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## **Agenda Motions**

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### **Allowances**

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#### **A1. Bourke**

*“That ICPA-NSW assists ICPA (Aust) to lobby 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.”*

Moved by Scott Mitchell, Bourke Branch. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke Branch.

Carried.

#### **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 actually appear less just as they are not only unable to access Youth Allowance but also are ineligible for the Relocation Scholarship.

#### Comment.

**Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch.** I would support that motion. We recently attempted this process with our family and advice from Centrelink was to apply as an independent first to access the relocation allowance and once that’s approved to log back into their system and change and apply for independent status. So, there are loop holes around the system that Centrelink is advising and that if it was clear and accessible to everybody it would be a much more straightforward process.

**Wendy Hick, ICPA (Aust).** I just want to say that that is certainly an unusual example so I would be really interested to talk with you because the general process for Youth Allowance is that you apply but you don’t apply for a dependent or independent. They categorise it when they go through your information and so I would like to get some more information so we can follow that up at Federal Level because Youth Allowance falls under Federal channels. I also wanted to comment again that while we have received the Tertiary Access payment which was just announced in January that Alana mentioned in her report, and we are really excited to see this happening. We really encourage everyone to check this out if you have students going away. It’s not quite exactly what Federal Council has been advocating for year after year in the Tertiary Access payment but it is something quite close. I guess there is still work to be done and we are hoping we are going to be able to make further changes but it is

exciting to see something happening in this space. So, just because it has a different name to what we've always asked for don't be afraid to and look at it because it can be a means to get some help for some of our children.

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## **A2. Bourke**

*"That ICPA-NSW assists ICPA (Aust) to lobby the Federal Government to change the criteria for gaining Independent Youth Allowance so that all rural and remote students who have to leave home to study at tertiary level are eligible for Independent Youth Allowance once enrolled."*

Moved by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke moved that this motion be withdrawn.

Carried

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## **A3. Broken Hill**

*"That ICPA-NSW assist ICPA (Aust) to lobby the relevant department to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children for geographically isolated students undertaking secondary education via Distance Education."*

Moved by Laura Finch, Broken Hill. Seconded by Ali Allison, Broken Hill.

Carried

### **Explanation:**

As students reach 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, more than likely they will be changing 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 school work. 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 of these expenses are the responsibility of the student's family.

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Comments.

**Alana Moller, President ICPA (Aust).** I just want to give an update on our AIC initiatives at the Federal level. We have been calling for some time for a review of AIC and as part of that we have been asking that they look at criteria and those sorts of things, not wanting to diminish any of the current criteria but the possibility of criteria needing to be changed. Should that come to Federal Conference that could sit under that AIC advocacy that we do. For interest's sake, at the moment there is no separation between primary and secondary so that would probably have to happen first before the second payment could increase. It would be like a two-level change in criteria or eligibility. But absolutely, if that motion can come to Federal Conference, we would be happy to take it.

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## **Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools and Hostels**

### **A4. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests that acceptance letters to state boarding schools be distributed earlier in the year to align with acceptance of scholarships and paying of deposits at private schools.”*

Moved by Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Cath Deshon, Walgett on behalf of Lightning Ridge/Goodooga.

Carried.

#### **Explanation:**

For families in rural and remote areas, the decision-making process around accessing secondary education for their children is difficult to navigate. Parents research options available to them considering the social, geographical and financial issues before applying to the schools which are a best fit for their children and personal circumstances. Often applications to several schools are made, particularly in the case of their oldest child. Before deciding on the best option available, parents wait anxiously for not only letters securing a place for their child at selected schools, but also letters offering scholarships. Inconsistent acceptance dates for secondary schools, particularly state boarding schools, makes this decision-making process difficult. Often a scholarship to a private school needs to be accepted and a deposit for the following year paid before acceptance letters to state boarding schools are made available. By government schools bringing their acceptance process forward and sending out acceptance letters earlier, parents will be better placed to make the best choice for their child by comparing all the options simultaneously.

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### **A5. Hay**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant authorities to 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, if border closures occur due to a pandemic.”*

Moved by Bill Ryan, Hay. Seconded by Carol Huggins, Hay.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

During the 2020 COVID 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 to be able to focus on their studies. Some families were forced to fly their children home at the end of the school term, placing the children and their families at risk of being infected with COVID-19, not to mention the financial stress this caused. These children were taken from COVID free areas into cities with large numbers of COVID-19 cases, placed on a plane and taken to another city with large numbers of COVID-19, their parents then having to travel 1,600 km from COVID free areas to pick up their children. If a standard border crossing exemption is in place for these rural and remote students, they will be able to focus on their studies and it will reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 into these rural and remote areas.

Comments.

**Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch.** We support this motion. There have been families in our area that have also been affected by the border closures. My own daughter is a boarding student in South Australia also and I think it is fair to say that each time there have been different closures ICPA has advocated when there has not been anybody else able to do that for families and each time the circumstances have been slightly different and I don't think there is confidence that that won't change. It might be other people's children in ten years' time and a different pandemic but different families have been affected in dramatic ways. My daughter came home in March and didn't return to school until term three. I'm a director in a local preschool so we decided not to isolate knowing that we wouldn't be able to get her home until term three when we realised, she wouldn't be able to go back to school. Her whole school cohort was back at school bar two children so she did remote learning but there were two children remote learning while her cohort were in the class. We made a commitment not to do that again until we isolated and then she came home again in November when the borders closed quickly which was another concern around safety when families jump in cars because they are so panicked and concerned about how they can get their children home and I think the school system was under a lot of stress as well. We couldn't get in or out of South Australia by midnight so we had great friends with students who lived in Victoria who boarded at the same school, they actually took our daughter home and we then couldn't get her. By the time she got home because the NSW/Vic border was still closed, on the Wednesday, South Australia was out of lockdown and back at school. If we could just have a simple national strategy in that boarding students are essential travellers moving forward it would make so many people's lives simpler and safer and allow children to be at school where they need to be.

**Kathy Bishop, Principal, New England Girls School (NEGS), Armidale.** I totally agree with this motion and would support everyone on the essential traveller exemption but I would also like to put my own support behind ICPA-NSW if you wish to move forward with this recommendation.

**Richard Stokes, Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA).** My first thing is to congratulate all of you for the work you have done in terms of helping our students. There are 23,000 boarders in Australia and 70% of them are kids from the country. So, that is a very important part of our market and a very unusual part of the world when it comes to boarding schools as we are the only country where that is the case. I believe we need a special case pass for our kids so that they can cross borders. Calling them essential travellers? An interesting question as to whether they can be pinned as different things. If we specify boarding school students as needing to be able to access their education equally, I think we

would have a very good opportunity to do that and I know that we are working pretty closely with all of the ICPA's, Federal and all States, and also with our Minister for Regional Education, we find, in fact, the challenges that our State departments have got are quite challenging at times. Different people were making different rules. Different police on borders were actually saying yes or no. I know of many families who waited for the shift to change and then were allowed across the border. That happened many, many times. That's insane. That's why we need to make it very clear for those 23,000 kids that we look after, that some sort of pass should be there. Can I just say that we've had a bit of press today because there are about 3,500 international students who are not able to access our boarding schools either, many of whom have stayed in Australia and haven't seen their families now for fifteen months and won't be able to probably until Christmas. I find that really sad. There is press in the Courier Mail in Brisbane today. But it is really interesting to try and do that. We need to fight those fights and we are there to stand with you to help that.

**Alana Moller, President, ICPA (Aust)** I just want to reaffirm everything everyone has said. We, at a Federal level, have been consistently working on this. The Minister for Regional Education has been absolutely open to any discussion and it has been an absolute pleasure in a really difficult situation to work with Claire and NSW State Council and all State Councils. This is what it is all about. This is why we are here and the fact that we've had to work together and do this together despite the fact that we are all isolated anyway, has just been amazing. Congratulations to NSW State Council for the incredible effort.

**Claire Butler, President, ICPA-NSW.** I would like to acknowledge the support, the unwavering support that Alana gave me and ICPA State Council. It was greatly appreciated and you gave us a lot of strength and we really appreciate ICPA (Aust)'s assistance with providing all that information from every State for the submission that was put into Andrew Gee's office. So, thank you very much.

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#### **A6. Broken Hill**

*"That ICPA-NSW continues to advocate for those students who board interstate to have equitable access to education by being deemed as essential travellers."*

Moved by Ali Allison, Broken Hill. Seconded by Laura Finch, Broken Hill.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen State Governments shut their borders to prevent the spread of disease. This meant that many students from NSW, who attend schools in SA, VIC and QLD, were required to quarantine, on returning to school interstate. Some children had to quarantine up to three times, which meant in 2021 some students spent over six weeks of their year in quarantine. Apart from the fact they are missing valuable face to face learning there is no doubt the negative, dramatic affect this is having on their mental health. The anxiety these kids face every time a school holiday is coming up is plain to see, and it is growing each day as this epidemic continues. The anxiety of not knowing if the borders will suddenly be closed and if they are going to be able to get home to see their family. There is also the added pressure for kids, some as young as 12 and 13, having to decide whether they come home and see their family, all the while knowing that if that is the decision they make, they may have to return to quarantine when school resumes. No child that age should choose between seeing their family or going as long as months on end not seeing them. Families would be happy to meet

half way with governments and work their livelihoods and businesses around making this work. Even if it means for example, that families, if an outbreak is happening at the time, have their children quarantine at home for the holidays and no one comes or goes from their place. If it means our children can get the education they deserve without the anxiety and extra pressure of possible quarantine. We need a long term, sensible and common-sense approach so these children can access their education freely and without the stress and anxiety of worrying about state borders. A large majority of these students are from rural and remote areas that have had no COVID-19 cases for over a year. For example, Broken Hill reportedly had two positive cases in March 2020, and yet there was no community transmission from these cases and there has not been a single case for over a year. Students living in these areas pose little to no threat of transferring COVID-19 interstate. Forcing them to quarantine is completely unjustified.

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#### **A7. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW asks both NSW and interstate Ministers of Health for rural and remote parents to be considered essential visitors to boarding houses at our boarding schools for start and end of term.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council, on behalf of Louth.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

Unpacking a child at the beginning of term is an essential part of the process of the return or collection from school each term. Especially those that have had no COVID-19 in their Shires. Clearly COVID-19 caution conditions would need to be adhered to. For example, a declaration of no visit to hot spot or symptoms for the prior 14 days.

#### Comments.

**Richard Stokes, Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA).** I do think that this has been a challenge for our boarding staff. Don't think that they haven't noticed the challenges that you face according to this. So often it is actually the facility itself that dictates whether visitors can come in or not because of the size of the places and the measures that we have had. It's just not black and white. It's very grey and so, again, I'd like you to think about the concept about essential visitors because in that case essential visitors are people who fix plumbing and electrics and things like that. I think if you wanted something to go to your Ministers of Health or maybe it's actually the Community Health Officers rather than the Ministers for Health, that you would go to, I think you might consider making a special case study for them rather than an essential visitor because that might blur the line.

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## **Communication**

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#### **A8. Collarenebri-Mungindi**

*“That ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) ask Telstra to review its customer service telephone assistance lines to more effectively assist rural and remote students and their families.”*

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council, on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi. Seconded by



Irene Lund, State Council, on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi.

Carried

**Explanation:**

The current 132 200 line for support is inadequate. After you have punched in all the numbers for account purposes the message tells you a link has been sent to your mobile for you to follow and chat with a Telstra assistant. That rarely happens. If you want to get a new SIM for your phone you have to present to a Telstra office with ID before purchasing a new SIM for your phone. This is not very helpful for rural and remote customers.

Comments.

**Chris Taylor, General Manager Southern NSW, Telstra.** We acknowledge the point that has been raised in the motion and, at the moment, we are investigating some of these instances where the text message hasn't been received because that should be happening in all cases. On the matter of SIM activations, I would just like to point out that there has been heightened increase in fraudulent SIM activations which has prompted us to try to put in place more controls over authentication of customers before we go ahead do that. Unfortunately, what it has meant is that it has resulted in more people having to go into stores which, as you say, doesn't help people in remote areas. We are reviewing how we can more effectively and efficiently authenticate customers in a really secure way to avoid that situation and make that easier for people. The other thing I will point out is, and I spoke about it earlier, is the Telstra App. You can now actually go into it and activate on your My Telstra account, your own SIMS without having to call a call centre. You can actually go into your own Telstra App and do that. Activate SIMS, request new SIMS for an existing service if your SIM goes faulty, and so those things are all available now to be able to do independently to having to go into a call centre to try and get through that. Having said that, in the meantime, if you do experience considerable problems and issues in getting through to someone, if you are not getting the right support, call 132 000 and just say the word "Complaint" and that does get you through as it bypasses all the other stuff you have to get through. But, as I said, we are working on better ways for our customers to authenticate their details for us to be able to deal with it on the phone.

**Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch.** I just wanted to support this motion. I had, unfortunately, Telstra accidentally cut off my home phone a few weeks ago and when I was made aware of that I tried to call the 13000 number, I did "complaints", I was transferred through three different departments which tried to rent brand new lines into my house. I didn't have a very good outcome. After two weeks I still didn't have any response. So, I didn't have a very effective communication through that way but can I say that your NextG wireless link team, when you call that faults number, is absolutely fantastic. So, ones not working but one is really, really great service.

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**A9. Collarenebri-Mungindi**

*"That ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) ask Telstra to urgently expedite the moving of all Telstra call centres to the mainland of Australia, to assist students and their families."*

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council, on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi. Seconded by Irene Lund, State Council, on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Rural and remote students and their families have experienced problems with the call centres for far too long. All Telstra call centres need to be moved back to Australia urgently, so that they can effectively assist customers needing to troubleshoot issues.

Comments.

**Chris Taylor, General Manager Southern NSW, Telstra.** I'll just reiterate that it was announced in November last year by our CEO that by 2022 all consumer and small business calls that are made into our context will be answered onshore so we are moving that way now. At the moment around 65% of calls are answered onshore and that will increase over the next twelve months and by mid 2022 it will be 100%.

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**A10. Balranald**

*"That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to give an establishment time frame for when the remaining satellite schools will be transferred onto the Fibre Optic (FO) internet."*

Moved by Kathleen Harris, Balranald that this motion be withdrawn as it has been addressed. Seconded by Kristy Wilson, Balranald.

Carried

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**A11. Balranald**

*"The Balranald ICPA Branch would like to thank and acknowledge Telstra for the installation of the Small Cell Tower located at Clare."*

Moved by Kristy Wilson, Balranald. Seconded by Kathleen Harris, Balranald.

Carried by acclamation.

**Explanation:**

In 2013 Balranald Branch moved a motion at the Cooma ICPA-NSW conference that small rural schools in blackspot areas be prioritised for future roll-outs of the mobile footprint. It is reassuring to have this motion acted on. The branch also thanks ICPA State and Federal Councils for their advocacy.

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**A12. Rankins Springs**

*"That ICPA-NSW strongly urges the Minister for Education to ensure that all remaining TP1 and TP2 schools with satellite internet have a secure and consistent connection."*

Moved by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs.

Carried

**Explanation:**

At our local TP1 Primary School, Naradhan Public School, the satellite internet connection at the school is unsatisfactory. The internet connection is slow and at times unstable, which

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inhibits the students and staff accessing essential resources and data. In the classroom, a number of programs requiring an internet connection are unable to be accessed due to slow internet speeds.

The Connected Classroom equipment is vital technology for a small isolated school and requires an efficient internet connection. Students and staff regularly participate in video conferences to access a variety of learning experiences, competitions, professional development and meetings. There is a significant delay from the school's end making it difficult to converse with other participants. A warning symbol is often displayed on the screen indicating a poor connection and quite often drops out, requiring the school to attempt to dial back in. The school has also been unable to participate in the NAPLAN Online trials. The principal was informed that a satellite option would be made available, however has now been told that Naradhan Public School is on the list of schools that require an upgrade to access NAPLAN Online. The school has recently rolled over to Learning Management and Business Reform (LMBR), the Department's new finance system. Staff have found it difficult to access EBS: Central, the Student Administration tool used to manage Student Attendance, Student Behaviour, Curriculum, Student Finance and Student Health Records. It often takes many attempts to log-in placing added pressure on the Teaching Principal who already has a challenging workload and on the school administration manager. The school has installed a Wide Area Network (WAN) optimisation appliance as a trial to attempt to enhance the satellite internet connection. After a number of trials of this appliance had taken place, it was deemed a failure.

There are now other satellite options available in the area, as accessed by local residents, with much better connection speeds. However, no specific information can be given to determine when the situation will improve. We understand an announcement has been made about these schools being upgraded to Fibre Optic internet access and request that Telstra and Minister Mitchell, the Education Minister provide a timeframe of when this project will be completed.

#### Comments.

**Chris Taylor, General Manager Southern NSW, Telstra.** Just to back to my discussion earlier around the project, we have set ourselves a timeline for the end of 2021 to have the physical infrastructure into each of the twelve schools. That is progressing as we go through the year. At this stage we are well on track even to the point where we believe that we may be able to finish that a little earlier than the end of the year but things are on track from our perspective.

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#### **A13. Wentworth**

*"That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Education Department provide the results of completed NBN trials using Remote Education And Conferencing Tool, REACT, and provide a clear time frame for implementation of an updated system."*

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

For a number of years, we have heard that trials are being conducted on the suitability of using NBN and REACT in the home school room, but nothing further ever eventuates. Three questions now need to be answered: Have the trials actually been completed? If successful when will the roll out occur? If not successful how long do our students have to continue

using ineffective methods of delivering lessons before another option is considered?

Comments.

**David McLeod, Department of Education.** Yes, the trial has been completed. It was completed in November last year. It has formed the way forward and, as Mike said in the meeting on Tuesday evening, we are looking at the next twelve months as the timing for the upgrade to the new systems.

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**A14. Broken Hill**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to provide a time frame of when geographically isolated students enrolled in Distance Education will be switched over to the NBN.”*

Moved by Laura Finch, Broken Hill. Seconded by Ali Allison, Broken Hill.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Families living in geographically isolated areas educating their children through Distance Education are still waiting to be informed of when they will be moved over to the NBN. We have been informed that it will be at the end of the year but we would like to have this motion still go forward because things can change and I would like it on record. A lot of students are experiencing a multitude of problems using the current satellite internet provided by the NSW Department of Education. Families that have moved their home internet to NBN have found a significant improvement in the speed and reliability of their internet. As the demands of the school curriculum require students to be online for much of their school day, it seems appropriate that the internet provided to students reflects their educational needs. Having a time frame for the transition to NBN will help ensure families have a goal to look forward to, to ensure our children are going to have access to the best education possible.

Comments.

**Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch.** We would like to support this motion and just say that now we have been given a timeframe by Mike Tom in the meeting we have had and the conversations we have had, but we would like to ensure that this timeframe is met because there are a lot of things that need to happen including lots of hardware instalments and if any changes to this timeframe is made that DE families are kept in the loop of these changes.

**David McLeod, Department of Education.** Absolutely we want to keep parents in the loop around the conversation and Mike has indicated on Tuesday night that he is looking for representatives from ICPA to be part of their consultative group for that.

**Laura Stalley, State Council.** Those representatives will be Bree Wakefield and myself so we will endeavour to keep everyone informed.

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## Distance Education

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### A15. Louth

*“That ICPA-NSW follows up with the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to ensure that a Preschool teacher from Dubbo School of Distance Education (DSODE) attends all Bourke Walgett School of Distance Education (BWSODE) functions.”*

Moved by Kylie Batey, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

Currently, the BWSODE access preschool through DSODE. Therefore, students are continuing their education through the other centres and not returning to BWSODE, due to the logistics. Parents who have more than one child, are having to enrol their students into two centres (e.g., a preschooler in Dubbo, and their Year 1 student in BWSODE) which is practically challenging in a school room and geographically logistically demanding. With the restructure of Distance Education Preschool, children will have to be enrolled through Dubbo DE, but if a preschool teacher from Dubbo attends all BWSODE functions and classrooms this will help families logistically, and keep these families at BWSODE.

#### Comments.

**Mike Tom, Department of Education.** In terms of preschool provision, we are aware of the issue from Burke Walgett. That was made reasonably clear to us just in the last twelve months or so. What we have done is that we have really worked with the preschool provision to look at making it a single provision. Basically, the way in which it works, and I explained it to the DE parents on Tuesday night, is that we have four classes of preschool out of basically 100 classes that are in the Department that are actually attached to the Departmental schools. That’s how that operates and out of that four classes sit with distance education. We look at the statistics every three years to see where the spread of young people is going to be and then we make a decision in concert with early childhood and also ICPA. There is a representative from ICPA that sits on that and that took place at the end of last year for this next cycle. In doing that we made the decision to leave the two classes at Broken Hill and the two classes at Dubbo. The object of those classes is to service the state. They are there to service the state. They don’t service just Dubbo. They don’t service just Broken Hill. Although we were running them under two principals with separate staff under those principals from two separate schools, we have worked with the principals so we work with Scott Sanford and Debbie Murray to ensure the staff work together, that the programmes are worked together and, wherever possible, we ensure that we interact effectively with other DE centres if it is actually a DE centre that is participating or if it is their student that is coming across. We also recognise that what was probably happening in some cases is that parents were making a decision, either consciously or sometimes, in terms of being encouraged to enrol their child because they were doing preschool in Dubbo and they were coming from the Bourke Walgett area, they ended up in the Dubbo kindergarten. So, we have ensured now that the processes try to integrate back to the home school. Effectively, it used to be, back in 2012 or so, that, if you were coming into distance education kindergarten, you were eligible to attend the preschool class and that was the eligibility criteria. In 2014 when we did the Rural and Remote Blueprint Strategy, we broadened that out. We had places in our four classes so we broadened it out to, basically, allow parents who did not have access to a mobile preschool or

a preschool service near them, to have their child attend the distance education preschool even if they weren't going to distance education kindergarten. Effectively, that could mean Dubbo or Broken Hill could be receiving a child who might be at Bellingen or somewhere in the mountains on the coast, or they could be down on the south coast, or they could be within the normal drawing area of Dubbo or Broken Hill, and in those cases, we would expect that that child is transitioned back into their local primary school and into their local kindergarten. So, again, if we are looking at Bellingen then we would expect that child to be transitioned to the kindergarten class of Bellingen Public School. That is what we would expect to happen. So, the staff are going to look at ways in which they would encourage that transition to move forward. That is now part of the processes we are working on. Effectively, the key messages here are transitions back to their local school which, if they have started at Bourke Walgett, they transition back to Bourke Walgett. Wherever possible we have an interaction of staff working with those particular schools if there is a large number of students there so, obviously, we are not going to have Dubbo travelling up to Bellingen, but if there are a number of students at Bourke Walgett then if there is an interaction that is taking place at Bourke Walgett we will do our best, and remember it is part of the scheduling process that principals will have to do to ensure that there is a person that may represent or interact as part of that process. Can I also say that in terms of preschool processes, if you remember yesterday, I said that we were wanting to increase the amount of satellite coverage, and one of the things we really want to be able to do is to try and get a satellite provision into a home if a child attending preschool and they are in a remote area as part of that particular provision and that will allow a better interaction and a more meaningful interaction with those particular children.

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#### **A16. Broken Hill**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobbies the NSW Department of Education to make Distance Education Schools a priority when upgrading bandwidth in schools, to improve internet services and therefore directly improve lessons when using Remote Education and Conferencing Tool REACT.”*

Moved by Laura Finch, Broken Hill. Seconded by Ali Allison, Broken Hill.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

Currently students enrolled in primary school through the NSW Department of Education via Distance Education are having daily difficulties in relations to connecting to REACT lessons. Students are unable to connect and a consistently being logged out of lessons due to the system not coping. All students attending NSW Department of Education Schools should have equal to access to course content and learning experiences. Students enrolled in rural and remote Schools, such as White Cliffs Public School are able to use the internet daily without interruption. All students are able to access video conferencing and interactive live shows with ease. Students all have their own laptops and are able use the internet simultaneously without any trouble. This is currently not the case for Distance Education students due to issues with REACT on a daily basis.

Bandwidth is described as the maximum data transfer rate of a network or Internet connection. It measures how much data can be sent over a specific connection in a given amount of time. Schools require large bandwidths and can run into service problems when students and teachers are accessing the internet. By increasing the bandwidth for Distance Education

Schools this will directly impact the amount of data that can be transferred through the school's connection and therefore improve the quality of REACT lessons. This will ensure that all students are able to access equal education opportunities no matter where they live.

Comments.

**Mike Tom, Department of Education.** You have just heard from Mark Greentree about the improvements that are being made to the service and for the parents who were part of the Distance Education Forum last night you would know that we are in the process of upgrading the bandwidth across rural NSW for our kindergarten/Year Six area and it is also our intention to try and lift that for preschools and also for years Seven to Twelve and those aren't currently included in the processes. We want to broaden that out and actually expand the number of students that we are supporting and we want to ensure that that bandwidth that is being provided is both fit for service and robust in terms of that process. That is where we want to go. We would also say that it is very important that the students have the same interactions as a face-to-face school so that's what we are aiming for. That's our goal and I would say to you that while we are limited in terms of the satellite process there will always be that physics that are involved from the fact that the satellite is flying up at that height and there will be latency in those sorts of things in there but we are aiming to put as much bandwidth as we can possibly extract from the system under NBN's current processes. In terms of REACT one of the things that has come up has been around some of the technical issues and they have not necessarily been with REACT itself but more about the bandwidth that it's running on which is restricted at the moment and some of the processes that are being run at the home site. In other words, where we have multiple machines. So, we hope to have enough bandwidth to have multiple machines running at remote sites if the number of students requires that so, again, that is a process that we need to have discussion about. We hope to improve the number of devices as part of that and we need to have discussion about what the devices are and how many are appropriate. We hope to also increase the amount of REACT licences we have available so that that frees up the amount of scheduling that happens in the studios of the distance education centres. Then it becomes something that the principals of those schools will need to look at with their teachers in terms of that scheduling and how they schedule those lessons and that is a discussion for them to have with the resourcing that they have in their school. From our side, we have to provide the principals with the flexibilities to be able to make those decisions and you, as the classroom at the end of the line, the ability to get a better interaction with your students. I would say to you that the only thing that I would like you to do would be to give us a call on the help desk number whenever you have a problem with REACT. So, I need that data and, indeed, Mark and his team need that data. Let us know when the system is going wrong. Having a governess or having yourself sitting at the end of the line thinking that it is your problem is not good enough. You need to log a help desk and let us determine whether that is a problem at your end or at our end. We need the data.

**Nerida Healey, Wentworth.** I have a governess in my classroom last week and the week before. She spent three days trying to connect to the internet and I told her that she has got to ring Dubbo. She said that she had rung Dubbo and School of the Air, and she was ringing the number on the screen and she had rung for three days. I finally rang and got through and I was told that there was only one person there. So, that took three days to fix that problem. I appreciate that you can log the issue but when it takes three days to actually get someone to answer the phone it is a lot of time that a governess or a parent is spending trying to contact to log an issue. So maybe the staffing levels there need to be addressed or there needs to be a different way for us to communicate that problem instantly.



**Mike Tom, Department of Education.** Nerida, I take your point and I am unaware of that particular issue but thanks for bringing it to our attention. We have actually made sure that we have removed all the other responsibilities from that help desk so that they are only dealing with satellite and I'll take that back.

**Britt Anderson, Broken Hill.** I'd like to reiterate that I do think it is a bandwidth problem. We travel between NSW and South Australia quite regularly as our other farm is in SA and my eldest daughter is at boarding school. My youngest daughter can sit on my private laptop with the REACT software on it with my WiFi toggle and have air lessons as we are going down the Adelaide road. So, I do believe that it is a bandwidth issue.

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### **A17. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW urges NSW Department of Education (DoE) to implement an initiative to ensure practical access to high schooling for geographically isolated stage four students, using the existing primary school facilities in remote and very remote areas.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Anabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

For many years NSW DoE has not provided practical high schooling options for some isolated children who are beginning high school. The students this motion refers to are those who, for many reasons, are unable to successfully assimilate into a boarding school environment. These children may be emotionally unready to leave their families to attend boarding school or because of a variety of other prohibiting reasons. The only practical pathway left to access high school is by Distance Education. Successful Distance Education requires a tutor and an appropriate place. Currently children in this category are unable to access AIC, In Home CCB or financial aid for the employment of a home tutor. DE allowance may financially cover the setting up of a school room however some students are without a space to 'set up'.

We would like to see a situation in which a successful time at high school is as accessible and the attendance obligation to do so, is as rigorous as it is in primary school; at the very least for stage four students. It is unreasonable to expect or imagine a student having any success completing the DE or SOTA high school curriculum without a literate adult to support them and an appropriate environment to learn in. Many students whom this motion addresses are living within sight of a DoE primary school which are resourced to meet their needs. Therefore, in some instances, remote families are anxious when their children are nearing stage four (year seven). Latterly with the increase of regulations accessing the primary schools' facilities for studying high school has been more difficult. This situation has led to parents arranging for their children to repeat year six. In some instances, the whole community worries and wants the year six student to repeat because effectively that 'buys' them one more year of school. The family and community recognise it will be those students' last chance of a genuine school year. Louth ICPA recognises the complexities with enrolments in dual schools however we ask the NSW DoE work with ICPA NSW to find a solution as quickly as possible because the current reality is that for some children their future is inescapable with the one avenue - education-being closed to them.



Comments.

**Mike Tom, Department of Education.** I understand where this is coming from and I think in some of the DE schools, particularly in the high school side of things, have organised an outreach process by which they actually look at a suitable location where children may come together. It tends to be a non-school site where they can get some extra tutoring and extra support. So, that does exist but it exists because the individual principals of those schools negotiate that particular process. In this case, what you're seeking here or if I understand the motion correctly, you are actually wanting a primary school with the principal to make available their classroom or their facilities for a child to receive or do some work. While that has happened in the past and I can think of a couple of examples where that has happened over the years, it is absolutely negotiated and needs to be negotiated, not mandated, by the principal of the small primary school and the principal of the distance education site. There are a whole host of reasons around that including the fact that someone has got to do the supervision and processes in place. Examples we have had in the past is there has been a relationship with Broken Hill School of the Air and Tibooburra Public School and that whole relationship was about brokering a relationship between the principals and the fact that the parents would have to be part of that negotiating process. My advice in this particular case is that, if you have someone who is in that need, then the first thing they need to do is have a conversation with the distance education principal of the school that they are actually enrolled in and, if you have a great relationship with the school, you might be able to do that as well, but I would start by talking to the principal of the school.

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**A18. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to support incentives, such as recognition of work experience, for graduate teachers who accept work as governesses tutoring Distance Education students in remote areas.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Many families who have more than one student in the home school room may employ a governess. Usually this is an untrained person or backpacker. In supporting graduate teachers to be employed as a home tutor in a distance education school room there are several benefits. For the students, they are being supervised by someone who is a graduate teacher. The advantages for the graduate teacher is that they have a full-time job, including full board and keep, they are working in the industry they have trained for, they are working under the guidance of an experienced teacher, they are gaining experience working in a multistage classroom and would be gaining recognition work experience.

For the family, they are able to afford to employ a qualified supervisor to help educate their children. This has the potential to encourage qualified teachers to move to the bush. The government is saying that the amount of funding for education is continually rising with the standard of education getting further and further behind. Could this be a way of helping close the gap in education between the rural, remote and metropolitan schools?

Comments.

**Laura Stalley, State Council.** We support this motion. A lot of our members are coming to us now and it is starting to get really hard to find supervisors to teach children in distance education. It is really

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hard to find qualified people to come in and teach them so State Council fully supports this motion.

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### **A19. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW asks the Minister for Education to change the policy to ensure that isolated home secondary students of School of Distance Education have access to their peers and teachers in person each term.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

Currently in DE primary school it is policy that students access their peers and teachers each term. 2020 was a year like no other, however, even though our rural and remote high school students were not in COVID-19 shires they did not have any face-to-face opportunities with their teachers or fellow students other than three days in term one before COVID-19. Even when all other high school students were back to face-to-face learning Dubbo DE High school students were not afforded the same option. For example, in 2020 there was a remote family with two students studying Year 7 through Dubbo School of Distance Education (DSODE) and other than three days in Term 1 at the residential camp held on school grounds in Dubbo, which was before COVID-19, they had no further contact in person with either their teachers or their peers for the remainder of the 2020 school year. Even after every other NSW student returned to in person learning after COVID-19 restrictions had eased, these DE students were not afforded the same option, even though the DE primary component was able to gather as a group for camps at the school site in Dubbo.

#### Comments.

**David McLeod, NSW Department of Education.** As we know last year was a year like no other and the restrictions that our school principals were put under around access to the schools was incredible. Most of the principals, once there was an opportunity to start bringing the schools back together, ran field services with the bigger schools and it became much more complicated to do that and they had to prioritize different groups. We’ve certainly learnt a lot out of last year. No borders for boarders. We’ve learnt lessons and I suspect that during 2021 we will be able to respond in a much more agile manner to the fact that there are restrictions placed on us from above.

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### **A20. Wentworth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to urgently address the technology and delivery platform provided to School of the Air (SOTA) and Distance Education (DE) students.”*

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried.

#### **Explanation:**

In 2020 all students in Australia moved to online learning and parents of existing SOTA/DE

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students were astounded at what was made available in mass and with such a short time frame. 2020 also showed significant problems arise with the existing technology provided to SOTA/DE students. Many lessons were cancelled due to satellite and/or Remote Education and Conferencing Tool (REACT) problems and no alternate lesson platform was offered. When the rest of the country are allowed to use other platforms to deliver effective lessons, why can this not be offered to children who have to receive their entire education via this means for their entire school life? Our children cannot return to face-to-face learning and catch up, so we must get this right to begin with. Numerous cancelled lessons are completely inadequate. The hardware provided is also outdated and inadequate. Children should have access to a larger screen that allows for their lessons and worksheet to be displayed at the same time. Access to WiFi is also essential in a functioning classroom, which would allow the effective use of printers, scanners and iPad or tablets. Many parents who are still recovering from drought are going to extraordinary lengths and expense to be able to access basic technology and internet in their school room to ensure their children can access a functioning level of education. This situation is not acceptable.

#### Comments.

**Mike Tom, Department of Education.** I couldn't agree more and, as a matter of fact, I could almost speak for the motion but what I'm saying in here is that we acknowledge that there were a range of issues with providing a service for you and you didn't get the service you should have and for that all I can do is apologize. Where we are going at the moment, I think will remedy that situation for you. I would say to you that COVID was probably the silver lining in the cloud there in that COVID caused everyone to focus on that. There were a range of people across the world, I suspect, who would have said thank goodness they are not having to deal with this with my children every day and the thoughts would have gone out to you guys because you do have to deal with this every day. So, we are wanting the same level of interaction with the teachers and the students as everyone else is experiencing and the bandwidth absolutely showed itself as lacking in the system and that is what we are trying to remedy. I would say to you that there is also now a range of products of ZOOM is one of them which are very, very simple to use and a lot of people were using those on their standard domestic service. However, when we run those on satellite it is not quite as reliable and the other things are that it tends to use a whole lot of bandwidth in its video usage that really has an impact on other sites. So, some of the things that we see coming up are because some people are using ZOOM and the system simply can't support it. The nice thing about REACT and one of the reasons we are sticking with REACT in the interim period at least, is that we can control and tweak the throughput on video and we think with the larger bandwidth it will be far more robust. I think the previous motion had your members speaking to that.

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#### **A21. Wentworth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education consult with parents and supervisors before updating the technology provided in the School of the Air and Distance Education home school room.”*

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried

**Explanation:**

It is imperative that the DoE consult with a core group of parents or supervisors from a range of schools to ensure appropriate technology is provided to enable lesson delivery in the home school room. Consultation must involve the people who are in the home school room using the technology day to day, to get an effective understanding of the problems that are hindering the education of our children. It is the understanding from the home school room that is imperative to getting this right.

**Comments.**

**Laura Stalley, State Council.** To give the floor an update we had a meeting yesterday afternoon with the distance Education families and we did discuss this issue and we have spoken with Mike Tom and we have come to an agreement that ICPA will have two members who will be able to consult with the process of rolling out technology and NBN when it comes to that point.

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**A22. Broken Hill**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobbies the Department of Education to make NSW Department of Education Distance Education Schools a priority when upgrading bandwidth in schools, to improve internet services and connectivity for geographically isolated students studying through Distance Education.”*

Moved by Ali Allison that this motion is deemed covered by Motion A16.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Currently students enrolled in primary school through the NSW Department of Education via Distance Education (DE) are having daily difficulties in relations to their internet service. These difficulties include, but are not limited to - trouble connecting to Remote Education and Conferencing Tool (REACT) lessons and being logged out of lessons, extremely slow download speeds, very slow loading of web pages and difficulty watching online videos as it takes a long time to load and buffers throughout the video. All students attending NSW Department of Education schools should have equal to access to online course content and virtual learning experiences, but geographically isolated students studying through DE seem to be experiencing difficulties where others are not.

Students enrolled in rural and remote schools, such as White Cliffs Public School, are able to use the internet daily without interruption. All students are able to access video conferencing and interactive live shows with ease. Students all have their own laptops and are able use the internet simultaneously without any trouble. This is currently not the case for DE students who are encountering difficulties with their internet, especially with their satellite lesson platform, REACT.

White Cliffs is a very remote and isolated town and some students studying through Broken Hill School of The Air (BHSOTA) live on stations not too far from White Cliffs, so it is hard to see how the internet is not of equal reliability for all students who live in remote areas. Bandwidth is described as the maximum data transfer rate of a network or Internet connection. It measures how much data can be sent over a specific connection in a given amount of time. Schools require large bandwidths and without it can run into service problems when students and teachers are accessing the internet.

By increasing the bandwidth for DE schools this will directly impact the amount of data that can be transferred through the school's connection and therefore improve the quality of education for geographically isolated students studying through Distance Education. This will ensure that all students are able to access equal education opportunities no matter where they live.

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### **A23. Broken Hill**

*“That ICPA-NSW asks the Department of Education to investigate whether Remote Education and Conferencing Tool is the most effective video conferencing platform for the delivery of essential satellite lessons to Distance Education students.”*

Moved by Laura Finch, Broken Hill. Seconded by Ali Allison, Broken Hill.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

Technology and the part it plays in our lives has evolved dramatically over the past few decades. We rely on technology in all aspects of our lives but DE students, especially those who are geographically isolated, rely on technology more than most. DE students have been so fortunate to have had access to video conferencing satellite lessons for approximately 20 years. The REACT program has been invaluable in allowing students to see their teachers and peers, show their work and engage in satellite lessons that can make them feel like they are in the same room with their teacher and peers. However, the REACT program does not seem to be evolving and changing as our technology demands increase.

*Case Study:* “I have been using REACT since I started our DE journey eight years ago and unfortunately, I have found that the quality of satellite lessons delivered using REACT have deteriorated rather than improved as other technology available to us improve. I am not the only one who has experienced this. Many, if not all, families enrolled in Broken Hill School of The Air (BHSOTA) have had difficulties using REACT.”

Broken Hill Branch asked SOTA families to complete a log book of issues they experienced with REACT late last year and there was a multitude of problems. Students are unable to be heard, their microphones are delayed or won't turn on. The teacher is unable to turn a student's video tool on as it distorts their audio, so the student can be seen but not heard.

Students working on Google classroom to complete work interactively have difficulty, especially younger students as they need to have their REACT screen open to hear instructions from their teacher but also have the Google classroom screen open to complete the work. This can cause a lot of difficulty and stress for students trying to navigate their way between the two programs.

The most common problem was that students are being logged out of their lesson by REACT with no warning or reason. Unfortunately, from evidence given by families, this is happening during most lessons. Students are being logged out during the lesson; they then have to spend time quickly logging back on before they miss too much. For younger students this can be very distressing, as their satellite lessons are often quite short and they feel they are missing out, as it can take some time to log back on to the lesson. These problems seem to be quite unacceptable, especially children being 'kicked out' of their classroom during a lesson. Imagine if this was happening in a face-to-face classroom with a teacher kicking students out of the classroom with no reason on a daily basis. The community would be in uproar. As technology changes our connectivity and ability to communicate and complete tasks online

has significantly improved. Yet unfortunately REACT doesn't seem to be improving at the same rate as other available technologies. For this reason, we would like to perhaps see an investigation into whether or not REACT is actually the best platform available for our DE students, or whether there will be changes made to REACT, as it is a 20-year-old program. We want to ensure DE students have access to the best technology possible.

#### Comments.

**Carol Huggens, Hay Branch.** I would like to support this motion. It is really evident when the rest of Australia can have brilliant delivery of lessons during COVID-19 but our distance education kids are definitely left very behind. So, I fully support this motion.

**Laura Stalley State Council.** We talked about the survey that we did and I guess these sorts of statistics help support this motion. From the survey, 80% of parents and supervisors felt that there was a need to upgrade the video platform that we currently use. With the video platform, 44% of people said that they were having daily issues and 42% said that they had weekly issues and in terms of the quality and interactivity with it, 40% said it was poor. 20% said that it was very poor and 29% said it was satisfactory. So, that is just some statistics from the data that ICPA-NSW collected regarding the video platforms.

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## Early Childhood

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### **A24. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests that the Minister for Early Childhood establish preschools in small isolated schools where there is no other access to preschool for three and four-year-olds.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

#### **Explanation:**

Several remote schools have been identified as servicing areas without access to preschool. This is despite an on-going effort to collaboratively find a system with sustainably which could facilitate preschool in remote villages for three and four-year olds. Weilmoringle has opened its preschool in October 2017 and yet that is the only operational preschool despite the Department of Education's (DoE) announcement of them being approved and actioned in March 2017. We believe that the process could be hastened if the three key elements, site/venue, staffing and provider, were worked on at the same time. Louth Public School is one of those schools. Louth Branch ICPA, along with many western communities is no longer able to be anything other than insulted by the Department of Education's Early Childhood and Education and Care Directorate's (ECECD) approach towards resolving this educational inequity.

#### Comments

**Sue Gordon, Lone Members.** I would really like to support this motion and I remember years ago when we were on State Council this was one of the issues that we took to Government when all that funding came in for early childhood services that looked at maybe they could start establishing preschool facilities in the small rural schools. So, I think this is great initiative although probably ten years in the making but I think, good on you Louth and all the other



motions that are following. I think it is great initiative and I think that the Department needs to be pushed into making this happen quicker.

**Annabel Strachan, State Council.** As at present when Wanaaring have got their building and their provider and have no staff being trained and so therefore the preschool cannot commence.

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**A25. Bourke**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobbies all relevant Ministers and State Government Departments to use a more accurate mapping method than the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Combined Drought Indicator (CDI) or ‘drought map’ that has been used to determine how affected a particular area is for assessing funding and drought services for early childhood education.”*

Moved by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Bourke. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke.

Carried

**Explanation:**

An example of how the inaccuracy is causing disparity is Bourke was assessed at the lowest rate of drought impact as at 30 June 2019. As most people would be well aware, this is indeed far from the case, and that Bourke still continues to feel the significant impact of the prolonged drought both economically and socially. The funding payments anticipated for the Bourke and District Children’s Services (Preschool, Mobile and Childcare) for the three licences were a third of what was received due to assessment determined by the CDI. This would have allowed the Services to install water saving measures such as irrigation and tanks and replace plantings so that we could provide quality learning environments during the ongoing drought. The use of the CDI mapping has also meant that children in our area are not eligible for the Drought Break Program run by the Office of Sport, as the map indicates that Bourke (along with Cobar and Wilcannia) are not severely drought affected. The children and families in these areas are ineligible.

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**A26. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW request the Minister for Education and Early Childhood to address the lack of salary parity between four year trained early childhood teachers and four year trained primary and high school teachers.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

It is necessary for the Department of Education (DoE) to take over the salary payments of early childhood teachers so that they can be afforded the same salary package as their four-year trained peers who are working in primary and high schools. Currently, the pay gap is so significant it is impossible to recruit and retain teachers in early childhood centres and new recruits often use early childhood jobs as a steppingstone into the primary school sector. Particularly in the remote context where the early childhood packages are without comparable

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incentives such as holiday pay, provision for housing, access to professional support and travel to attend professional development. Some centres are unable to offer early childhood packages which are equal to those in state primary and high schools.

### Comments

**Laura Stalley, State Council.** I would like to support this motion. I think it is really important. A lot of areas within NSW that have early childhood centres or preschools are really finding it hard to find qualified staff for the required number of hours they need for the centres to stay open. So, it is a really important thing. A lot of teachers come to town but they come and they work at the schools and the early childhood centres don't even get a look in. I think this is a really important motion and it really needs to be looked at.

**Sue Gordon, Lone Members.** I would highly support this motion as well. I think it is long overdue. The only explanation I can offer is that early childhood has come from a welfare background which was always traditionally poorly paid. I think now early childhood teaching is a highly trained position and I always used to say that if I had the choice between a high school teacher and an early childhood teacher for my 15-year-old I would employ an early childhood teacher any day. So, I just think this needs to happen to save the staff going over to the school's system where they are better paid, get more holidays and that sort of thing and depriving the early childhood sector of well-trained teachers.

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### **A27. Bourke**

*"That ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) lobby the relevant Ministers for funding to be sought to address Early Childhood Teacher pay parity."*

Moved by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Bourke. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke.

Carried

### **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 seven weeks of annual leave (approx. \$10,000pa)
- Significantly shorter contact hours per week
- Approximately \$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) (\$10,000pa)

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.

**A28. Bourke**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobby Minister for Education and Early Childhood to explore options for better governance models for Early Childhood Services in Western NSW.”*

Moved by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Bourke. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke.

Carried

**Explanation:**

In rural and remote areas of NSW most Early Childhood Services are provided by Community Managed not-for-profit organisations or Local Government. The significant weight of responsibility placed on the volunteer management committees means that many potential candidates will not volunteer for such a role. There is limited capacity for volunteers to undertake rigorous training and, indeed, Early Childhood Services have extremely limited resources to be able to deliver training in governance and financial management.

Comments

**Neridah Healey, Wentworth.** In Pooncarie we currently have 15 expressions of interest for preschool. The parents of these children are already volunteer firefighters, ambulance officers, cleaners of the RTS Clinic, P&C members as well as many other community organisations. Combined with this they run their own businesses with no option of child care to complete these tasks. Volunteer fatigue is a major concern in rural and remote areas and needs to be considered at all levels of government. Our parents are not trained to manage a preschool and nor should they be expected to.

**Laura Stalley, State Council.** I think this is a really big issue in local communities where they're in charge of running centre. They are in charge of staff. They are in charge of the pay roll. They are in charge of everything and it makes it really hard for the communities when you are a volunteer on a committee and you don't have this training and yet you're expected to run a community or organisation that sometimes isn't even making or braking even for these communities. This is seen not only in preschools but also in early childhood centres as well. It would be great for that training to happen for the volunteers so they know what to expect and so that they can then ensure that they are getting quality teachers and staff working at the centres.

**Sue Gordon, Lone Members.** I can only empathise with this motion. I spent many years advocating and working in early childhood in the management position, on the preschool committee, the long day care committee, and I was even part of the organisation then called The Country Children's Services Association, that is now Community Connections and Solutions or something like that. CCSA anyway. There is still a peak organisation. A lot of Pooncarie is possibly a member of that organisation and I would suggest that ICPA-NSW perhaps talks with CCSA about how this can be carried forward because I think it is extremely important. All our services grew from just community-based organisations when there wasn't the regulation and the responsibility that is imposed on the governance of organisations today. I think that, if you want early childhood well you have got to be part of that governance organisation but certainly, I would be talking to CCSA about how you can advance this because it is extremely important. Otherwise, the service just folds.

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**A29. Louth**

*“ICPA-NSW asks NSW Government Ministers to not announce initiatives which they have actioned until those projects are ready to be commenced.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

The establishment of preschools by the NSW Department of Education in very remote NSW was announced at the 2017 ICPA-NSW State Conference in Mudgee. To date there are two (perhaps three by the time of this 2021 conference) operational of the ten identified by ICPA-NSW.

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**A30. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to include children from remote and very remote settings in the priority group for three-year-olds so that they can access preschool.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

We would like remote and very remote children to be included in this criterion primarily due to the cost, time and other vagaries associated with travel in remote and very remote areas. This would enable the children to access 600 hours of preschool over two years. This also allows time for children to complete any intervention programs which may need to be delivered.

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**A31. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW communicates to The Smith Family review into attendance strategies for early learning, the idea that 600 hours preschool accessed through the universal guarantee could be done across a two-year period prior to school in rural and remote areas.”*

Moved by Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Liz Powell, Walgett.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

Four-year-olds attending face to face preschool 15 hours a week, often across three separate days, is not always a financial or physical possibility for families in rural and remote settings. This is primarily due to the cost and time associated with travel to access early childhood services. Families may be able to access one day the first year (3yo) and two days the following year (4yo) accessing the recommended 600 hours across two years instead of one. This would benefit small rural preschools through increased funding for three-year-olds who would not be

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able to attend 15 hours as four-year-olds. It would also allow students more contact time with educators who may be able to recognise if early intervention for students with developmental delays may be required.

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**A32. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to incentivise students who are studying Early Childhood qualification by assisting with study costs, to enable remote preschools to be staffed adequately.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

After a protracted process Louth Branch is delighted to have, pending at the time of writing this explanation, three of the original ten sites identified as needing practical access to preschool, actually running as preschools. These are at Weilmoringle, Louth and Wanaaring and staffing is a critical component to their success. It is obvious that in these areas there is a dearth of early childhood certificate, diploma and degree qualifications amongst the people who live there. While there are local people interested in training to take these positions, they will need to be supported financially to complete the required training.

Comments.

**Annabel Strachan, State Council.** I will just reiterate that Wanaaring has no educator. They have the provider and the building but no one is able to any educating so the preschool is yet to be started.

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**A33. Wentworth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education to provide preschool within the school environment where numbers and continuous population are considered too low to fund an independent preschool.”*

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

For the past few years, Pooncarie parents have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure their children can access some form of face-to-face preschool. The mums meet regularly for mothers' group in Pooncarie and there are a number of children looking for preschool in the coming years. It has now been four years since Reporting the Health and Development of Children in Rural and Remote Australia was prepared by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. The report states that, *“Given that Early Childhood is the period of greatest developmental plasticity with profound long-term influences, access to timely and quality Early Childhood Education and Care service such as preschool and Early Childhood Intervention services such as allied health can prevent the avoidable and address presenting issues from the onset.”* With little change or progression to preschool in remote areas since

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the release of this report, it is now time to reconsider the options to delivering preschool where small numbers exist and allow for the provision of preschool in small schools where possible.

#### Comments.

**Sue Gordon, Lone Members.** I just think that this is an absolute no-brainer. We just talked about being unable to find committees to manage the local preschools. If preschool can be offered in a school setting, then this just makes so much sense especially in rural and remote areas. I would love to have the Minister's comment on this.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell MLC. Minister for Education and Early Childhood.** I agree with this motion and I have had the opportunity to speak with Nerida earlier about what they wanted to do out at Pooncarie. I think that there is a real opportunity to look at how we do this. Obviously, we have got that community safety net and I agree with the motions that have been coming from the Louth Branch that it has been too slow. We have only done three and we have to improve that, but also, I think that we particularly need to look at what do in schools in these smaller communities. We are on board for having that discussion about what we can do and I look forward to that discussion as well.

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## Rural Schools

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### **A34. Bourke**

*“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to advocate that permanent Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item numbers for telehealth consultations that are assigned to Telehealth Allied Health Services, specialists and consultations, including but not limited to Speech Pathology, Paediatricians and Psychologists, and to support the specific educational needs and learning difficulties of geographically isolated children.”*

Moved by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Bourke Branch. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Bourke Branch.

Carried.

#### **Explanation:**

Many allied health services are unavailable to rural and remote families. In border regions this unavailability is heightened, for example; Qld practitioners cannot see patients who live in NSW and vice versa.

Barriers are:

- that people sometimes travel long distances only to have the appointment cancelled
- lengthy waiting lists to access practitioners are 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 are unfamiliar with metropolitan areas when accessing treatment
- many people needing National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plans are



unable to navigate the system and without access to services they are unable to utilise their plans.

Utilisation of telehealth services can be of a 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 accessed 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.

#### Comments.

**Alana Moller, President, ICPA (Aust).** I just wanted to let conference know that Federal Council have been working hard on this, particularly since the pandemic, and we have raised it with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Regional Health most recently in a virtual delegation meeting with the Minister for Regional Health, Then Hon. Mark Coulton, MP, and what he indicated at the time is that there will be things forthcoming and continuing following on from what happened during the pandemic. They don't know what it is going to be or how it is going to look as yet but it is coming and we will certainly be continuing to work on that as much as we possibly can.

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#### **A35. Collarenebri-Mungindi**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to change the numbers of students registered at the school for the limited schools’ program be lowered to 20 students.”*

Word change requested. That “lowered” be changed to “increased.” and remove “to 20 students”.

Permission granted.

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to change the numbers of students registered at the school for the limited schools’ program be increased.”*

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi.

Carried.

#### **Explanation:**

The limited schools’ programme has one criterion where the number of students registered at the school is 25. In rural and remote areas this number is preventing families from being able to apply for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) under the limited schools program. This registered number which includes students enrolled but not attending, needs to be reviewed.

#### Comments.

**Mike Tom, Department of Education.** When we met with ICPA executive on Tuesday we had a discussion around this. There are two parts to the AIC process. The first part is the part that was discussed yesterday in terms of Walgett and that is around naming or listing a limited programme school. The second part is the part that they pass down to each jurisdiction which is looking at a case-by-case basis for a Statement of Support. The Statement of Support has

specific guidelines around it that the Commonwealth dictate. What we try and do is, like every jurisdiction, as Queensland will have their way of dealing with this which will be different to ours as will South Australia, we try and bend, twist, do what we possibly can, to stick within the guidelines but to be fair and reasonable with the process. Part of this which we negotiated with ICPA a number of years ago was simply to look at, not so much the isolation in terms of geographic isolation because that is taken into account in our process already by allotting points to the schools that are furthest away and the more isolated the school is the more points are given to that particular school, but to try and look at social isolation. So that is what we are trying to look at in terms of here. Part of that is to say that if the school has a very small number of children in a particular year those students would be perhaps socially isolated. That's the one that you people will tell us all the time, the per to peer interaction and how that is important. So, we are trying to take that into consideration. At the moment it stands at 25. What I will say is that changing that will require discussion with a range of senior officers in the Department but what I'm happy to do is to undertake discussion with the ICPA in terms of where that should be and we can have a discussion around that so I'll take that onboard.

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### **A36. Balranald**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to strongly promote and emphasise the benefits of early transition programs into rural and remote schools throughout NSW.”*

Moved by Lisa Duryea, Balranald. Seconded by Kathleen Harris, Balranald.

Carried.

#### **Explanation:**

In 2019 Clare Public School introduced the early transition program for the four preschool aged children in the community that would be attending in 2020. Apart from fortnightly access to the Hay Mobile Preschool, these children would otherwise have had no other access to an early education due to the huge distances involved - for some a trip of 180kms one way. The early transition program introduced at Clare Public School allowed these children to access the program in mid 2019 instead of late in the year. This early transition program allowed the children to have access to education resources and was received positively by the children, who showed great advancement in their school readiness. The universal 600 hours of preschool recommended by the Federal Government is difficult to achieve. Many children from rural and isolated areas barely, if at all, receive the recommended hours of preschool education because of the limitations in their community. By encouraging more rural and remote schools to introduce the early transition program the NSW Department of Education would be allowing children to have some preschool education before attending primary school. The Balranald Branch would like to thank the NSW Department of Education and the Principal at Clare Public School for implementing an early transition program.

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### **A37. Louth**

*“That an ICPA-NSW representative meets annually with each Director Educational Leadership overseeing rural and remote schools and that these meetings become embedded into the directors' calendar.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

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Carried.

**Explanation:**

When we have education issues in the bush, we are always aware of how fortunate we are to have ICPA as a voice through which we are able to advocate. However, this motion is really too old as it was first presented and carried with Department of Education (DoE) acclaim in 2011. It is a simple initiative to action. It has come to our attention however that new Directors responsible for 'ICPA areas' are sometimes aware of ICPA existence only after a conference when a motion that concerns their office has been carried. However, without ICPA-NSW asking annually for a meeting they currently do not happen. We feel it would be beneficial to both the community and Directors, newly appointed or not, if they'd had the opportunity to meet with State Council and or members from their area and, at least, heard of some of the issues ICPA-NSW is working towards.

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**A38. Louth**

*"That ICPA-NSW requests the Executive Director of Public Schools NSW to ensure that the Director Educational Leadership actually physically attend the rural, remote and very remote TPI schools in their area, at least twice a year."*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

There are many reasons for which the Louth and Wanaaring School communities feel that the Director should be on site at least twice a year. Most importantly they need to review the teaching principal's program to be delivered and register of work which has been delivered to the students. The Director then also, and perhaps this is the most integral part of the overseeing role of a principal, needs to inspect and enjoy the students' completed work; whether it be a work in progress or published and ready for sharing. How else can the tax paying public be assured that the above is happening in a positive manner? We believe that the Director's physical presence will engender friendships and networking which will allow them to understand issues between teaching principals and their communities before problems arise. This level of support is necessary for the teaching principal who is working in professional peer isolation even though they have access to online mentoring, and the communities they are serving who deserve the best education possible for their children.

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**A39. Louth**

*"That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Department of Education Director Educational Leadership responsible for isolated schools monitor their principals to ensure that the communities are being thoroughly included in any school decision process."*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

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**Explanation:**

Currently the principal can access a series of training opportunities for themselves even though they are intending to transfer from their current school. Louth Branch certainly does not wish to hinder any in-servicing of staff if it is necessary for their jobs in our remote schools. Without a definite school program to follow or sometimes a casual teacher to deliver it, students can miss valuable learning days while their teaching principal is away. Other examples of lack of community consultation have resulted in issues with throwing out of and reordering school resources. We feel that Directors should be aware that in some circumstances, training needs to be moderated and we feel that safeguards still need to be put in place to prevent wastage of students' school time and school resources. We ask therefore for the Directors to help local people induct principals with a strong sense of the need to collaborate in an inviting way with communities to enable them to make decisions with which they are genuinely comfortable.

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**A40. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW urges the Executive Director of NSW Public Schools to ensure an interview process is undertaken when a TPI school's relieving principal's position is to be filled for longer than two terms.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

When a principal is away from his or her permanent position for whatever reason it can stretch to years in time. Obviously, the relieving principal is then a significant person in the school life of a child. Louth ICPA Branch feels that when the relieving principal is in the situation of 'filling in' for longer than two terms, for their sake and the school families involved, the position of relieving principal should be opened for applications of expressions of interest and the formal interview process should be conducted. Anything less is creating an environment for confusion and awkwardness.

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**A41. Balranald**

*“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Department of Education to monitor and encourage consistent information at handovers of principals in TPI rural schools”*

Moved by Kirsty Wilson, Balranald. Seconded by Kathleen Harris, Balranald.

Carried

**Explanation:**

The changeover of principals at Clare Public School, six in the last four years, has had a negative impact on the pupils and staff at the school, detrimentally affecting the education of the pupils and putting an excessive amount of time constraints on the new principal. Inconsistent information and difficulty accessing the department's computer system due to contract changes for new principals means that the teaching principal has a lot of catching up to do and in some cases, it takes a whole term for all the administrative applications to be implemented. This impacts on the productivity of the principal in the office and ultimately impacts the time spent in class with the students. Contracts commence on the first day of

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school, however if they were dated 1<sup>st</sup> January the new principal would have access to applications and information well before the first day of school and would be able to familiarise themselves with information applicable to the new school.

It is vital in this small school and other TP1 schools that correct information is exchanged and there should be a consistent handover to ensure a smooth transition at the start of the school year.

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**A42. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW urges the Director Educational Leadership, to ensure that there is always a 'hand over' between principals in TP1 schools particularly in the program.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

It has been the practice in small western schools, for the succeeding principals not to have crossed over. The common arrangement is for the leaving principal to tidy and pack up the school, collect their own resources, hand back the keys and drive away just before Christmas. When the new principal arrives in the blinding heat of January with all the problems it creates for stock people, most isolated school community members while welcoming, are not focused on school.

Even with an industrious will, it is hard for the new teacher to set up the school for the following year, not knowing the students or his or her way around the resources. Seldom is there an on-going Term 1 program, scope and sequence or assessment records. To be frank, there have been several cases where there is not even the preceding year's program. In general, the teaching principal is felt to be the boss in the sense that they are responsible for students' welfare and schooling, the staff and the school's budget, assets and grounds. As the leader the principal often must assume a role of command which is difficult when all the vagaries of whatever scenario they are faced, are totally unfamiliar. In our experience of assisting new teaching principals as they begin their appointment, the major shock is the huge workload required to program appropriately for a multistage classroom, let alone rigorously implementing same and following up with constant assessing. While obviously this is the most important task, often it is the one which the teacher is not able to do expediently as he/she are having to mentally grapple with and make decisions about other issues which also require immediate attention. This has resulted in poor coordination of programs, resources and staff rosters; generally a longer period of time for the community and principal to feel comfortable as co-workers in an isolated setting which has led to any dispute or misunderstanding being presented as a complaint; a program vacuum being created, as in no set outcomes, adjusted program being followed daily; awkward staffing arrangements; new resources being unnecessarily purchased and a myriad of other negatives, most of which could be prevented by the outgoing principal inducting the incoming principal.

**A43. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW ask the Minister for Education and the Minister for Regional NSW if the agreed 2019 staffing levels for 2020 and 2021 not be immediately or gradually removed but remain in place in public schools.”*

Moved by Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. Seconded by Liz Powell, Walgett Branch.

Carried

**Explanation:**

The support that was provided to children in drought and bushfire affected communities by maintaining staffing entitlements at public schools was a godsend to many communities over the past few years. For some schools they were able to reach goals of providing a wider range or elective subjects. Take this away and we will see families moving away and enrolment numbers still decreasing. Knowing our local schools have the capacity to retain skilled and dedicated staff during these times of hardship helps give our children the opportunity to be the best they can be. It is acknowledged that some areas have come out of drought but it must be also noted that it takes some years for some families and communities to regain their footing.

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**A44. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobby the ministers for education and health to invest in the availability of on the ground youth and adolescent Mental Health services in rural schools and communities, further more provide incentives for these specialists to remain in our communities.”*

Moved by Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. Seconded by Liz Powell, Walgett Branch.

Carried

**Explanation:**

While there is some access to services, supply in many rural areas does not meet demand, to the point of failing to refer and lack of disclosure. If these services are not available locally, the expenses and continued trauma associated with travelling to access services are prohibitive for many families. By not providing incentives for specialist to remain in our community’s it creates a fly-in fly-out mentality, a perception of a lack of care and a continuation of a lack of referrals and disclosure.

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**A45. Walgett**

*“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Minister for Education to place Walgett Community College (WCC) on the list for bypassing from Years 7 – 12 commencing 2021.”*

Moved by Liz Powell, Walgett Branch. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett Branch.

Carried.

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**Explanation:**

We acknowledge and thank the effort made by ICPA-NSW State Council to address this issue over the years but sadly our members and our community are still very much in need. We continue to lose valuable community members, some of whom have lived in the area for generations, in pursuit of an appropriate education for their children in the secondary years.

For 2021, 19 Queensland Schools were on the list for bypass and only two schools in NSW. In comparison with information already researched and collected by Bank West Curtin Economic Centre called Educate Australia Fair, most of the 19 schools in QLD have a better educational opportunity and a better socio - educational advantage than the Walgett Community College. Ten schools in this report are in an advantaged area and ten are in a disadvantaged area. Walgett is number two and where I grew up at Goodooga, far west NSW, number one.

Once again, we have lost a Principal with this making it in the last seven years an average loss of one Principal per year. Up to nine staff are not returning for another year so this unrest and instability is a major disadvantage with staff losses reaching 60% turnover per year over the last five years.

We all know the figures, that 88% of students are in the bottom quartile for socio-educational advantage and that only 19% of students attend for 90% of the time. The curriculum has been significantly modified to meet the needs of the students attending the school and the prospect of achieving an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) almost impossible, with only five senior secondary students awarded a senior secondary certificate on completion as per information provided on the My School website 2019.

In 2019 Walgett Community Centre (WCC) received approximately \$4,000,000 from the State Government and \$1,500,000 from Australian Government recurrent funding. Therefore, 106 students on average cost the Australian Government \$6,000,000. This information is freely and openly supplied on the My Schools website. This therefore makes the \$114,000 for six families averaging three children requiring the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance seem comparatively insignificant. Out of the 2020 graduating students from the local Catholic Primary School one is attending the WCC and only seven from the State Primary School. This is about choice and equality.

**Comments.**

**Mike Tom, Department of Education.** The AIC process and the Bypass process is complex. I don't think I can go into it in huge amounts of detail on the conference floor but I would certainly encourage you, through the executive of ICPA, a deeper conversation with the Department of Education and, certainly, in terms of the Walgett Branch, I am available for the next two days so please come up and share a conversation, specifically in the context of Walgett and the Bypass process. We spent yesterday for around about an hour meeting with the executive of ICPA to go through the AIC supporting statement process. Obviously, Walgett has been an issue for you as a community for a number of years and we will work with you through the supporting statement process. Every jurisdiction is different in terms of how they deal with that. So, I would say to you that making comparisons between jurisdictions is probably not going to be helpful because, when you look at the jurisdiction, which is way education is laid out in each of those jurisdictions, it will be very, very different. Each jurisdiction will have to actually go or support the guidelines that are actually laid down by the Commonwealth. It is a Commonwealth allowance and they detail how schools will be made, as you say, a Bypass school. It is actually called a Limited Programmes School in terms of the proper language. So, again, I encourage the Walgett representatives here to come and have a conversation at some stage during the conference.

**David Cameron, Namoi Branch.** This issue regarding the Statement of Support was around ten years ago and it has been re-jigged. The Statement of Support was started in the 1990's and

the issue has been around forever. We all have figures on what it is costing the schools. You can pour as much money into some schools as you want. You can have better teachers or better curriculum but the bottom line is that families need to decide where their children go to school and, with no bad words about Walgett, if they don't want to send their children to Walgett, then they should have the choice to send them somewhere else. This allowance that parents have been asking for, for years, doesn't pay for boarding school. It doesn't pay for very much at all. It's not a huge allowance. It is just a help and I think we have mucked around for too long because governments and departments just don't to admit that a school might look bad if there is a number of kids leaving. They're leaving anyway by choice. So, come on, let's fix it up. Not everyone wants to go to boarding school. Give them some choice.

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**A46. Walgett**

*“That ICPA-NSW request that the NSW government change the criteria for bypass to not be based on subjects alone but to include socio educational advantage and individually assess a school.”*

Moved by Karen Ricardo, Walgett Branch. Seconded by Liz Powell, Walgett Branch.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Once again, we acknowledge the effort made by ICPA-NSW State Council to address this issue over the years but sadly our members and our community remain in need. Walgett Community College (WCC) should be the most obvious choice for bypass in NSW and added to this existing list of two schools. This is not an option for these families and this is becoming and always has been a great injustice. We also accept this isn't just a school problem but an entire community battling alcohol, drugs, abuse, domestic violence and generational government dependency and this creates an environment that makes it difficult to learn in.

The criteria for bypass include subject restrictions and as most subjects are available, there are very few, if any students doing them. We understand and are willing to accept that as stated on the Department of Education Procedure for Bypass printed by the Queensland Government that it would need to be assessed every two years. We also see on this document that the HR assesses student enrolment numbers and that for Years 11 and 12, criteria is given to schools with less than 25 students in Years 11-12. This also makes WCC eligible.

The list of criteria should also include student behaviours. The WCC has a history of assaults to Teaching staff and to other students. After receiving documents from the Freedom of Information Act we were made aware of police being called to the school on a number of occasions with weapons, drug exchanges, assaults on students and at least four teachers assaulted in 2019 alone. In 2019 we noted a serious assault where a student physically harmed a teacher. There are many of these incident reports available and these are increasing every year. This doesn't include injury to staff who are trying to protect other students from assault. Of the five applications for a statement of support for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) only one student was successful and that was because they were in Year 12 and the subject was not available. In November 2019 we were made aware that a teacher, after trying to save another student, was assaulted leaving the staff member with a broken vertebra leading to surgery and of course, as we all know, mental and physical trauma. We feel that these statistics and incident reports and student safety issues should assist WCC in becoming eligible for the bypass and should be added to the required initial criteria by the NSW government to support all students residing in the Walgett Shire.

Comments.

**Robin Beckwith, Walgett Branch.** I'm not a farmer. I'm a plumber and I live in the town of Walgett. We met Minister Mitchell at the Bourke Cabinet meeting and we explained this situation. We were told by her advisers that in December 2019 that within two weeks we would be able to apply for AIC and it would be granted. This went on and on and we do accept that there were other issues that came up such as bush fires and everything in between. We were then informed in April that we wouldn't be able to qualify for it and it wasn't possible to be done. The situation at Walgett High School has deteriorated with some staff saying that it is at its worst since 2015 when it was named as the state's worst high school. They say that it has never been as bad as it is now. We had a teacher who was strangled last year, there are lockdowns averaging twice a week, the situation is dire and we cannot attract people to the town. We have farmers and contractors who can't get staff. The aboriginal medical service can't get staff. Walgett Shire Council can't even get people to drive ride-on lawnmowers any more and people are leaving the town. In Walgett you are no less geographically isolated access to quality education because you live in town. It is actually worse. We are only asking for access to the small amount of help that is available through AIC. We are not asking for all our school fees to be paid or anything like that. We are just wanting to be on a level playing field with those that can access it. We are really at a point now where we have to make decisions whether to leave town. Ironically COVID probably saved us and certainly prolonged my time in Walgett for a little bit longer. We just need some real help out there. We need new strategies for the school which we have discussed with various people but it needs to be done now. It is destroying the community and we are losing businesses; we are losing families; we have families who have split up and we have aboriginal students in Year 11 and 12 who have given up. Their teachers are gone and they haven't got teachers to teach them so they have given up and their parents say that they are just staying at home. We have a student in Year 12 who hasn't struck a blow in seven weeks on one of her elective subjects because there is no mechanism for her to be taught that subject because of the staffing levels. The staff are scared. They are bound by the so-called Code of Conduct and unable to really speak out. I think it is incredibly brave of them that they had a walk out recently and that has lead to press coverage which we all in the Walgett community would really rather have not had because it is just going to make the situation even more dire and, I'm afraid, if this situation doesn't get resolved it is going to get worse because it is going to perpetuate until we have community that is absolutely decimated.

**Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch, neighbouring Walgett, also past State Council and State President.** Over my years on State Council and still here and been to all these conferences. Walgett has always had these issues and like we have heard it is getting worse and worse. We keep coming to you about these problems. We're meant to be here to put all our issues up front, have your comment, have some resolutions and have some way forward. This is going backwards and going backwards very, very quickly. So sometimes, to the rest of the room, I just feel why do we bother because this isn't happening. This is just going backwards. So, you are not really giving us enough hope and encouragement and this is really getting worse and I am worried that we are not encouraging our members and what we are here fighting for is looking at department ministers and saying that we have this problem. We seem to get other problems helped or other ideas fixed. Education just sort of sits there and some issues are just plummeting so much so that yes, we have health issues, we've got police involved and we've just heard of some atrocities that are happening in our schools. It shouldn't

be and we need to do something. We need to encourage others because we need to get these issues fixed no matter what they are for the education of our children.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell MLC. Minister for Education and Early Childhood.** What I would like to say is that Walgett is a really, really complex case and I'm not just telling you that. Kate, please bear with me, I completely understand what you are saying and the emotion you are feeling and I know, Robin, that my office was working with you to try to find resolution here. I think, as Mike said before, these aren't easy issues to solve and that doesn't mean that we should walk away from them but I've got a job to play as Education Minister. We've got wider community issues that we need to be looking at there as well. I don't want you to be disheartened to think that this isn't a priority or something we forget about or that we don't want to work with you. I can't fix things overnight as much as I would like to but I just want to reassure conference that this is a priority looking at what's happening at the school and what's happening more widely in the community because schools are a microcosm of the community and there is a lot of complexities and a lot of issues that have been going on for many, many years and I know that. I can't give you all the answers that you want because there are a lot of things we've been trying to do and it has been quite challenging. I know that Mike has said that he is happy to sit down and talk to you more about what we can do as am I. You know that you can always get in touch with me. We are trying to find solutions to the problems out there but, like I said, I wish that I had a silver bullet solution but I don't and I don't want you to be disheartened or to think that we don't care or that we don't want to provide support because we certainly do and we want to keep working towards a solution.

**David Cameron, Namoi Branch.** Minister, it is a complex issue and it is far more than education. It's health, its social issues, its drugs, alcohol, the whole bit, but we are here for education and a very simple way to fix it is to allow any student that wants to bypass to get the small amount of money to keep people in the town. Keep their mother and their father in the town while they go off to another school and it is only a small amount of money for the AIC that would fix part of that problem. We can work on the health and other issues later but any student should be granted access to the AIC would help people like the plumber, the agronomist and the nurse in the town.

**Jenny Sheaffe, Hay Branch Life Member.** I'll be very brief and my comment is addressed to the Minister. Minister, you are the one responsible. I know there is no silver bullet but it is time to start taking some responsibility. I've seen this issue when I was on State Council in 1992. We would address issues like that so it's time that something is done and I hope you have the courage to stand up as a Minister and do it.

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#### **A47. Louth**

*"That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to provide single person accommodation at Louth Public School, as they have done in other small remote schools."*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

There is literally no affordable accommodation in Louth. So, when a casual teacher or visiting consultant needs to overnight it is not feasible for them to do so. There is no additional funding which allows for this extra expense. This is yet another disincentive for principals as they cannot leave their position for any amount of time as the school would not be attended by a teacher.

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**A48. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to ensure that teacher housing is maintained to a high standard in remote and very remote schools by insisting the relevant authorities respond immediately to any reasonable requests.”*

Kylie Baty, Louth request permission for word change. Permission granted.

**Motion A48 now reads:**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Minister for Water, Property and Housing ensure that teacher housing is maintained to a high standard in remote and very remote schools by insisting the relevant authorities respond immediately to any reasonable requests.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

Because of the isolation and distances from amenities and trades persons it is imperative that remote teacher housing be maintained at such a level that is comfortable, safe and an incentive for the principal and their family to make it a home throughout their time at the school. We believe that there should be consultation with the staff who are going to live there. For example, the Louth School house has been there 30 years and the recent upgrade did not include a dishwasher. The installation of a new stove and oven is also necessary as the current one is about to die. While in Louth the principal and family are happy with the renovations the community is disgusted with the following and we would like to table those issues by way of explanation of our motion. The installation of a new rain water tank. The original plan was to clean out the tank, however this did not happen due to safety concerns from the contractors and the tank is old and corroding inside. There needs to be a new tank installed and attached to the kitchen and bathroom. Since moving to Louth in April 2019, the current principal has had to purchase his family’s drinking water as the water in the current tank is bore and river water and undrinkable. The external blinds which were on the house veranda originally have been removed. These are illegal due to the length of the cords and the community is wondering if they will be put back or replaced. The front of the house faces the west and is extremely hot in summer and requires blinds or something similar. The community would also like to have ceiling fans installed in the house as this would assist with the cooling of the rooms. These issues are in themselves not hugely expensive and we urge an immediate response.

**Comments.**

**Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga.** There is such a thing called the Department of Planning and Environment and the Minister for Water.

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**Ellen Walker, Rankins Springs.** Google is a wonderful thing. The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment has four Ministers one of which is the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. So, it is just a matter of pausing at the right spot in this motion. So it is, *“requests the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (pause) Minister for Water, Property and Housing.”* There is also a minister for Planning and Public Spaces. A Minister for Energy and the Environment and a Minister for Local Government all within that one Department. The wording is correct so it is just a pause in the way that you read it out.

**Claire Butler, President, ICPA-NSW.** Thank you. That won't change who we advocate to and we would still be advocating to that Minister.

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**A49. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to include an appropriate vehicle for the Louth Public School.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

Louth ICPA Branch requests as a matter of urgency a car that could transport all of Louth Public School students to extracurricular activities. For example, a car could transport the students to activities such as team sports, sports carnivals, swimming carnivals, excursions, any cultural activities they may be invited to attend, other small school cluster days and the like. All these activities require at least a 200 km round trip on dirt roads. Students' access and participation in these activities is a crucial part of their development. Currently parents have to drive those long distances requiring time away from work and other family commitments in order for their children to participate. Therefore, quite often attending such events are logistically impossible.

This means that Louth Public School students' schooling opportunities are inequitable. Vast distances and unsealed roads in these isolated communities coupled with the fact that there are no essential services, for example, health, emergency services and telecommunications, means that the school and students are even more isolated without an appropriate vehicle. Obviously, it is an expensive decision to accept a position as an incoming principal at a rural and remote small school as they need to have or buy an appropriate vehicle. Therefore, without a vehicle attached to the school, these very remote students are at a disadvantage.

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**A50. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to ensure that procedures are followed before sending a complaint to Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

**Explanation:**

We understand that once a complaint has gone to Employee Performance and Conduct

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Directorate (EPAC) the Department is unable to do anything about it. We believe before a complaint goes to EPAC that the person about whom the complaint has been made are able to defend their actions and any other persons who can give information are asked before the person responsible sends it to EPAC. This would alleviate the stress that occurs when waiting for long periods until the complaint process is dealt with by EPAC. Only when all the information has been gathered and the person responsible is not satisfied should it then be sent to EPAC.

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**A51. Rankins Springs**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education to ensure that rural and remote schools have access to face-to-face counselling sessions for students.”*

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch. Seconded by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs Branch.

Carried

**Explanation:**

There are students requiring counselling face-to-face in rural and remote schools, however, due to the lack of services being available locally, they don't have access to an appropriate face-to-face counselling service. At our TP1 School we have been fortunate enough to try the Royal Far West (RFW) counselling service via video conference, but it freezes and stops working due to our poor internet connections. Our local TP1 School, Naradhan Public School has not had access to a regular school counselling service for over two years. The school has a significant need for regular face to face counselling to support students academically and emotionally and we are being disadvantaged by not having this support. They have recently participated in a further trial with RFW where they had access to a psychologist who provided a mix of telepsychology and a fly-in, fly-out service. At the end of the second trial, the Principal saw the model as a viable last resort but had many students missing out on vital support as there was only capacity for one student to be receiving counselling through the telepsychology program.

The effectiveness of this program was also hindered by the school's poor internet speeds. During the fly-in service part of the trial, students had to be transported to the nearest larger school, at the school's expense, for cognitive assessments to be conducted as the school's internet connection was insufficient. The teaching staff are also feeling the absence of a regular school counsellor who had previously provided support with classroom management strategies and learning adjustments to ensure every student was supported.

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**A52. Rankins Springs**

*“That ICPA-NSW urges the Department of Education to ensure that the Hub and Spoke Program position in rural communities is retained for TP1 and TP2 schools so that relief teaching staff can be accessed when needed.”*

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs.

Carried

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**Explanation:**

Our local schools currently have access to a Hub and Spoke Program, formally the Rural Area Relief, (RAR), program teacher when covering teaching staff on leave or who are attending professional development days. These positions are filled on a temporary basis and at the end of each contract the position is reviewed. School principals are continually fighting for the positions to continue as casual teacher availability is extremely low in rural areas. These positions are vital in ensuring schools remain operational in the event of an unexpected illness and/or leave. TP1 and TP2 schools have a low number of staff and do not have the ability to split classes in the event of an unexpected absence.

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**A53. Rankins Springs**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister of Education to allow TP1 and TP2 Principals more autonomy on how Routine Planned Maintenance funding is spent.”*

Moved by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs Branch. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Currently the Assets Management Unit identify what projects will be funded with the Routine Planned Maintenance funds whilst the Principals of TP1 and TP2 schools don't have any say in where the money will be spent in their school. Often the money could be better spent in other areas that would be of immediate benefit to the students and staff. Funds associated with Routine Planned Maintenance are for carpets, painting, adjusting doors and windows, cupboards and boundary fencing.

A school where students of some of our members attend wanted to fix some old blinds in the staff room and place ceiling fans in some of the rooms. However, they could not use the money they had available to them in Routine Planned Maintenance fund as the items requested were classified as new fittings and fixtures. Improvements need to be included.

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**A54. Wentworth**

*“That ICPA-NSW congratulates the Minister for Education on the success of the Rural Experience Program and requests the program be further extended.”*

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth Branch.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Many small schools have reported enormous benefits from being provided with an additional teacher with different experiences. Some teachers have decided to continue in these rural and remote communities. Benefit would also be gained if rural and remote teachers were encouraged to take part in an exchange program. This would provide those teachers with experience in a larger mainstream setting where they are exposed to many and varying teachers and methods that they can learn from, adapt and bring back to their home school.

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## Special Education

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**A55. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobbies the Ministers for Education and Health to increase available allied health services in rural schools and communities.”*

Moved by Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Cath Deshon, Walgett on behalf of Lightning Ridge/Goodooga

Carried

**Explanation:**

While there is some access to specialised allied health services such as Occupational Therapists and Speech Pathologists, supply in many rural areas does not meet demand. If these services aren't available locally, the expenses associated with travelling to access services are prohibitive for many families. As the NSW Government have been unable to facilitate practical face to face early childhood education for numerous children in Western NSW, we have students in need missing out on vital early interventions which has a carry-on effect throughout their school life. This lack of educational experiences and socialisation results in children starting school without the required language and other social skills required to succeed. It also means children requiring early intervention are not being identified until they start formal schooling.

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**A56. Balranald**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Health to implement an incentive program to encourage allied health professionals to come to rural and remote areas.”*

Moved by Kathleen Harris, Balranald. Seconded by Kirsty Wilson, Balranald.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Children benefit the greatest from early intervention. To give one example, a speech issue is usually identified at preschool. Parents are then referred to the relevant therapist at a local allied health services, however there is an increasing gap and turnover of health professionals in towns like Balranald, therefore parents may need to travel over 300kms one way to access a speech therapist or occupational therapist. Balranald Branch therefore requests that more incentives be offered to allied health professionals to work in rural and remote localities.

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## Tertiary

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**A57. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to request the Minister for Education to consider ways to condense tertiary training, such as at Marcus Oldham Agricultural College, which would benefit very remote students.”*

Moved by Kylie Batey, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

**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/studies. In most instances the study/training 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 would be alleviated if the courses could be completed in a shorter time frame, such as at Marcus Oldham. Louth ICPA members would like to see public universities considering offering that flexibility to condense their studies too. Louth ICPA members would like to see that remote students have access to an accommodation institution at which they study on daily basis from nine to 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 smaller time frame to their remote communities with their skills.

Comments.

**Sue Gordon, Observer, NSW/Vic Lone Member.** I would support this. I think this is long overdue and I wish you well. (Most of Sue’s comment was inaudible)

**Wendy Hick, ICPA (Aust).** I would like to make a comment that at the Federal level we don’t have this policy. This motion hasn’t been submitted to a Federal Conference yet so I highly urge the branch to bring this to the Federal forum so we can have a discussion and if it is what members want to take forward it can be officially put in. I appreciate the discussion here because that will give us a lot of feedback to take back on that.

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**A58. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW works with Universities to ensure that an adequate level of support be delivered by university/tertiary educators.”*

Moved by Kylie Batey, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Louth ICPA Branch has family members who have struggled to receive enough help from their lecturers and tutors with their studies. This lack of support is compounded by the fact that they felt they would be penalised if they were too forthright about their needs not being met. As a result, we have several families whose children have withdrawn from courses. If a

student is living within their family and extended friendship group, they have more chance to benefit by discussing the topics they are studying. For remote students this is not possible.

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**A59. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) in requesting the Federal Government to increase Centrelink rent assist payments.”*

Moved by Kylie Batey, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Obviously 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 and is often prohibitive therefore to study for example in a larger city or it may mean that a student has to work so much that their course suffers.

Fortnightly Example:

If a student is over 18 years of age, has no children and the single Youth Allowance is \$304.60. Until March 2021 there is a Corona Virus supplement allowance of \$150. 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.

Comments.

**Alana Moller, President, ICPA (Aust).** This is in policy federally and I just wanted to let everyone know that we do work on this within Youth Allowance. I just wanted to clarify some of the numbers that are in that example in the explanation. I'm going to have to read this.

For single students with no children 18 years and over that need to live away from home the rate is actually \$462.50. The \$304.60 is actually for students who still live at home with their parents.

Also, to let you know that rent assistance is paid per fortnight. The single rent assistance is paid on a sliding scale if rent is over \$124.60 and to get the maximum rate of rent assistance rent has to be at least \$310.73. Single rent assistance in a share situation is paid on a sliding scale if rent is over \$124.60 and to get the maximum rate the rent has to be at least \$248.69. So, I hope that clarifies some of those figures around what is available.

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**A60. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education to review the way credits and advance standings can be transferred when a student studying an accredited teaching degree moves from one university to another.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

Louth ICPA Branch asks for this because we believe the circumstance is unfair when, a University degree course unit has been completed and passed that a student is required to re-do and pay again for that same unit. For example, a student completed two and half years of a primary school degree at Notre Dame University when, due to the expense of living in Sydney, he transferred to Charles Sturt University (CSU) in Dubbo. He then discovered that only two units from Notre Dame were acknowledged in his primary school degree at CSU. As a result, this student has ceased his training.

These degree courses are both certified by Department of Education so we feel the lack of unit acknowledgment is an inequitable deterrent for students’ success in achieving qualifications; requiring more time to complete, increased accommodation costs, plus having to pay twice for the unit. Are these regulations serving for monetary gain or the altruistic education of young people? This seems especially counterproductive when one considers that some of these students are from isolated addresses, who when qualified, may return to rural and remote Australia to be employed in the hard to fill professional positions. Obviously, students everywhere change universities for a variety of reasons. A rural student has the added worry of course length when choosing because of always needing to factor in cost of accommodation. Thus, the lack recognition of passed units is particularly frustrating for bush families.

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**A61. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobbies the NSW Department of Education to investigate alternate delivery modes to video conferencing at small rural TAFE campuses.”*

Moved by Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Liz Powell Walgett on behalf of Lightning Ridge/Goodooga.

Carried

**Explanation:**

TAFE campuses in rural towns offer courses by video conference. This delivery method does not suit the learning style of many students. In order for courses to run they require large numbers of students but in an area with small population it is almost impossible to get the numbers in order to have a face-to-face teacher. We would like to understand if any other delivery methods have been considered and if not, can they be?

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**A62. Monaro**

*“That ICPA-NSW calls on the NSW Government to support recommendations 17 and 18 of the NSW Parliament’s Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education report into The Future Development of the NSW Tertiary Education Sector.”*

Moved by Pam Fletcher, Monaro. Seconded by Tim Fletcher, State Council on behalf of Monaro.

Carried

**Explanation:**

On 22 January 2021, the NSW Parliament’s Education Committee released its report into The Future Development of the NSW Tertiary Education Sector with its strong endorsement of the Country University Centre (CUC) model and its centres. ICPA-NSW had provided a submission into the inquiry supporting the CUC and its role in regional development in NSW. The Chair’s Forward at page x notes: *“The Committee was highly impressed with the CUC model. In an NSW education system overloaded with problems and challenges, it is refreshing to find a successful, community-led innovation like CUCs.... Their targeted attention to student learning needs is a sharp departure from large, impersonal campus education. The more CUCs grow and succeed in NSW, the more our higher education system will flourish.”*

After reviewing a Case Study on the CUC, the Committee comments at paragraph 3.38 on page 36: *“The committee was very impressed by the CUC model and found it to be a compelling community-driven initiative that was delivering high-quality tertiary education opportunities to its students. The committee commends the CUCs around the state for their efforts thus far and encourages the NSW Government to further explore ways to contribute to the future success of the CUCs, and other similar models.”*

This endorsement has led to Recommendations 17 and 18 of the Parliamentary Committee:

- Recommendation 17: That the NSW Government prioritise support for CUCs in its forthcoming Higher Education Strategy.
- Recommendation 18: That the NSW Government engage with the CUCs about where future centres should be located, and support CUCs to provide careers guidance and advisory services.

ICPA-NSW was instrumental in developing the student learning and support models for the CUC, particularly through the involvement of people like Caroline McDonald, Jesse O’Donoghoe and Jilly-Ann Strother. ICPA-NSW should take great credit and satisfaction from the Committee endorsement of the CUC model. With government acceptance of the Parliamentary Committee recommendations, the CUC will be inserted into future strategic planning of higher education in NSW and ICPA-NSW will have the opportunity to engage with the NSW Government about the future location of CUC Centres.

A full copy of the Report can be found at <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2597/Report>

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## Travel

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**A63. Rankins Springs**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport and Transport for NSW (TfNSW) to lower the number of students required to start a non-commercial bus run as a matter of urgency.”*

Moved by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs.  
Carried.

**Explanation:**

Although a bus run may be maintained with eight students, 15 students are required to start a new bus run. This requirement means that an operator needs to purchase a Category 2, which is a 14 to 24 Authorised Adult Seating Capacity (AASC - excluding the driver), bus to service the run. This would mean for example a Toyota coaster or similar bus. If the required number to commence the run was brought back to eight then a Category 1, which is an 8 to 13AASC bus, is all that would be required; a Toyota commuter bus or similar. We understand that the larger bus allows for a significant growth of student numbers but would argue that the lower number of eight is hard enough to attain in most rural and remote communities so that much room for growth is not necessary. Consideration of applications for commencement numbers lower than the requisite 15 on a case-by-case basis would be welcome and appreciated. All communities are different, and consideration of this should be taken into account. Perhaps it is time that Transport for NSW again looked at community owned bus runs where feasible, which would be less expensive to support.

Comments.

**Lewis Clarke, Executive Director, Customer Systems and Operations. Customer Strategy and Technology. Transport for NSW.** Just in terms of this motion, while there are some rules that are in place around starting and stopping bus services, I think your comment at the end was probably the most important in the fact that services are unique. I'd encourage you to work with your local bus operator where you are having issues and also ask them to get in contact with Transport NSW. We are happy to look at unique circumstances and give due consideration outside of the rules so that is not to say that you will always get a different answer but we are aware that there are unique circumstances which we are happy to consider.

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**A64. Wentworth**

*"That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport to reconsider minimum numbers required to start and maintain bus runs in small rural communities."*

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch that **Motion A64** be deemed covered by **Motion A63**

Carried.

**Explanation:**

There are currently several small schools in our area that would benefit from a school bus service. Pomona Public School is one such school where new families are considering School of the Air over attending the local school due to travel commitments. The Pomona bus was discontinued in 2017 and we find families are seeking for it to be reinstated.

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**A65. Rankins Springs**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport to allow preschool children travel on rural and remote bus runs in the year prior to commencing school enabling them to be included in the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) and the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) for that year.”*

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

The costs relating to getting preschool children to the service’s front gate are a significant barrier for many rural and remote families. If the preschool children were included in the contract between the bus operator and the Department of Transport this would result in certainty of numbers and financial remuneration for the bus operator, as well as a definite seat for the child. For those families who do not have the option of putting their preschool child on the local school bus, the ability to receive the SDS to transport their child from home to preschool would be of great benefit. This would alleviate some of the costs relating to driving their own vehicle to transport the child to the preschool’s front gate. Families should be able to receive either the SSTS or the SDS, not necessarily both. We understand that some trials were conducted around this and perhaps Transport for NSW could provide some further information on the results.

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**A66. Balranald**

*“That ICPA-NSW asks the Minister for Transport to fast track the inclusion of preschool children on the School Drive Subsidy (SDS).”*

Moved by Lisa Duryea, Balranald. Seconded by Kathleen Harris, Balranald.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

By being able to access the SDS parents that are already or will be travelling substantial distances to access preschool education for their children will face less financial pressure to access an early education. Balranald Shire has a huge geographical area and combined with the impact of drought, being able to access the Early Learning Centre in town, for some, up to 190km away, is getting more and more challenging. Enrolments and attendance would improve if families could receive a subsidy to drive their children to preschool, and would help them to reach the universally recommended 15 hours per week.

Comments.

**Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch.** I would just like to speak of my experience with the preschool School Drive Subsidy. I have a current student in Distance Education Preschool. I live 640 kilometres from the centre in Broken Hill. That is 640 kilometres return. I travel to town once per term for face-to-face experience. It takes us two days and I would travel a total of 3,840 kilometres to receive 48 hours of face-to-face preschool education for my child. This is the equivalent of travelling 80 kilometres for one hour of face-to-face preschool education. This is like travelling from the Sydney CBD to the Blue

Mountains all for a total of the year travelling from Sydney to Melbourne four times. Being able to include preschool students in the School Drive Subsidy would definitely assist in the social, mental and wellbeing outcomes of preschoolers.

**Neridah Healy, Wentworth Branch.** We actually had this as a motion a while ago and when we did our meeting, we actually took it off our list of motions as we thought that this was something that was promised and already going to happen so we are a little bit surprised that this still continues to be on the list even though there has been talk that this was going to be an easy fix and possible.

It is a little disappointing that it is still here.

**David Butler, State Council.** Like I said before in the report, we just have to go back to that recommendation that is in the Effected Rural Communities. The recommendation was for the Minister to include preschool children in the School Drive Subsidy. I don't know how long that takes to implement but it has already been recommended.

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#### **A67. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW request the Minister for Transport to make provision for preschool students in rural and remote areas in the year prior to school to be included in the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) and the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS).”*

Moved by Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett Branch on behalf of Lightning/Goodooga.

Carried.

#### **Explanation:**

Distance is currently a barrier for four-year-olds accessing preschool in isolated areas of NSW. The choice is currently between preschool via Distance Education or a long drive to the nearest service at the parent's expense. The former requires a committed tutor and limits students contact time with other children and the opportunity to develop important social skills. It also limits contact time with educators who may be able to determine if early intervention is required for students with developmental delays. While face to face preschool addresses these needs, the costs and time associated with travel exclude some families from accessing services. Early childhood education is the best investment we can give our children prior to them starting full time-school, no matter where we live.

#### **Comments.**

**Lewis Clarke, Executive Director, Customer Systems and Operations. Customer Strategy and Technology. Transport for NSW.** Just a response from Transport NSW's perspective. There are a number of safety concerns in relation to preschool aged children travelling unattended on public buses. These safety concerns include child supervision, seating and belt requirements, driver distractions and road speed limits in rural and remote NSW. Due to these concerns, TfNSW has no plans to include preschool children in the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) or the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) which subsidises private transport to the nearest public transport service pick-up point. Instead, TfNSW is intending to trial a new scheme which aims to supplement personal transport costs for preschool attendance. This has been identified as a safe and appropriate alternative to SSTS and elements of the SDS. An application process for a separate scheme is currently being developed that covers the

transportation of preschool children living in remote and very remote areas of NSW. These areas are defined in the Australian Bureau of Statistics developed Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas and include towns such as Broken Hill, Cobar, Walgett and Coonamble. Using these boundaries assists with determining areas that require additional services to address socio-economic disadvantage and various health and educational outcomes. Selection of locations in remote and very remote NSW will also provide additional support to Aboriginal families to access preschool.

The trial scheme will operate similarly to the SDS and apply only to eligible preschool aged children being driven by parents from their home to the preschool centre that they attend (door to door) using private vehicle transportation. It will not cover private vehicle travel to a transport pick-up point to access public bus services. Similar to the SDS, the new scheme will only be paid on days where an eligible preschool child's attendance at their preschool centre is confirmed by their enrolment records.

Where a family has children attending school and preschool, the journey will be calculated under similar rules as the SDS, with one payment per family. For days where a child is attending preschool, the subsidy will be calculated between the home and preschool while still allowing for school age children to be taken either to their school or to a transport pick-up point. The trial scheme is being established in line with the Commonwealth Government's commitment to support access to preschool education for children in the two years prior to their commencement of Kindergarten.

TfNSW will work closely with the Department of Education. The introduction of a Preschool Drive Subsidy will require improvements to the school portal and supporting technology. We are aiming to have the trial up and running before the end of 2021.

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#### **A68. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport to supply adequate funding and encourage local councils in rural and remote areas, to prioritise and maintain unsealed roads that are travelled on by families accessing schools and school bus routes.”*

Moved by Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett on behalf of Lightning Ridge/Goodooga.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

Children in the Lightning Ridge and Goodooga region are often required to travel long distances

along unsealed roads to access schools and school bus routes. It is recognised by local families that there are risks associated with these trips and it is important that these trips are as safe as possible.

While members are aware of the importance of driving to the conditions, they believe improving the maintenance programs conducted on these access roads will greatly decrease the risks associated with the frequent trips. Without giving priority to roads that families travel on to access schools and school buses, accessing face to face education becomes difficult and dangerous.

While Distance Education is a valuable alternative, many families do not have the time to commit to providing the necessary school room supervision or be in a financial situation to employ a suitable supervisor. For these families, travel on poorly maintained unsealed roads

becomes an exhausting daily task for students and parents, impacting on school attendance and classroom performance. Now just wearing my archives hat, I found a letter last week that was sent from ICPA to the Bland Shire and it was for this issue and was dated 1985. That is how long we have been addressing this issue. This is just another example of why we are here.

Comments.

**Kathleen Harris, Balranald Branch.** We would like to support this motion because it directly involves Balranald as well. We have the same issues in our shire and we are constantly complaining to the shire about poor condition and poor maintenance of our roads, especially on school dedicated roads that some of the families from Clare Public School and other schools' use. Also, coming from and into Balranald the roads are poorly maintained and regardless whether it is a school road or not they tell us that there is no money so we really feel like there needs to be more attention given to these roads so that people aren't having to consider if they can afford to drive their children to school because of the maintenance of their vehicles and damage and fuel or stay at home and do school of the air because, realistically, financially it equals the same amount.

**David Butler, State Council.** Regarding the maintaining of the shire roads, when we met with Minister Paul Toole, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, he said that there was money available and it's under the Fixing Local Roads funding. You should lobby your local shire about it because he is telling us that there is \$90 million dollars available and they only apply for \$20 million each year so he is suggesting to see your shire and they are meant to maintain the school runs under the Fixing Local Roads Programme.

**Lewis Clarke, Executive Director, Customer Systems and Operations. Customer Strategy and Technology. Transport for NSW.** Just a further comment to David. It is really for you to try to address this with the local council. As a bit of context, Transport works in concert with local government to provide funding to allow them to maintain their local roads. The Fixing Local Roads Programme is specifically designed to assist local governments with funding for that and that provides about \$500 million from State Government and about \$191 million from Federal Government for fixing local roads. The first round of this programme provided about \$243 million to improve the local road network for 253 projects across regional NSW. The submissions for Round Two Programme have closed and it is expected that the successful projects under Phase Two will be announced in the next couple of weeks. Transport for NSW also provides block grant funding for local government which can be used on their road network. This financial year I this area Transport for NSW has provided just over \$2.5 million in block grants to the Walgett Shire Council and about \$1.2 million to Brewarrina Shire Council. In Round One in Fixing Local Roads Walgett received about \$200,000 and Brewarrina received \$5 million for Fixing Local Roads. Both those local government areas have submitted further proposals for Round Two and in addition to those schemes the NSW Government has committed \$5 million under the NSW Fixing Country Roads Programmes towards the upgrades and sealing of Goodooga Road. I think the State Government is providing assistance as is the Federal Government. I really encourage you to work with local council just to make sure that they are clear on where your priorities are as local residents.

**Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga.** My question was about the funding and it actually relates to that old letter which states that it is State and Commonwealth funding as well. So, I think, certainly address the shires as well again. Certainly, knowing on those figures you just gave, plus Alana and Wendy, we could take this to Federal. I think it has



been mentioned at previous Federal Conferences so we will just keep it on the table until we can see our roads improved.

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## Supplementary Motions

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### S1. Nyngan

*“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) in requests to the Federal Government to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children boarding allowance to more closely reflect the real costs of educating isolated students.”*

Moved by Jodie Stewart, Nyngan. Seconded by Kate Yabsley, Nyngan.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

Boarding school fees continue to rise at a greater rate than the CPI. The AIC 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 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 world-best educational opportunities that will equip children with the skills they need, this equity allowance needs to remain equitable, giving rural parents choice in education for their children, equivalent to their city counterparts.

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### S2. Louth

*“That the Department of Education increases the funding for remote preschools’ positions to allow for the purchase of an appropriate vehicle to ensure the position, and school’s ability to function, is sustainable.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

#### **Explanation:**

The positions attached to the newly established preschools at Louth and Wanaaring attract funding of \$120,000 each. This is for staff salaries, resources and the running of the facilities. An early childhood teacher is expected to travel to these schools over long distances on gravel roads. The provider, Cobar Far West Family Day Care (CFWFDC) is therefore only able to pay for the educator’s time he or she spends travelling. Far West Family Day Care would be able to meet the running costs of the vehicle. Far West Family Day Care has had two applicants for the early childhood educators’ job at Louth and Wanaaring. Both queried the travel and withdrew their expression of interest. We have an educator in Louth who could travel to Wanaaring from Louth and therefore service both preschools.

**S3. ICPA-NSW**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to have a consistent policy for geographically isolated distance education students to have an appropriate interaction with teachers and peers both in person and using video conferencing in both secondary and primary.”*

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council.

Carried

**Explanation:**

We have been made aware that, currently, it is an expectation that primary DE students have set satellite time with their teachers and peers, but there is no expectation for the secondary students to have the same as their primary counterparts. To quote Minister Sarah Mitchell during COVID-19, “Every year at school is a critical year. Every child is important and we recognise the importance of the relationships between teachers and students.” For DE students having daily interaction and regular in-person catch-ups is so important socially, mentally and for their development. Many of these geographically isolated children often have little or no regular daily interaction with other children. In a recent survey which ICPA-NSW conducted, 66% of participants felt that their child would benefit from an increase in satellite time with their teacher and that survey went across several DE centres within NSW.

**Comments.**

**Ali Allison, Broken Hill.** Broken Hill Branch strongly supports this motion and would greatly appreciate the Department of Education reviewing their policy on distance education and satellite lessons interaction time. Currently, on average, a school of the air stage two or three student has a maximum of four hours satellite interaction with their teachers and peers per week. In a thirty-hour school week this is just over ten percent of their school time. Just to put that into context, some students can have up to 325 minutes of set work for a day but only 20 minutes of that is satellite interaction time. We would like the Department of Education to consider whether this is an appropriate interaction time when making decisions and creating consistent policy. We implore the NSW Department of Education to not only create a policy which stipulates increased satellite interaction time but also support schools and principals with the resources and facilities to implement this policy. For example, allowing teachers to use other platforms to interact with their students from their desks rather than having to use a studio.

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**S4. Goolgowi**

*“That ICPA-NSW request the Minister for Education to review the implementation of out-of-zone enrolment policy as it pertains to the enrolment of students who are experiencing bullying in small rural schools.”*

Moved by Penny Haddrill, Goolgowi Branch. Seconded by Rob Haddrill, Goolgowi Branch.

Carried

**Explanation:**

The out-of-zone policy is used by the Department of Education to prevent students from enrolling in schools outside their designated areas. The policy is largely used to manage over-enrolment in urban areas. In rural areas where numbers are not under pressure, the policy prevents students who are experiencing bullying from being able to access an alternative public school education without families moving to a new town. In the case of bullying in small schools, the small numbers in the cohort often prevent the issue from being resolved or effectively managed. In an example from our branch, a child had been bullied to the point where she no longer felt she could attend her zoned school. Despite the efforts of the parents to have the issue addressed at their current school they felt that the only alternative for their child to access education was to move to another school which was accessible from their home but out of their zone. The student was not only denied enrolment to the out-of-zone school but also to School of the Air with the out-of-zone policy used to prevent enrolment. The parents have had to rent a house in the new school zone for their child to be able to attend.

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**S5. ICPA-NSW**

*“That ICPA-NSW thanks the Minister of Education and the NSW Department of Education for announcing the upgrade of the dormitories at Yanco Agriculture High School.”*

Moved by Monique Watkins, State Council. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council.

Carried by acclamation.

**Explanation:**

This has been a motion for a number of years and it is pleasing to see this announcement.

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**S6. ICPA-NSW**

*“That ICPA-NSW works with Transport for NSW to immediately resolve the inadequacies in the Aria mapping system so that rural and remote preschoolers are eligible for the school drive subsidy.”*

Moved by David Butler, State Council. Seconded by Laura Stalley, State Council.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Many rural and remote preschool children live in vast Local Government areas that have preschools in small towns. These towns under Aria are classified as outer regional, remote and very remote but, in fact, service only rural and remote children. The recommendation by the Federal Government to access 600 hours of preschool in the year before compulsory schooling is making it very costly to families as there is limited access to preschools in outer regional, rural and remote areas. Some parents are driving considerable distances to access this early learning requirement. The ongoing drought and subsequent recovery period are having a huge impact on the affordability to transport children to preschool. It is well documented that access to preschool plays an important role in a child's education. ICPA-NSW views access to preschool as a vital step towards an equitable education and recently surveyed 106 service providers in rural and remote NSW. The response was overwhelmingly positive towards a school drive subsidy for preschool children and ICPA-NSW has published a separate paper on

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this issue. Two years ago, ICPA-NSW supplied Transport of NSW with data relating to a number of preschoolers in each rural, regional and outer regional LGA. It needs to be noted that on the Aria map some towns are classified as outer regional yet they do service rural, remote and very remote children.

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### **S7. Nyngan**

*“ICPA-NSW lobbies the Minister for Transport to provide tertiary students with a travel subsidy, similar to the School Drive Subsidy, but providing a subsidy based on the distance from their home to the tertiary institution as a kilometre rate, assisting with travel costs at the start and end of each semester.”*

Moved by Jodie Stewart, Nyngan. Seconded by Kate Yabsley, Nyngan.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

Dependant tertiary students still live at home with their parents but are required to move away from home during the semester time to access their tertiary education. With limited access to transport links in rural and remote NSW it is an equity issue that these students have access to a travel allowance similar to the School Drive Subsidy, for travel and the beginning and the end of each semester.

#### Comments.

**David Butler, State Council.** We put this to Minister Constance three or four years ago and when we suggested it to him, he just said that it seemed pretty simple and shouldn't be too hard to do. Ever since then we have been pushing stuff uphill.

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### **S8. ICPA-NSW**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant ministers to ensure that universities providing teacher training include a stand-alone, mandatory unit on Autistic Spectrum Disorders in their curriculum.”*

Moved by Kellie Turnbull, State Council. Seconded by Laura Stalley, State Council.

Carried

#### **Explanation:**

With the alarming rate of increase in the diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) the chance of a newly graduated teacher having a student with ASD in their class is significant, therefore, knowing how to manage this condition with an appropriate level of skill and knowledge in behaviour management strategies for ASD would provide beneficial outcomes for all students in the class. This early training could also lead to a reduction in the high level of early burnout with between 40% to 50% of teachers leaving in their first five years of teaching because they feel that they don't have the skills to deal with the challenges of having children with ASD in their class. Educating teachers at the undergraduate level would be more cost effective than having to provide post graduate training during the first few years of

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teaching. This could also reduce the amount of time that teachers need to take out of the classroom for professional development. In some rural areas, teachers are unable to take time out for such training because there is a lack of relief teachers available or they are required to travel considerable distance to attend training workshops and this is often not an option for them.

Very little learning happens when children are not engaged. Teachers need the training to recognise when a student's coping skills are not working. They need to recognise the signs and be able to avoid the melt down before it happens. They need to be proactive so that they won't have to be reactive. Dealing in a reactive way when the student has lost the ability to cope creates a stressful situation for everyone. With adequate training a teacher learns to create the environment that will reduce the likelihood of a meltdown. A teacher can learn these things the hard way over many years, but, by then, coupled with the curriculum and extra curricula activities expected of them, they are looking for the door. The cost of the four-year degree is wasted not to mention the toll on the teacher's health. The biggest cost is the damage done to the students, not only those with ASD but also to every child whose education was impeded by a teacher, through no fault of their own, didn't have the necessary skills and support to teach the wide variety of students who are now in every classroom. The reason we have chosen Autistic Spectrum Disorder is because the behaviour issues related to a child's inability to cope with learning, that are displayed as a result of ASD, are very similar to that of children diagnosed with Dyslexia, Asperger's, Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHA), Axis II Personality Disorder (APD) and many others. By training to understand ASD behaviour related issues, a teacher would have a strong grasp of a student's inability to cope regardless of their disability and have the skills to deal with the situation.

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### **S9 Bourke**

*"That ICPA Bourke Branch host the 2022 Annual State Conference in Bourke on a date to be set by ICPA-NSW State Council."*

Moved by Scott Mitchell, Bourke. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke.

Carried by acclamation.

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## **Miscellaneous**

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### **A69. Bourke**

*"That ICPA-NSW lobbies NSW Minister for Health for the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) to be made available for rural and remote students travelling to access face-to-face specialist Allied Health services."*

Moved by Scott Mitchell, Bourke. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Children with specific education needs and developmental delays require access to appropriate specialist Allied Health services which often require face-to-face consultations. Adequate and uniform assistance should be available to assist geographically isolated, vulnerable and at-risk children accessing face-to-face specialist sessions with expenses such as travel and accommodation when extensive travel is required to attend these consultations.

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**A70. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW urges the Department of Education to recommend that their remote staff connect with ICPA-NSW as an information source for understanding isolated education processes and difficulties that may be incurred due to remoteness.”*

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

**Explanation:**

Louth ICPA Branch welcomes knowledge sharing with professional staff and believes that all communities, to which teaching staff come, would always wish to share issues with the aim of working collaboratively towards solutions.

Comments.

**Laura Stalley, State Council.** I fully support this motion and I know that I have talked to other Council members about how hard it is and often we feel that the school is against you and you are really just trying to help the school and the students. So, I really support this motion because, at the end of the day, the Department of Education works so closely with us and has great regard for us and asks us for our opinions so all we ask is that they pass on to the schools that we are here to help. We are not here to do anything else but help the children and help the schools. It is just vitally important that that message from the Department of Education goes down to the principals and the teachers that we are all here to work together. We are all here for our children. We are not here to name names or push anyone out. We just want to work together to make our children have a better education.

**Nerida Healy, Wentworth.** I just have a comment regarding this one and a few of the other ones that have cropped up. One of the small schools in our area uses a Department provided survey to their parents at the end of each year and it is an anonymous survey that they send out to their parents and they gather the feedback on everything that is happening in the year and then the principal got an informed view of how the parents and the families are feeling about the school and how they operate in the community. I'm wondering if the Department adopt this method. At the moment it is up to the principals as to whether they choose to use that service. I'm wondering if the Department adopted this method in the far west, for the Area Directorate to send that out and to assist with the communication between the parents, the community, the principals, the teachers and the Area Directorate so that they all have a better understanding of what is happening in some of these smaller schools. It may just help the Area Directorate to address some of these smaller issues that keep coming up on our motions year after year. Maybe some of these can be addressed through those surveys.

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**A71. Monaro**

*“That ICPA-NSW thanks the NSW Minister for Education and NSW Minister for Health for the expansion of the Wellbeing and Health In-reach Nurse (WHIN) program in NSW schools.”*

Moved by Pam Fletcher, Monaro. Seconded by Tim Fletcher, State council on behalf of Monaro.

Carried

**Explanation:**

The Wellbeing Health In-reach Nurse (WHIN) is a registered nurse who provides a range of support and coordination of health services with the aim of contributing to improved education, health and wellbeing outcomes for children, young people and families. Tasks undertaken by the WHIN may include identifying and triaging health needs of students and coordinating appropriate assessments and referral pathways into the relevant services. There are currently six positions in NSW with a further 100 position to be established over the next four years.

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**A 72. Broken Hill**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobbies the Department of Education to provide a second computer to all geographically isolated home sites with more than one student enrolled in primary school through the NSW Department of Education via Distance Education.”*

Moved by Ali Allison, Broken Hill. Seconded by Laura Finch, Broken Hill.

Carried

**Explanation:**

Many geographically isolated families with two children studying distance education via NSW Department of Education only have access to one computer provided by the Department of Education and Training. As the curriculum requirements continually move towards more online learning, computers have become an absolutely essential piece of equipment that students need to access at nearly all times during the day. As many families only have access to one computer this can be a logistical nightmare trying to ensure access to the computer for both students when they need it. Many families have resorted to using their own home computers and laptops in the school room to be able to ensure that the school day can run more smoothly and the students can complete their work without interruption. We feel that this is not fair on families. It also means that families are having to use their own home internet as nearly all learning requires internet access. This in itself is an issue as geographically isolated families may not have access to the most reliable internet and they are limited to how much data they can use. It also means that families don't have free access to that laptop during school hours as the student will be using it. This can cause difficulties especially if the laptop is used to run the family business. We feel that this is an unacceptable situation. All students have the right to access equal education opportunities and public education should not be exclusionary. Therefore, each child should be provided with their own computer to be able to complete their work with no interruptions. Families who access a public education should not have to use their own computers and internet to ensure that their children have this equal access. Their geographical isolation should not place inconveniences on their daily lives.

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Comments.

**Pip Ryan, Hay Branch.** I support this motion wholeheartedly. I think it is really important, particularly nowadays, that every student in the school room has their own computer.

**Laura Stalley, State Council.** This is definitely something that we have been taking to the Department. For the last two years it has definitely been a motion and we do continue to take it to the Department and we will continue to push for this.

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## Floor Motion

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**F1. Hillston**

*“That ICPA-NSW supports local farming families in the Western Division to oppose the release of the gas exploration area.”*

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council on behalf of Hillston. Seconded by Laura Finch, Broken Hill on behalf of Hillston.

Lost.

**Explanation:**

We feel that the proposed gas exploration area in the Western Division of NSW will have a negative impact on the family farm. There are several factors, some including border security, livestock disruption and health which will ultimately affect the business's viability. Some of the factors that we worry about are our children and mental health, education, no opportunities, and the continuation of the family farm. Children and young people in drought ravaged NSW have told UNICEF Australia that the natural disaster has meant that they have had to prematurely grow up, facing difficulties in balancing increased workloads with their education as well as experiencing escalating levels of stress and adverse psychological outcomes. We are worried that, if the gas exploration affects the wellbeing of the parents and the viability of the family farm this will, once again, affect the wellbeing of our children and the next generation of the Western Division. We are a productive area within Australia providing meat, fibre, fruit and vegetables and we need to protect and sustain the area so that the next generation can continue the legacy of the past.

Comments.

**Kathleen Harris, Balranald.** We are pleased to support this motion as it is widespread in the Western Division and it is going to negatively impact our future viability on these farms, especially for our kids.

**Lindy Kitto, NSW/Vic Lone Members.** I feel that, while this is a very valid thing to be discussing, I think it is something that should be left to NSW Farmers, the CWA or other like organisations. I don't think it is actually appropriate for education and the ICPA.

**Pip Ryan, Hay.** I'm against this motion. I think that the ICPA lobbying time need to be prioritised to educational matters. I think your time with politicians is precious and I don't think that this is a priority. I think that there are other higher priorities that we have heard of over the last two days.

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**Scott Mitchell, Bourke.** As much as I think it would be good if ICPA supported those people who are against the gas exploration I think it best to let them go on and fight their fight. It is not an ICPA matter.

**Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga.** It certainly is a valid point in issue but, as we have just heard, it has not the educational aspect that we are looking for and just looking at the Constitution to be correct, it doesn't come under the objects of our organisation. So, as Lindy suggested, CWA, National Farmers would be the best avenues.

**Dennis Kitto, NSW/Vic Lone Members.** I've never been up to speak to one of these things but I've been to a lot of these conferences because my good wife has been to a lot of ICPA occasions so I have a fair background in these matters. This is not for ICPA. Don't put yourself in this position. You are here for the ICPA – the isolated children and parents. Don't go near farmers. This association is for the children's education. Stick to your last. Do what you do very, very well and I honour you for it but don't go near something that doesn't really involve you. Do it as a private citizen but not under the ICPA banner.

**David Cameron, Observer, NSW Life Member.** We live around the coal seam gas area that Santos has in the Pilliga. I'm speaking against the motion and the reason being is that what has happened in the last five years where we live has divided the community. It has divided the politicians. It has divided the local government. What happens when you divide a community? They are not united and sometimes if you divide a politician away, then when you come with an education issue the response is that ICPA has joined the coal seam gas exploration fight and that takes the heat away. If you're just concentrating on educational issues then you have got more chance of having everybody on board and trying to find a solution than if you get into something divisive. I understand from the movers of that motion, I understand what they are getting at but I think we just leave it, like Dennis has said, to other organisations that are better equipped for this sort of thing. ICPA is overloaded as it is and I think we need to stick to the education of our children.

**Shennah Joiner, State Council.** I would like to say that I think we all have empathy for the situation but I think we need to draw on what David said and work with our commonality and that commonality is the education of our children. I think that this does not affect all of us and I think we need to focus our energy on the commonalities we have in this room and the forum for this situation is, as discussed, NSW Farmers, CWA and not ICPA, but I do have empathy for their situation.

**Laura Stalley, State Council.** I really appreciate everyone's feedback and understand that ICPA is about children's education but I do also feel that a lot of isolated children and parents are farmers and if you look at the area that they are looking to go into, we don't know if it is going to be five years, ten years, we don't know when it is going to come into play and we don't even know what they are going to do. The area you are looking at is a lot of these distance education families and we do it hard already. Whatever they choose to do and it affects our water then we are gone from that area. You have lost it and will possibly have to move away from country areas and lose the areas we love, our farms we love and I do appreciate everyone's comments and thoughts but I'm not asking that we lobby even. I'm not asking that we go in but that we support the other organisation and just say that we back these farmers. We want them to stay in our area. We don't want the health of these children, the next

generation, to go off their farms. To be affected. We want them to still have access to their education. If we lose income because of what happens well then how are we supposed to afford to send our children off. All I'm saying is that we don't know what is going to happen. We don't know when it is going to happen. But if it does, we don't want to leave the area and I take whatever. If we don't support it that's fine because that is what ICPA is about. We are here to vote and we are all allowed our own opinion and I appreciate that so, I just want you to think about the children and these farming families. What if it was your area? I'm sure there are other people in here that have had this and we don't want to divide our community because we are an amazing community. We're strong and we do get through.

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