



ICPA NT 2026 State Conference

Portfolio Reports

MOTION RESPONSE from Dept Education & Training

Boarding & Allowances Portfolio

Communications & Distance Education Portfolio

Early Childhood Portfolio

Miscellaneous Portfolio

Rural & Remote Schools Portfolio

Special Needs Portfolio

Tertiary & Training Portfolio

2025 Portfolio Teams	
<i>NOTE: President is active across all Portfolios.</i>	
Boarding & Allowances	Kiya Gill, Melissa Kerr, Bec Osmotherly
Distance Education & Communications	Amanda Murphy, Amanda Brown, Danyelle Haigh, Connie Woods,
Early Childhood	Julianne Vlach, Jacinta McInnerney
Tertiary & Training	Kiya Gill, Catherine Atkins, Bec Osmotherly
Rural & Remote Schools	Jacinta McInnerney
Special Needs	Constance Woods, Danyelle Haigh
Roads & Travel	Catherine Atkins

Policy Documents

The Policy Statement will become ICPA NT Policy (updated only via full Constitutional process). All Policy Objectives are determined by resolved motions from conference and referenced with year and motion number.

Summary of 2025 Motions

Portfolio	Motion #	From	Summary	Actions
Allowances ▾	A.01	Alice S... ▾	DOET - change measurement of zones from circles to actual km traveled (SAS)	COMPLETE- May letter - changes Term1, 2026
Allowances ▾	A.02	Alice S... ▾	DOET - share findings on Back to School (B2S)Payment Scheme review	COMPLETE-
Allowances ▾	A.03	Alice S... ▾	DOET - adapt conditions in guidelines for interstate DE enrolments (SAS)	COMPLETE-
Allowances ▾	A.04	Alice S... ▾	DOET - increase to full reimbursement (ISS) (note word change)	Increases and improvements made
Allowances ▾	A.05	Katheri... ▾	DOET - annual review - change to actual km not circles and incr\$ (SAS)	COMPLETE- May letter - changes Term 1, 2026
Allowances ▾	A.06	Katheri... ▾	DOET - extend B2S to NT interstate borders	COMPLETE-
Allowances ▾	A.07	Katheri... ▾	DOET - encourage annual review and improvement (SAS)	Basically done
Allowances ▾	A.08	Katheri... ▾	DOET - that if eligible for AIC (no reasonable access clause) then also eligible for (SAS) CONTRACTORS	COMPLETE- May letter - changes T12026 Katherine ▾
Boarding ▾	A.09	NT Co... ▾	Investigate trade focussed secondary options with boarding NT	Ongoing
Boarding ▾	A.10	NT Co... ▾	Support Aus Boarding Standard	COMPLETE- No action required other than to update ICPA NT policy
Distance Ed... ▾	A.11		DOET - subsidize full amt (ISS) and remains a key participant /advisor regarding its provision.	Increases and improvements made
Distance Ed... ▾	A.12	Katheri... ▾	DOET - that all GI DE students receive a laptop at	Bond for laptop usage has been removed &

			no cost to families	past bonds repaid.
Distance Ed... ▾	A.13	Alice S... ▾	DOET - regular comms with SOTAs and DCDD	Ongoing
Distance Ed... ▾	A.14	NT Co... ▾	Comprehensive review of NT DE's SOTAs	Ongoing
Distance Ed... ▾	A.15	NT Co... ▾	Min & DOET support FedICPA campaign to add GI loading to SRM	Yes. Ongoing
Distance Ed... ▾	A.16	NT Co... ▾	Formation of Distance Ed Supervision subsidy	Ongoing
Early Childh... ▾	A.17	Alice S... ▾	DOET - develop & implement Early learning program for GI central Aus	Ongoing
Roads & Tr... ▾	A.18	Katheri... ▾	DoL - increase Road maintenance	Ongoing
Roads & Tr... ▾	A.19	NT Co... ▾	Lobbies Qantas to extend Resident Fares	Conversations had, letters written
Roads & Tr... ▾	A.20	NT Co... ▾	Work with major airlines fairer GI student pricing structure	Conversations had, letters written
Special Needs ▾	A.21	Katheri... ▾	DOET - targeted support & \$ for SOTA AddNeeds team to support HT	Work in progress
Tertiary & Tr... ▾	A.22	NT Co... ▾	Continuation and expansion of Home Tutor program (CDU)	Work in progress

Boarding and Allowances Portfolio

Portfolio Team - Kiya Gill, Melissa Kerr, Bec Osmotherly

Eight motions were carried under the Allowances Portfolio, and two motions under the Boarding Portfolio at the 2025 State Conference, with lots of discussion around enrolment funding models, allowances, back to school vouchers, zone travel and the Student Assistance Scheme (SAS).

The Student Assistance Scheme policy and guidelines was simplified with the introduction of GrantsNT in 2023, and allowances have been grouped to decrease the burden on applicants. Using this system for applications is proving easy and less of an administrative burden on families.

Many Distance Education families were previously required to pay an IT bond when enrolling students in Distance Education in the Northern Territory. Following a review of the Department of Education and Training's School Fees and Voluntary Contributions Policy, schools are no longer permitted to collect or hold Student Resource Bonds.

As a result of this change, Student Resource Bonds should have been returned to families earlier this year. If you have not yet received your bond refund, please contact your Distance Education school in the first instance to follow up.

As part of its 2025 review of the Back to School Payment Scheme, the Department of Education and Training has expanded eligibility to include Northern Territory students attending an interstate boarding school that qualifies for the basic boarding allowance under the Australian Government's Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) scheme through Services Australia.

From 2026, eligible families will be able to purchase approved educational goods and services in line with the Back to School Payment Scheme policy and claim a one-off reimbursement of up to \$200.

Other key improvements to the policy include:

- An extension of the claim period through to Term 3
- Expanded eligible purchase options
- The ability for families to consolidate multiple students' entitlements

The Department of Education and Training has also completed a review of the Students Assistance Scheme (SAS) Policy. Key outcomes from this review include:

- Zone calculations will now be based on the most direct route travelled, using Google Maps
- Contracting and transient working parents are now eligible to apply
- Students residing interstate who meet Distance Education enrolment criteria may be eligible for the Distance Education Allowance if their family's closest business centre is Katherine or Alice Springs
- Greater flexibility for tertiary fares reimbursement claims, which will now be submitted through GrantsNT
- Introduction of an annual indexation factor to the scheme

ICPA NT thanks the Department of Education and Training for the significant improvements made to their policies and application criteria to support geographically isolated families.

The mission statement of the Education Act 2015 is -

“An Act to provide for the availability of education in the Northern Territory and in particular to provide for the access of all children and young persons to education programs appropriate to their individual needs and abilities, and for related purposes.”

ICPA NT advocated that the NT Government's position that it is “preferable all students should attend school within the NT, including boarding school”, is untenable and that instead their policy should work to keep families in the NT. We are aware many NT boarding students receive significant and ongoing NT Government support under the (Indigenous) Transition Support Unit to attend education opportunities across Australia. This should be available to all GI students in the NT, indigenous and non indigenous.

ICPA NT advocates that ALL geographically isolated families should be supported to choose a school with the best fit and necessary support for both the student and family.

ICPA NT met with Sara Sabib from Qantas after the AGM and a discussion was had about resident fares, with capped affordable concessional airfare to travel to and from boarding school, within the

NT and interstate. Currently, only residents of Alice Springs can access the resident fares for return flights to Darwin or Adelaide.

ICPA NT continues to advocate for concessional travel intrastate and interstate for GI boarding school students.

Federal Motions

Recommendations

ICPA (Aust) calls on the Federal Government to commit funds to:

1. Restore the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance to its original value, equating to 55% of the average cost of boarding.
2. Financial remuneration for individuals undertaking the role of supervising students in geographical isolated learning environments through a Distance Education (DE) school aptly called Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor (RICS).
3. Increasing the In-Home care Childcare Subsidy (CCS) hourly rate cap to ensure families who have no alternative childcare options are not faced with an unfair financial burden
4. Reforming Youth Allowance eligibility for rural and remote students by:
 - Raising the parental income threshold for dependent Youth Allowance to reflect the higher costs rural and remote families face when students must relocate to access tertiary education.
 - Removing the Liquid Assets Waiting Period which unfairly penalises rural and remote students who save during their gap year.
 - Granting automatic independent status to geographically isolated students commencing tertiary study, recognising that they have no option but to live away from home.

Communications & Distance Education Portfolio

Portfolio Team - Amanda Murphy, Amanda Brown, Danyelle Haigh, Constance Woods

Five motions were presented at the 2025 State Conference, all which were carried.

Motion 11 from Katherine asked for the full cost of the internet to be reimbursed in DE classrooms. As part of the Departments of Education and Training review of the Students Assistance Scheme the internet subsidy scheme will be revoked and will now form part of the Distance Education Allowance under the Student Assistance Scheme. The payment will now be paid at the beginning of Semester 2 as a one off payment and has been increased to match the most accessed internet plan by families living in remote locations up to \$195 per month. Upfront hardware costs of internet installations continue to be conversations had with the Department. NBN offers free installations through the **School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI)** which is open until 2028. NBN also has news to share in the upcoming months regarding low latency satellites.

Given that adequate and equitable access to reliable telecommunication and internet service is a vital part of distance education for GI families, NT State Council continues to work with government departments and relevant organisations to ensure that children accessing Distance Education in rural and remote areas have the best possible connections. As the world of technology moves fast, we need to ensure that education being delivered in geographically isolated areas is moving with it.

Motion 12 - That ICPA NT requests the NT Department of Education to ensure all Geographically Isolated students receive a laptop at no cost to the families, through Katherine School of the Air. Either through the form of a bond, or no cost.

Due to conversations with the Department, there was a major review of policies of laptop and educational materials supplied and fees charged by the schools of Distance Education.

Policy changes included in which no fees must be charged as below:

- laptops and other IT equipment required for distance education students to access the standard curriculum program, where the school of distance learning is the student’s primary enrolment
- distance education learning materials and resources, including the postage of materials and resources
- general stationery, subject-specific stationery such as fine pencils for fine art, and all preschool resources, required for students to access the standard curriculum program

Motion 16 - formation of a Distance Education Supervision scheme

ICPA NT continues to ask the Minister of Education to support the federal campaign for securing a **Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor (RICS)**. This is an ongoing issue for ICPA Australia and ICPA NT continues to support and advocate at a State Level. Motion 15 from ICPA NT was looking at adding a loading category to the School Resourcing Model for Geographic Isolated students. This has been a tricky issue to navigate but work continues. The NT has been an active participant in the Federal Virtual Round Table working group led by the Regional Education Minister.



The NT State council continues to advocate for all GI families, particularly Distance Education through delegations with NT policy makers and all relevant organisations. Government departments and the Education Minister are well aware and fully supportive of the importance of Schools of the Air for geographically isolated children in the NT. We must thank the Department of Education and Training for listening and taking on feedback and suggestions.

Early Childhood Portfolio

Early Childhood Portfolio Team - Juliane Vlach, Jacinta McInnerney

Only one motion was brought forward in the Early Childhood Portfolio at the 2025 ICPA NT State conference which was submitted by the Alice Springs Branch highlighting the non-existence of (mobile) early childhood playgroups servicing GI students outside the “community footprint” in Central Australia for over 2 decades.

During our delegation in June 2025 the lack of early learning programs prior to school in Central Australia were discussed with the Minister of Education, The Hon Jo Hersey. The NTG FaFT program was putting a funding proposal for mobile playgroups together which would have had a huge impact if eventuated but funding has not been confirmed yet.

And unfortunately, following recent risk assessments, the FaFT team is now unable to continue delivering Early Learning Playgroups in Central Australia during in-school weeks. While this is disappointing, ICPA Alice Springs has proactively engaged with Playgroup NT, who have committed to hosting an early learning playgroup in Alice Springs during in-school weeks.

We continue to work closely with the Families as First Teachers team as they investigate opportunities to deliver playgroups for geographically isolated children in the Central and Barkly regions. We have recently provided updated data on the number of geographically isolated children under five in these areas and remain hopeful that appropriate funding will be secured to support services for these families.

Discussions between ICPA and KICS Playgroup regarding potential fundraising initiatives to establish a mobile playgroup in Central Australia have not progressed any further at this stage.

KICS Playgroup (Katherine Isolated Children’s Services) continues to offer quality Early Childhood Services to the Katherine and greater region. This mobile model is one which we consider best practice for GI students. It is currently funded Federally under a 5 year programme but consistent long-term funding is still difficult and stressful.

ICPA NT welcomes the recent announcements from the Federal Minister for Education and Minister for Early Childhood Education around increasing child safety in education and care services. Followed on from the Federal Child Safety Review, we are very grateful to our Northern Territory Minister for Education and Training and Early Education, the Hon Jo Hersey for attending the National Education Ministers’ Meeting in Adelaide and strongly advocating for improved outcomes for all Northern Territory children including our youngest geography isolated Territorians and their families.

We would like to congratulate Sara Barker, a Territory Wide member who was nominated as the Playgroup NT Rural Community Development Officer, for 2026 Australia Day Community Champion,

Litchfield Council. Sara has supported volunteer-led playgroups for seven years and been a strong advocate for families in rural areas including Howard Springs, Humpty Doo, Berry Springs, Adelaide River and Batchelor. Well done Sara and we are very proud that you are in our ICPA family.

Our Early Childhood team look forward to connecting more with members this year and joining like-minded organisations to further advocate for equitable access to early childhood education and care.

Miscellaneous

ROADS - Concerns re maintenance (are lack of it) and unsafe standards of our road network were taken to relevant ministers and raised with whoever might be able to assist - in particular, NTCA (Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association). The more people that log a complaint about a road, the more traction possible for the issue to be expedited. All please REPORT A ROAD FAULT - by using NTCA's [reporting form](#).

BOM RADAR - The Barkly Electoral office informed us that progress was happening for the Tennant Creek weather station and that the early hurdles of land title clearance were finally dealt with and installation could go ahead. An independent review of the Barkly Regional Deal was being requested to understand why key projects like the weather radar were being delayed. It is devastating that this outstanding motion from 2024 is still not addressed. Whilst having a working radar would not have reduced the severity of the current devastating flooding - it would have greatly allowed mitigation to occur. The consequences of no working radar (and no warning on the BOM site that the reading is incomplete) is far-reaching and put lives and livelihoods at stake.

AIR TRAVEL - Meetings were held with both Qantas and Airnorth. Surveys and data collected. Letters written. Change is still a work in progress.

Rural and Remote Schools Portfolio

Portfolio Leaders Melissa Kerr and Jacinta McInnerney

There were no formal Rural and Remote Schools motions presented at the 2025 NT State Conference. However, ongoing informal discussions occurred throughout the year with the NT Department of Education, school principals, families, and NT COGSO as opportunities arose.

A joint national Rural Schools meeting was held on 25 November 2025, bringing together rural portfolio leaders from across Australia. The meeting focused on current developments, shared challenges, and broader community impacts, particularly regarding transport, staffing, and declining enrolments.

Cross-State Themes

- Declining enrolments impacting school viability, staffing, bus contracts, and broader community sustainability.
- Transport access remains a major concern, with difficulty engaging state transport departments.

- Policy rural proofing is lacking — initiatives such as free kindy and swimming access often suit metropolitan areas but fail in rural contexts.
- Opportunities for collaboration across states, particularly in bus systems and bypass school arrangements.
- Geographically Isolated students need to be included as a loading in the School Resource Standards

Federal Motions

- Incentive programs for experienced teachers to accept long-term placements in rural, remote and regional schools.
- Implementation of Dr John Halsey's recommendation from the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (IRRRRE) to reduce administrative burdens on teaching principals.
- The Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) scheme accounts for remoteness and ease of access to transport options for students travel to Canberra to participate in program.

Special Needs Portfolio

2025 Special Needs Portfolio - Jacinta McInnerney

The Katherine Branch moved a motion at the 2025 State Conference requesting the Department of Education and the Department of Health provide targeted support to 'Special Needs Teachers' at Schools of the Air. The Department of Education confirmed that Katherine School of the Air and Alice Springs School of the Air each have an allocated Key Contact in Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Programs and Services (**SWIPS**) Client Services team that is available to provide advice and support to the school.

The schools are able to request a service for support and this has been discussed as part of the School Service Plan. This includes planning for support to special education teachers, home tutors and students through professional consultancy, professional learning sessions and individual support (e.g. assessments and counselling) as required. The School Service Plans are reviewed regularly by the key contact and school leadership to ensure that needs identified by the school are supported. ICPA NT welcomes the allocation of the SWIPS Key Contact in each School of the Air as our geographically isolated students deserve the same opportunities as their urban peers when needing support for additional needs.

One family attending Katherine School of the Air has shared that they have received good support for their child from their inclusion support teacher while other parents in other locations have identified that there are still gaps in the support for their children. ICPA NT will continue to follow up with families to see if their children are receiving the support they need through training, coaching and mentoring of teachers and educators, adjustments to the curriculum, SWIPS team working with students (as appropriate) and referrals to other services. ICPA NT will continue to lobby for equitable access for education for all our children including children with disabilities, developmental delays, additional needs and the gifted and talented.

ICPA NT has recently shared on our socials information about the **Envisage Families Program**. This is a fully funded program for parents and caregivers raising children aged 0-8 years with developmental concerns or disability. Children do not need to have a diagnosis or be on a NDIS Plan. Families can

join the program at selected locations in the NT or choose the online option for the workshops, making this program one that is really geared to our ICPA NT members being in geographically isolated locations. In the Envisage Families Program, families connect with other caregivers where they can share their experiences, learn effective strategies and access practical tools for supporting the child and family.

Tertiary & Training Portfolio

2025 Tertiary and Training Portfolio Team - Kiya Gill

While no tertiary and training motions were presented at our 2025 State Conference, the Tertiary and Training portfolio has continued to strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders to recognise the vital role home tutors play in the Northern Territory.

We have met with the Department of Education and Training Skills NT division, to develop strategies that position home tutors as a defined and viable career pathway for Northern Territory school leavers. As part of this work, the Skills NT team is collaborating with a small group of Northern Territory home tutors to develop a VET Pathway Profile. This resource will promote the career opportunities available through Vocational Education and Training and highlight the professional pathway of being a home tutor..

In addition, we continue to advocate for greater recognition of home tutors within the agricultural industry. Ensuring this career path is acknowledged alongside roles such as stationhand. This is an important step in strengthening awareness of the role and we are hopeful home tutors and the valuable contribution they make to the agricultural industry will begin to be showcased through their multimedia platforms and careers events.

In partnership with Charles Darwin University, we launched a new vocational training program for home tutors: VTP523 Gateway for Home Tutors in Isolated Areas. Approximately ten home tutors enrolled in the program and completed a number of training units focused on working and living remotely, including providing First Aid and operating four-wheel drive vehicles on unsealed roads.

We are pleased to announce that two home tutors have successfully completed the program and each received a \$300 incentive through a funding partnership with the Connellan Airways Trust.

As part of its continuous improvement cycle, Charles Darwin University is reviewing all units within the relevant qualifications to ensure they remain fit for purpose, accessible, and aligned with current delivery contexts. In the interim, the existing Vocational Training Product (VTP) will remain open for enrolments and can continue to be used for new tutors.

The Certificate III and Certificate IV in School Based Education Support are currently in transition. As part of this process, CDU is proposing changes to the VTP later this year to improve accessibility for students and strengthen outcomes for those tutoring in remote settings.

A key focus of the proposed changes will be reducing reliance on placement-based observations, particularly those requiring access to Early Childhood Education and Care settings, which have proven difficult and, in some cases, not feasible.

Related ABC radio and TV story ;

[7PMd_TutorCourse_09-PKG_DDA02HRS.mp4](#)