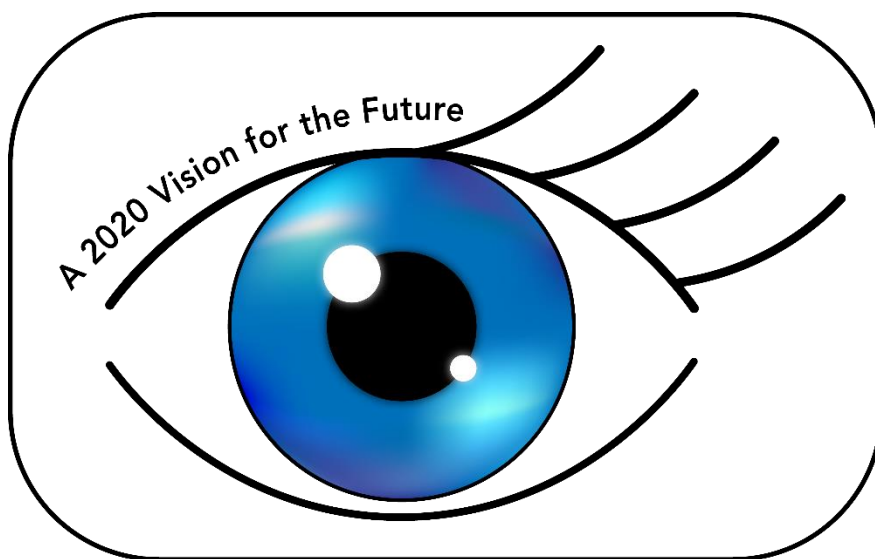


**2020 South Australia Isolated Children's Parents' Association Inc.**



## **State Conference Motions**



## **RURAL SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL TRAVEL**

### **Motion 1 Port Augusta Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA ICPA approaches airlines servicing the regional areas of SA and request that they implement a student fare.”

#### **Explanation:**

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

### **Motion 2 Marla Oodnadatta Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

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

#### **Explanation:**

Face to face events are imperative for children educated through distance education as they provide an opportunity for children to meet their teachers and interact with their peers, as well as extend their experiences and knowledge past what is offered at home. The cost of attending these events is increasing, given families have large distances to travel and many have to take time off paid work to attend. Currently families are reimbursed 28 cents/km which is far from the 89 cents provided to government employees. It is important that families are supported to attend these events as families might choose not to attend, which would be detrimental to their child’s learning.

### **MOTION 3 Flinders Ranges Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA ICPA asks the Department for Education to investigate the impact of continual contract appointments, as compared to permanent positions, for teaching in remote and regional schools.”

#### **Explanation:**

Department for Education policy that allows teachers to maintain right of return for extended periods (numerous year) requires schools to constantly backfill using contract teachers. The uncertainty of tenure for these contract teachers results in a high turn-over of staff. This in turn impacts negatively on student learning.

The uncertainty of continual contract teachers means constant change for students. While the difficulties of attracting and retaining teaching staff in small schools is widely known, the added lack of continuity consequently impacts on planning and student well-being. This is amplified in small rural

schools when high turnover of staff results in losses of experience specific to the particular learning environment.

## **DISTANCE EDUCATION**

### **MOTION 4 North West Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA State Council requests, works with and support the Department for Education to adjust the teaching ratios for distance education within Port Augusta School of the Air, so that they accurately reflect the realistic workload that teachers face.”

#### **Explanation:**

In November 2019 the Port Augusta School of the Air were advised by Marden Open Access College that the staffing formula for 1 Full time equivalent teacher was **18** Reception to Year 2 students and **23** students per FTE for Years 3 to 7. Our members are very concerned that this figure is too high in the realm of Distance Education. Distance Education teachers and in particular School of the Air teachers face so many more challenges than their town and city counterparts as State Council is fully aware of. With Distance Education student numbers on the rise in South Australia, we know our teachers are under strain with larger classes and band aid solutions being offered year in year out from Open Access College. Inevitably this never solves the problem and the same strategy is applied to deal with the ratio issue with no real long term solution. We understand that State Council has looked at the ratios of other states which we know to be lower in Queensland and the Northern Territory, for example, and we urge State Council to work alongside the Department for Education and OAC to adjust the figures to truthfully reflect the high teacher workload and to maximise learning outcomes for our students.

### **MOTION 5 Flinders Ranges Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA ICPA writes to the Minister for Education seeking an intervention to adjust Port Augusta School of the Air staffing ratios to more accurately reflect the needs of SOTA families.”

#### **Explanation:**

SOTA staffing ratios need to factor in the circumstances of geographical isolation and the extra support needed by supervisors to provide an adequate level of schooling to students. Staffing ratios should allow for each enrolled student to be counted as a minimum TWO students when allocating staff (one student, one supervisor that the teacher is required to support). It is also important that sufficient support staff be based at the Port Augusta campus to meet the needs of isolated students.

**Motion 6 Marla Oodnadatta Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA ICPA requests the Department for Education to adjust SOTA teacher-student ratios to accurately reflect the additional requirements of SOTA students.”

**Explanation:**

SOTA student-teacher ratios in South Australia are determined by a formula of 25% less of a mainstream classroom. Given the complexities of distance education, in particular the reliance on technology (uploading/downloading) and no longer having work written and printed and sent to families, class numbers need to factor in a teacher’s workload. Teachers and students in rural and remote locations, especially those using a mode of delivery that involves many complex variables providing unique and challenging opportunities, would benefit from reduced class numbers. This would ease the demands on teacher workload and increase student air-time thus optimising learning outcomes.

An adequate staffing allocation would include full time SSOs, Information Technology support and resourcing for targeted learning support for children with specific learning needs (noting that remote children need an extra level of service as they can’t access community support groups, regular appointments etc).

Ideally, the Department for Education would recognise the unique nature of distance education by giving SOTA the ability to advertise roles as “School of the Air” rather than OAC jobs, externally, thereby accessing a different pool of applicants with appropriate skill levels in relevant areas.

**MOTION 7 Flinders Ranges Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA ICPA requests the Department for Education to grant School of the Air a specific staffing allocation independent to that of Open Access College.”

**Explanation:**

In recent times, the staffing allocation at Port Augusta School of the Air has fluctuated with student enrolment numbers. While this is the usual process for staffing a school, this is not a logical way to determine staffing requirements to provide adequate support to geographically remote students enrolled at School of the Air. We ask the Department for Education to consider the unique needs of very remote students and offer concerned families some assurance that enough teachers will be available to support students and supervisors throughout their learning journey.

**Motion 8 Marla Oodnadatta Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA ICPA requests the Department for Education to allocate dedicated funding to School of the Air for a full-time Student Support Officer (SSO), based at Port Augusta School of the Air to work alongside the class teachers.”

### **Explanation:**

Whilst SOTA receives some SSO hours, many of these hours are used to cover administration and Information Technology tasks. Given the complexities of learning via distance education, student support is paramount to ensure students do not fall through the gaps. Early identification and adequate support for students with potential learning difficulties, disabilities as well as exceptional talents and abilities is necessary for a child to demonstrate their potential. Additional SSO hours would also support the teachers to provide adequate resources and support on aspects of learning such as student reading, to reduce their excessive workload. As Dr John Halsey's findings point out, "the early years are an especially critical time", as is early identification and sufficient support for those with learning difficulties. Additional SSO hours would provide support to teachers and optimise student learning and experiences and minimise the number of students that lack adequate support. This too would reduce the onus put on parents who are often left to put their own measures in place when teacher resources and time are stretched.

### **MOTION 9 North West Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

"That SA State Council requests Open Access College Marden to provide a SSO based at Port Augusta School of the Air to support teachers and student needs."

### **Explanation:**

SOTA has previously had SSO roles based in Port Augusta to support teachers and staff in their roles. With our enrolments increasing each year, the workload of our teachers also increases, leaving them falling behind and sometimes under so much pressure they resign to jobs with more adequate staffing levels. An SSO can be on hand to help take classes, support students in areas of learning, support staff with their workload and relieve the pressure of being a distance education teacher.

SOTA does not currently have any SSO's based in Port Augusta but can access them through OAC Marden. This is suitable for an online lesson with a student but not helpful for teachers based in Port Augusta who need support with resourcing material, setting the class curriculum, preparing for lessons and being available for students when they come to town.

### **MOTION 10 Flinders Ranges Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

"That SA ICPA requests the Department for Education to allocate dedicated funding to School of the Air for a full time Information Technology support person, based at Port Augusta School of the Air."

### **Explanation:**

The Port Augusta School of the Air community needs assurance that a full time Information Technology support person will remain at SOTA's Port Augusta campus, regardless of enrolments at School of the Air. IT support is now considered a basic necessity of allowing the continuing education of our isolated students.

**MOTION 11 North West Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA State Council appeals to Open Access College Marden to reinstate a finance officer based at School of the Air, Port Augusta.”

**Explanation:**

SOTA has always had a finance officer based at Port Augusta for the efficient running of our school. In 2018, the role was transferred to become an OAC Marden based position so all fundraising, payments, reimbursements and finance matters for Port Augusta SOTA are dealt with from Adelaide and are not as transparent to the school and families as have been in the past. For example, simply buying a SOTA school shirt from the office is preferred to be done through Marden so it feels very much removed from our community. In addition, SOTA families must fundraise independently for all our face to face events to be able to make attending these affordable for our students, this is something Marden families are not obliged to do, yet our fundraising efforts have to be processed via Marden where transparency has become an issue. It was a shock to our school community when this position was removed from our campus, and left families with the feeling that our school had again lost part of our identity to Marden.

**Motion 12 Marla Oodnadatta Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA ICPA requests the Department for Education to enable School of the Air (SOTA) teacher positions to be employed under the Port Augusta - Quorn Partnerships region as “School of the Air” rather than under the Central East Partnership of “Open Access College”.

**Explanation:**

Currently teachers at SOTA are employed under the Central East Partnership. This requires them to attend many training and development days in Adelaide, often mid-week which results in further pressures and exhaustion levels. The Port Augusta – Quorn Partnership offers many in-situ training and development opportunities throughout a year. This would involve the teachers with other local teachers and possibly, help retain teachers by involving them in the Port Augusta community.

**MOTION 13 Flinders Ranges Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA ICPA requests the Department for Education to provide additional, dedicated funding to School of the Air specifically to assist families from drought affected areas to attend face to face events.”

**Explanation:**

Geographically isolated families need to attend face to face events so children have the opportunity to meet their teachers and interact with their peers. The cost of attending these events is increasing and families might choose not to attend while family incomes are limited by drought conditions. It is important that the Department for Education recognise this hardship by providing additional funding.

**MOTION 14 North West Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA State Council continues to pursue the vital goal of autonomy for the Port Augusta School of the Air.”

**Explanation:**

The North West branch would like to thank State Council for the work they have been undertaking around this motion. Our branch wishes to give our support to council and further urge them to advocate and engage with all relevant parties who can assist in reaching this goal. You will hear many motions today of requests from this community to better School of the Air and distance education in South Australia, and until the needs of our staff and students are met this motion will remain high on our agenda.

**BOARDING SCHOOLS AND HOSTELS**

**MOTION 15 Flinders Ranges Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA ICPA writes to the Department for Education, Transport Services Unit and thank them for their recent correspondence regarding the State Education Allowance and its proposed processing and payment dates for each term for the 2020 school year.”

**Explanation:**

Over recent years members who have been in receipt of the State Education Allowance have had no real knowledge if their applications had been received and when they would be processed and paid. It is well known that the processing and payment of the State Education Allowance has been somewhat erratic, and families have often had to chase payments or have seen payments arrive much later than expected. The processing and payment dates proposed by the Transport Services Unit has been welcomed by families and we hope that applications will be processed and paid as they have indicated. We would however, like to remind the Transport Services Unit that due to the recent faulty AIC payment system, some families may not have their AIC payment letter by the first term dates. As this is a required component for receiving the SEA we would ask that they make allowances for this when processing payments.

**MOTION 16 SA State Council**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA ICPA State Council writes to the Minister for Education to request an increase in the State Education Allowance (SEA) amount”

**Explanation:**

The State Education Allowance is available to geographically isolated parents, who meet the following criteria

1. Are in receipt of the federal Assistance for Isolated Children payment
2. Have children at secondary level who board away from home to attend school or have set up a second home for the purpose of educating their children.

The SEA assists families with travel, boarding and other expenses associated with the education of their children. The allowance needs to ensure that it is sufficiently assisting families with these costs. These isolated families are faced with years of boarding school or hostel fees and extensive travel to access secondary schooling. In 2019 the average cost of tuition and boarding in South Australia was \$41,769 and fees have continued to increase.

In August 2016, Minister Close (the then Minister for Education and Child Development) wrote to ICPA to say that a departmental review of the state education allowance and remote education allowance payments had been completed with the following changes.

- The SEA was increased to \$2000 per student per annum (an increase of \$546 per student), indexed annually.
- the distance criteria for remote travel allowance was removed, making all students receiving SEA eligible for the \$250 per annum allowance.

The current payment of approximately \$2250 per annum is far below the gap left between the boarding fee, tuition fee and the cost of getting students to and from school. The allowance was last increased in 2016. It is time the State Government recognised this unfair burden and increased the State Education Allowance.

**Motion 17 Port Augusta Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA ICPA continues to work with the boarding schools in Adelaide and ask that they provide financial assistance in the form of a bursary to students that live at least 56km from the nearest school offering year 7-10 entry.”

**Explanation:**

There is a widening gap between the true cost of boarding and the AIC and SEA available to families of students that must board in order to receive their secondary education. The gap needs reducing in order that these families are able to meet the cost of educating their children. Since 2015 the costs of sending a child to a boarding school has risen from an average of \$37 237 to \$41 769.



## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & CARE**

### **MOTION 18 North East Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA State Council continues to work with Federal Council towards having the AIC extended to 4-year-olds doing Kindergarten by distance education.”

#### **Explanation:**

Currently, 4-year-old students studying Kindergarten via distance education are ineligible to receive the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance. If families received this allowance, it would alleviate the cost of providing an educational experience for their children. The majority of children who are enrolled in a distance education Kindergarten program are found to have better educational outcomes in later years, by forming these important foundations early in their educational journey.

#### **Case Study:**

- Laptop/Computer and printer (not supplied by RICE) - minimum \$500.
- Internet - no cost covered \$30 per month = \$300 per year. There is an ed-port that kindergarten students can access to have extra data – but it is an extra cost for families.
- Lessons - parent/governess. The expectation is 15 hours per week. (minimum wage \$20x15 = \$300) For roughly 40 weeks = \$12,000.
- Trips to Port Augusta - three times/year -say 9 nights throughout the year at @\$120/night + fuel = minimum \$1,200.
- This is a very conservative figure of \$14,000 that we are out of pocket. The Assistance for Isolated Children ‘Distance Education Allowance’ is \$4,278 per year.
- As a comparison, a face-to-face kindy in Adelaide costs \$600 for kindy fees and an \$80 excursion fee.

### **MOTION 19 North West Branch**

CARRIED/LOST

“That SA State Council continues to liaise with Child and Family Health Services, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the office of the Minister for Health and Wellbeing to pursue the basic right that all families have ease of access to government funded child and family health services regardless of their place of residence”

#### **Explanation:**

The North West branch would like to thank State Council for the work they have been undertaking in regards to the access to Child and Family Health Services for our members. Our branch wishes to give our support to council and further urge them to engage with all relevant parties who can assist in improving the health outcomes for our remote families.

Our concern is that there are still a number of families with infants and pre-schoolers requiring child health and developmental checks that are not easily able to access CaFHS clinics due to distance and a lack of engagement from CaFHS to provide the holistic care these families require. It was a detrimental loss to our families when the Child Health Nurse funding to RICE was lost in 2018 and RICE could no longer support families with home visits. Families in our branch now have to travel up to 400kms to access a CaFHS facility for their needs, and families are slipping through the cracks. It is not acceptable that a government funded entity such as CaFHS cannot provide adequate care to assist families living in remote regions of the state.

The RFDS has been playing a vital role in caring for remote families with children where CaFHS has an inability to reach them. This however poses an issue with South Australian families who access Broken Hill RFDS which are not aligned to the SA Health Service and their records. Also it is not expected that the RFDS picks up the slack where a government funded entity should be supplying the service.

Our branch would like to see a collaborative approach to the needs of our families by CaFHS and the RFDS where the RFDS can provide the means to get a CaFHS nurse into the homes, on airstrips and other facilities, so that our families can have ease of access to health care providers for their children.

#### **ADMINISTRATION**

**MOTION 20 Marree Air Branch**

**CARRIED/LOST**

The Marree Air Branch to host the 2021 State Conference in Port Augusta with a venue to be finalised.