



2025 Federal Conference Supplementary Motions

**The Isolated Children's Parents'
Association of Australia
ICPA (Aust)**



**2025 Federal Conference
Supplementary
Motions**

30th & 31st July 2025

Adelaide, South Australia



BOARDING SCHOOLS/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME

S1. Far North Queensland Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA Australia lobbies *Services Australia* to assess the payment times for the AIC applications for Year 12 students, to coincide with the beginning of Term Four so parents are able to budget for the balance owing at the completion of the senior school year.”

Explanation:

Queensland families appreciate the valuable subsidy that *Services Australia* provides in the way of AIC and thank ICPA Australia for continuing to lobby for a much-needed payment increase. Receiving the final AIC payment earlier for Year 12 students would allow Parents/Caregivers to have their accounts finalized prior to Week Three Term Four when a lot of non ATAR school leavers are graduating and schools require accounts to be settled, it would alleviate overpayments and assist with more accurate budgeting for families.

S2. Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobby the Minister for Social Services and *Services Australia* to reduce the claim processing times for ABSTUDY.”

Explanation:

In addition to our branches motion in 2024 regarding the slow claim processing period of 12-13 weeks for remote students to access the Tertiary Access payments it has come to our attention that this is also occurring to remote students when applying for ABSTUDY. In Queensland children who receive ABSTUDY are ineligible to receive their State- Living Away From Home Allowance and Federal-Assistance For Isolated Children Basic Boarding Allowance which means they receive no assistance for Term 1 School Fees, uniforms, or the costs with travelling long distances to put their children in to start the school year until their ABSTUDY claim is processed. A distance education student transitioning to Boarding School in 2025 applied in November 2024 and was not approved until 12th March 2025 (Week 7 of Term 1) and the first payment wasn't processed until 15th May in Term 2. This geographically isolated family had to bear the full cost of putting their child into Boarding School and flights home for Easter school holidays without a single cent in assistance.

S3. ICPA Federal Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to all levels of government for increased and sustainable funding to ensure the viability and accessibility of boarding facilities for students from rural and remote areas.”

Explanation:

For families living in remote and very remote parts of Australia, boarding is often the only pathway for their children to access a full secondary education. This necessity places a significant emotional, logistical, and financial burden on families, who are often separated for long periods and face high out-of-pocket costs, even with some government assistance.

The recent closure of the St John's Catholic College boarding facility in Darwin starkly illustrates the national under-funding crisis affecting boarding schools. This closure – and others like it – forces



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families to make impossible decisions: to relocate entirely, to separate siblings, or to forgo consistent education altogether.

Families already juggling the challenges of geographic isolation are now facing even fewer viable education options for their children. In some cases, the lack of affordable and accessible boarding options results in students being withdrawn from school prematurely, further entrenching rural disadvantage.

While boarding schools receive some funding to operate, it is increasingly clear this support is insufficient. The current model is unsustainable and unfair. Governments continue to rely on boarding facilities as the default solution to regional education provision, yet fail to match that reliance with appropriate investment.

ICPA (Aust) calls on governments to:

- Acknowledge boarding facilities as essential education infrastructure for rural and remote students.
- Increase and secure long-term operational funding, particularly for facilities supporting First Nations and geographically isolated students.
- Reduce the financial burden on families by increasing boarding-related allowances and subsidies.
- Support culturally appropriate pastoral care and well-being programs for boarders, to ensure students thrive while living away from home.

If Australia is committed to improving outcomes and closing the gap for rural and remote students, it must begin with fully funding the services that make education possible – starting with boarding.

COMMUNICATIONS

S4. Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) thank the Federal Government and previous Minister for Communications (the Hon Michelle Rowland), nbn and the Low Income and Digital Inclusion Forum (LIDIF) for the nbn School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI) that benefitted many rural and remote students.”

Explanation:

To boost education opportunities and narrow the digital divide, the Australian Government provided around 30,000 qualifying families with school age children a free NBN service through its SSBI. Connected families receive free internet until 30 June 2028. 33% of these families are rural and remote. These families may well be unable to continue funding connectivity services beyond end of June 2028, due to their circumstances, compromising educational accessibility and optimal learning outcomes which in turn leads to the student being unable to fulfill their potential.

That the ICPA Federal thank the Government and those involved with bringing about the SSBI program (free nbn connection to low income families with school age children who did not have a working home internet connection), and now that this program is “full” (reached capacity), they aren’t taken any more applications, we’d like to see it continue and be expanded (more placements, continue to cover costs for those eligible families, and expanded application eligibility).



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S5. Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government that the current Regional, Rural and Remote student nbn School Student Broadband Initiative recipients continue to benefit from this initiative beyond the end of June 2028 to ensure that these students, continue to receive free internet for the entirety of their educational journey.”

Explanation

To boost education opportunities and narrow the digital divide, the Australian Government provided around 30,000 qualifying families with school age children a free NBN service through its SSBI. Connected families receive free internet until 30 June 2028. 33% of these families are rural and remote. These families may well be unable to continue funding connectivity services beyond end of June 2028, due to their circumstances, compromising educational accessibility and optimal learning outcomes which in turn leads to the student being unable to fulfill their potential.

That the ICPA Federal thank the Government and those involved with bringing about the SSBI program (free nbn connection to low income families with school age children who did not have a working home internet connection), and now that this program is “full” (reached capacity), they aren’t taken any more applications, we’d like to see it continue and be expanded (more placements, continue to cover costs for those eligible families, and expanded application eligibility).

S6. Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate the Federal Government for an expansion of the NBN School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI) for Regional, Rural and Remote students.”

Explanation:

To boost education opportunities and narrow the digital divide, the Australian Government provided around 30,000 qualifying families with school age children a free NBN service through its SSBI – a programme that is now fully allocated. Connected families will continue to receive free internet until 30 June 2028 with 33% of these families being rural and remote. Now that this program is “full” (reached capacity) and no further applications are being accepted, we’d like to see it continue and be expanded (more placements, continue to cover costs for those eligible families, and expanded application eligibility) as families may well be unable to either continue or commence funding connectivity services beyond end of June 2028, due to their circumstances, compromising educational accessibility and optimal learning outcomes which in turn leads to the student/s being unable to fulfill their potential.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION and CARE

S7. ICPA Federal Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education and the Commonwealth Department of Education for future Preschool Reform Agreements to include funding for, and the condition to provide an access payment to enhance funding equity for geographically isolated (GI) distance education preschool students.”



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Explanation:

For many years, members have called for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance to be extended to geographically isolated children enrolled in a fulltime, approved early childhood distance education program to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to access the 600 hours of preschool per year as per the Preschool Reform Agreement 2022 – 2025 and previous agreements.

Excluding these geographically isolated students from receiving the AIC, severely limits their opportunity to benefit fully from the Preschool Reform Agreement of 600 hours for all children in the year before they start school and places substantial financial burden on their parents who are doing their absolute best to provide a quality education for their children in trying circumstances.

This issue has continued to be on the agenda for this portfolio for many years however the responses received are that 'state and territory governments have the responsibility for supporting the participation of all children in quality early childhood education programs.' Currently all states and territories do provide distance education early learning programs however, families who need to undertake these programs due to being geographically isolated incur expenses associated with accessing these programs, like those incurred by families with students studying primary or secondary distance education programs.

The purpose of the AIC as outlined in *The Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme Guidelines, last updated Feb 2025, section 5.4.1* reads as

The Distance Education Allowance contributes towards incidental costs incurred by geographically isolated families whose student children are undertaking their education by distance education methods.

Given that families undertaking early childhood distance education programs incur the same incidental costs and attend a State or Territory primary school, ICPA (Aust) believes that it is incongruous that they are not eligible for the same assistance.

It is clear geographically isolated children need further support, evidenced by the most recent Australian Early Development Census (AECD) data showing on 41.3% of remote and very remote children are developmentally on track in all domains before starting school.

The Commonwealth Department of Education continually denies these children eligibility for AIC DE allowance, therefore funding with specific conditions for financial assistance for geographically isolated children enrolled in a fulltime, approved early childhood distance education program through a School of Distance Education needs to be delivered to each State Department of Education via the Preschool Reform Agreement.

S8. ICPA Federal Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education and the Commonwealth Department of Education for a separate Geographically Isolated In Home Care (IHC) Early Education Service Delivery Price Project to accurately represent the actual cost of delivering IHC in geographically isolated homes."



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Explanation:

The Australian Government's Early Education Service Delivery Price (SDP) project will provide a data-driven understanding of the reasonable costs of quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) service delivery.

This is a key part of the Government's commitment to ensuring Australian families can access universal, affordable ECEC no matter their background or postcode.

The findings from this project will be used to inform future funding reforms.

The project will ensure the Government can understand the reasonable cost for providers to deliver quality ECEC services throughout Australia – including where costs vary by cohort or location.

This will be a critical enabling piece as the Government works towards a universal ECEC system and will inform future reforms.

ICPA(Aust) are concerned that IHC data collected during this project will not be presented in the broader project due to small number of families using IHC similar to how data regarding IHC has been left out of previous research completed by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission) ACCC and the Productivity Commission therefore request that specific geographically isolated In Home Care data be collated in a separately funded project.

RURAL SCHOOLS

S9. Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the federal government for funding to be sought to further encourage and incentivise experienced teachers to take up contract and long term rural, regional and remote positions."

Explanation:

Students from rural, regional, and remote areas are facing disruptions to their education due to teacher shortages. Teacher retention in rural areas is low and even in those schools where teachers are committed long term their workload is far greater than the metropolitan counterparts due to the lack of colleagues, relief teachers and/ or support staff.

It is not uncommon for small schools to have only two classroom teachers across all year levels and minimal funding for additional support staff such as EAs or Library Technicians. When one teacher is away from the classroom the other teacher must take the whole school and/or EAs are being asked to step in and take classes. In some cases teachers are being called in without completing their training which effects the students and teacher alike.

The states all have varying incentives to encourage teachers to rural schools however it has been our experience that these incentives are not always well advertised and targeted at graduates and not experienced teachers. As well as federal funding we suggest the federal government run an advertising campaign to get teachers into the bush pitched at experienced teachers and their families.

Additional Incentives to those already on offer could include.

- Financial incentives for short term or contract work in the regions.
- Increased childcare rebates for teachers with young families wanting to take up rural positions.
- Clear potential for permanency.
- Increased potential for permanency in the city after completing a set amount of time in a rural, regional or remote schools.



SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS

S10. New South Wales State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate against the changes to travel allowances for allied health providers under the 2025–26 NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits, as these cuts pose a significant risk to the delivery of essential support services for students with disabilities in rural, regional, and remote communities."

Explanation:

With these changes, providers will face limits on the travel they can claim when supporting students in harder-to-reach areas. This poses a major threat to clinicians working in rural Australia assisting students with a disability, where long-distance travel is a necessity, not a choice and public transport is often non-existent. The long-distance travel can become a barrier to the student receiving the much-needed allied health care to assist with their education.

Rural students should not be penalised because of where they live when it comes to gaining allied health care. Every effort needs to be made to ensure appropriate care is available without any barriers.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

S11. Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Federal Government through Services Australia recognises the adversity geographically isolated students face when living away from the family home to access a tertiary education, by reviewing and simplifying criteria for assistance."

Explanation:

Geographically isolated students have already typically endured 6 years boarding away from home. They are expected to live independently to attend higher educational institutions – and this should be recognised.

We suggest the following changes to criteria.

Allowing geographically isolated students to automatically access Youth Allowance & Rent Assistance as independents so that students can focus on the task at hand and complete their studies without having to work several part-time jobs to earn enough to establish themselves as Independent.

Increase the amount that they can save for going to University. - The current limits are discouraging students from saving.

Eligibility for Assistance for Isolated Children and BAHA to carry over into Tertiary Studies if commenced immediately following School - or eligibility for these payments automatically qualifies students for Youth Allowance and Rent Assistance.

S12. St George Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies universities to offer secondary teaching students Agricultural subjects as a pathway."

Explanation:

Schools are struggling to offer Agricultural subjects as there are limited Agricultural teachers. If Universities offered Agricultural subjects as a pathway there is the opportunity for more teachers to be trained in Agricultural subjects.



S13. Nyngan Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Agricultural Minister, Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry and the Commonwealth Government to financially support the National Farmers Federation AgCareerStart program, which helps teachers and students who are considering careers in Food and Fibre production in Australia.”

Explanation:

The AgCareerStart program offers school leavers a structured, paid gap year in agriculture, including accredited training and personal development opportunities. It enables young Australians to explore career paths in the food and fibre sector that match their interests and capabilities.

The program also benefits host farmers by giving them access to a new labour market and the opportunity to mentor the next generation of agricultural professionals. Bursaries are available for gap year students, and participating farmers receive grants to support their involvement.

A recent monitoring and evaluation review cited by Project Manager Tim Bradley found that AgCareerStart delivers a return of \$5.56 for every \$1 invested—demonstrating exceptional economic and social value.

For families educating children through distance education (DE), securing on-farm labour is a significant challenge. When parents are the DE supervisors and are required to assist with farm work, it limits the time they can dedicate to their child’s education. By providing additional farm labour, AgCareerStart can relieve this pressure and support better educational outcomes for geographically isolated students. ICPA (Aust) has been advocating for an allowance for home supervisors and maybe this could be a viable option to help support families.

With full government funding, the program has the potential to expand beyond agriculture to include placements in remote teaching, DE supervision, and rural tutoring—further strengthening the rural education workforce and community capacity.

S14. Tambo Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Commonwealth Minister of Education, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership(AITSL) and any other relevant stakeholders to ensure that Universities promote teaching students to study elective subjects to gain an Agricultural Teacher specialisation.”

Explanation:

There is a significant shortage of teachers who have an agriculture based teaching degree. It has become apparent that many teachers who are teaching ag at schools have no speciality training in the area, however, may have an interest so end up in these positions. There are very few institutions that encourage agriculture based electives in the teacher training degrees. Agriculture is one of Australia’s key industries and needs to be supported in the education sector by teachers who are suitably trained.

S15. Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA Australia lobby the Minister for Education to attract more students with an agricultural degree into the High Achieving Teachers (HAT) Program.”



Explanation:

The HAT program focuses on attracting new teachers, including those with a STEM background, First Nations peoples, people with disability, teacher aides and people based in remote locations. We would like to see a focus on more teachers with an agricultural degree being added to the program as we strive to educate more students in the agricultural industries, the demand for qualified agricultural educators will continue to grow. These teachers play a vital role in shaping the agricultural pathways and education for our rural children.

S16. Lakes District Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Education to extend eligibility for the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) to students undertaking a Graduate Diploma in Education.”

Explanation:

Addressing Workforce Shortages: Students enrolled in a Graduate Diploma in Education are pursuing a postgraduate qualification specifically aimed at tackling the urgent shortage of qualified teachers across Australia, especially in rural and remote areas. These students are a vital part of the future teaching workforce and are responding directly to national and state workforce needs. **Parity with Other Teaching Pathways:** The current eligibility criteria for the CPP include Bachelor of Education and Master of Teaching students, but do not explicitly include Graduate Diploma in Education students. This creates an inequity, as all these pathways lead to teacher registration and require mandatory professional placements. **Financial Barriers:** Graduate Diploma in Education students face the same financial challenges as their Bachelor's and Master's counterparts during mandatory placements, including travel, accommodation, and living expenses. Excluding them from the CPP increases the financial burden and may deter capable individuals from entering the teaching profession. **University Support and Application Process:** Universities have recognised the need for financial support and have provided Graduate Diploma in Education students with application details for the CPP, indicating institutional support and the importance of including these students in the scheme. **Maximising Teacher Supply:** Including Graduate Diploma in Education students in the CPP will help attract and retain more individuals into teaching, ensuring a steady supply of qualified teachers to meet Australia's educational needs.

Supporting Points:

- The Graduate Diploma in Education is a recognised postgraduate pathway to teacher registration. Students in these programs undertake the same mandatory placements as those in Bachelor and Master teaching degrees.
- Excluding these students is inconsistent with the CPP's aim to support those entering critical workforce areas.
- Universities have already prepared and provided application processes for these students, demonstrating the demand and readiness for inclusion.

S17. Kindon Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) lobby relevant Ministers to review the Dependent Youth Allowance so that rural and remote students have a higher parental threshold.”

Explanation:

Rural and remote students face unique and significant challenges when pursuing tertiary education compared to their metropolitan peers. One of the key barriers is financial. Unlike students living in



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cities, rural students are often required to relocate far from home to attend university, incurring high costs for accommodation, transport, and living expenses. These additional burdens make access to higher education significantly more expensive for rural families.

The current combined parental income threshold for the Dependent Youth Allowance is \$62 634 per annum while in contrast the Independent Youth Allowance has a combined parental income of \$160 000 per annum plus an additional \$10 000 added for each dependent child. To qualify for independent Youth Allowance a student must work for a 14 month period after leaving school. This break from studies often leads to students not returning to their tertiary study.

Raising the parental income threshold for rural and remote students would acknowledge these inequities and better support families who are already at a disadvantage due to geography. It would also encourage higher education participation among rural youth, promote regional equity, and contribute to breaking cycles of educational disadvantage.

S18. Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

“That ICPA Australia lobby the Minister for Education to include students from regional, remote and very remote areas and also students wishing to travel to regional and remote areas as being eligible for exceptional circumstances for the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP).”

Explanation

Currently the CPP will only be given to students who are already receiving a commonwealth support payment (for example Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY or Austudy) or satisfy a ‘need to work test’ where students show that they need to work during their normal studies (on average 15 hours a week) in a 4 week period prior to placement or when applying for CPP. There is no consideration or exceptional circumstances offered to students from regional, remote and very remote areas as well as the additional costs for students associated with travelling to regional or remote parts of the country to undertake placement. We don’t want students choosing to not complete regional, rural and remote placements due not being eligible for CPP and experiencing placement poverty.

S19. Hay Branch (NSW)

Hay Branch ICPA would like to thank ICPA Australia, the Department of Education and the relevant Ministers for the changes made to the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP).

Explanation:

These changes enable first-year students who have taken one or more gap years following Year 12 (or equivalent) and are aged up to 22, to apply for the TAP.

More details here

<https://www.education.gov.au/tertiary-access-payment>