President, Alana Moller said "Our first entirely face to face Conference in three years provided an opportunity to reaffirm that ICPA continues to be an organisation which provides support and connections for the geographically isolated members it represents. While after 51 years it is disappointing to still see so many motions reflecting the educational inequities experienced by geographically isolated children and their families, it does reiterate just how important ICPA continues to be."

Throughout motions, delegates and guests heard of the ongoing significant disparity in educational opportunities and outcomes across rural and remote Australia. Issues raised included situations where families with students requiring allied health treatment are being turned away from local publicly funded health facilities because they do not 'fit the criteria' and are then forced to travel hundreds of kilometres to access the required services. Also high on the agenda was the need for itinerant families to have access to portable internet solutions for their children's education. While there are solutions currently available, these come at a cost of around \$30,000 with ongoing monthly data plans costing in excess of \$600, with no assistance existing to help cover these costs.

The Conference was opened by the Hon Fiona Nash, Regional Education Commissioner and delegates and guests were heartened to hear of her experience in rural and remote affairs and her dedication to improving education for geographically isolated children.

Keynote speaker Dr Craig Challen SC OAM, who participated in the Tham Luang cave rescue of 13 people in Thailand and was subsequently named 2019 Australian of the Year for Western Australia had attendees captivated by his recount of the cave rescue.

Other speakers provided attendees with useful information on communications from nbn[®] and Telstra and other philanthropic endeavours in rural and remote education were presented by the Country Education Partnership and the Minderoo Foundation along with a session on 'The Future of Boarding' by the Australian Boarding Schools Association.

ICPA Federal Council will immediately begin working with Government and stakeholders to continue advocacy to address the issues experienced by geographically isolated students from early childhood to tertiary and training put forward at Conference.

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