

SCHOOLS

A 35. NEBO BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld Inc. lobby the Department of Education to review fencing and safety measures at staff accommodation at rural schools”.

Explanation:

The Valkyrie State School is isolated in its location. It is positioned on highway road frontage, nestled between neighbouring rural cattle properties. The closest town of Nebo is approximately 60 kilometres away. The Valkyrie State School is the only landmark between Nebo and Middlemount, a further 100 kilometres away. It also has a vacant block next to it, which is utilised by a transport and main roads camp when projects are being conducted, which is then occupied by a large number of men. The school is often approached by travellers for use of their toilet, water, amenities, fuel (which we don't have), and telephone. Given the high volume of mining traffic that passes, these types of call-ins for amenities are becoming more frequent and worrying for the staff and families who reside at the school grounds, and occur at all times of the day, night or weekend. The closest neighbouring house is approximately 3 kilometres away and not close enough to provide monitoring or assistance in these circumstances.

Our current resident is a high school graduate, 18 year old female teacher-aide who is the only resident at the school grounds. Her residence is positioned a short 100 meters or so off the highway and is the first point of contact by travellers when outside of school hours. There is also a pull over bay opposite the school which is utilised by trucks who stop and camp the night to break up their journey.

Many of the previous resident principals have expressed feelings of being unsafe due to the proximity to the highway and the isolated location.

There is a small chain mesh fence around the staff accommodation which is easily passable. There is no security lighting. There is nothing to deter travellers from entering the yard or contacting this resident, which we believe is a great cause for concern and personal safety risk. Any persons would also then be free to enter the school grounds. The school grounds has a high aluminium fence only along the front side, which stops right at the boundary of the staff residence, and the remainder of the school grounds premises is barbed wire on the remaining 3 sides. We are keen to see this type of high aluminium fencing continue to encompass all of the residence as well, together with security sensor lights for greater visibility and signage indicating private residence.

For accommodation residences in rural, isolated locations, greater protection, deterrence and security is needed. If these upgrades are undertaken throughout rural schools, as well as ensuring a greater level of security while staff are residing there, it would make their accommodation, and belongings more secure during periods of school holidays when they are often vacant.

Carried

A 36. NEBO BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld Inc. lobby the Department of Education Qld undertake an audit of all rural schools to ascertain whether the current number of rainwater storage tanks on their grounds is sufficient, that their

plumbing and guttering is appropriately connected to capture any rainwater, and implement a program for the ongoing testing of the water and cleaning of the tanks”.

Explanation:

Ample, clean drinking water should be a basic necessity at all rural schools. The Valkyrie State School solely relies on rainwater for use at the school grounds for drinking, kitchen, toilets, and activities. There is no other water source available. When water runs out, it is trucked in through the generosity of a neighbouring mining company. Rural areas are often subject to prolonged dry periods. This causes difficulties in obtaining water, which necessitates operating on a far more reduced usage than our metropolitan counterparts. Our schools are very conscious of their water use as being a precious resource. Assisting rural schools to have greater water storage, preferably utilising all available sheds and rooflines for optimal/maximum rainwater storage, would see them have more in reserve for the dry times, and more available for any activities or projects they may like to undertake. Having the storage is only part of the solution, ensuring that all gutters, pipes and plumbing is capturing the water is equally as essential to having greater water storage.

The water storage tanks that the Valkyrie SS does have, have never been reviewed by anyone within the Department to ascertain its suitability and safety for human consumption. Given that this is their only source of drinking water, we would like to see a program whereby there is someone who can, on an annual basis, check the quality of the water, cleanliness of the tanks and rectify if necessary.

Carried

A 37. NEBO BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld Inc. lobby the Department of Education Qld to install further water storage at the staff accommodation residences at rural schools”.

Explanation:

Having sufficient water storage available for personal and recreational use is a necessity to all residences, especially in rural and isolated locations. The Valkyrie State School has a Principal residence, and a donga type single residence for a teacher-aide or additional staff member. These residences share 3 rainwater tanks between them. There is no other water source available. When the residence are at full occupancy, the principal residence traditionally has had a family of 4-5 and a single teacher-aide onsite. The rainwater available for use between them all is extremely limited and restricted for personal and household use only. Sharing the same issue as with the school grounds, once water is needed, especially in times of low rainfall, we rely on the generosity of a neighbouring mining company who truck in water to fill up these tanks. Given the isolated location of the school, the staff do not have the option of exploring a town or park for recreational activities. They are limited to their own backyard, which is small, dry and bare due to no water available to establish a simple lawn or gardens. It would be a great advantage to our rural areas to have the simple enjoyment of a lawn and garden, and would greatly assist in making it more attractive and liveable to future applicants once staff move on. It would also improve the quality of living of the current residents.

Carried

A 38. NEBO BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld Inc. lobby the Department of Education Qld to support any rural school that endeavours to obtain a reliable water source (other than rainwater) at the school grounds and staff residence, and that they treat any rural school without a reliable water source as a priority in assisting them in their journey.”

Explanation:

The Valkyrie State School was established in 1974. It has never had a permanent source of water. The school has relied solely on rainwater catchment. Underground water is not an option due to extreme amounts of salinity, as well as being scarce and expensive to locate and equip. Other options are far more costly and complicated to achieve. The water usage at the school has been strictly limited to personal consumption, kitchen, toilets and some small projects. The school has never had a grassed oval, or a continuous area of lawn for the children to play. The school cannot host a sports day, or a cluster sports day, due to the absence of a grassed oval. The school lawn has periods of life if there is a good wet season, but once it dries off the lawn dies off. Children have also sustained injuries over the years due to the dry, gravel surface of the current ground in the absence of any grass.

The P&C committee has spent years thoroughly investigating every possible avenue of gaining a permanent water source at the school, which could be obtained, stored and utilised to establish and maintain a lawn, oval, and other projects, (as well as the staff residence lawn and gardens). This would then leave the rainwater to be utilised throughout the year for personal use, without the need for refill by the generosity of the neighbouring mining company. The Valkyrie P&C committee have extensively fundraised and researched, and are now in a position to undertake a project of re-establishing, by excavation, a dormant dam adjacent to the school grounds on neighbouring state held land which is a stock route. Other Government Departments involved have been extremely supportive, and have prepared and endorsed the relevant Water Agreement. However, the DOE have declined to execute the agreement and we believe have not given this issue the diligence it desperately needs.

The school community have dealt with every piece of correspondence from the DOE in a quick, informative and substantial approach. The P&C are fully prepared to meet all costs involved, in implementing, maintaining and anything else associated with this project. This has been a hugely disappointing exercise for our community. Our children are greatly disadvantaged by not being able to have physical exercise classes, sporting lessons, extra-curricular activities and the list goes on. In past times of limited water, our children have been told not to flush the toilets to preserve water until the next truck delivery arrives, which can take several days. Especially in these times of COVID, when personal hygiene and handwashing is so critical, having ample water available has never been more important. These conditions would be unthinkable to a metropolitan school; however, they are the reality for many of our rural schools that operate on limited rainwater only.

Given the enormous amount of work our community has put in to achieve an outcome so close to giving us a permanent solution, it is baffling that the DOE are still resisting and delaying executing the Water Agreement. We are fortunate to have now had backing from our local State Member Mr Dale Last who is taking the matter further in parliament on our behalf. We strongly urge the DOE to immediately and urgently assist us in finalising this Water Agreement. Any rural school without a permanent water source faces the same array of challenges. In this modern world, with the resources available, it is simply not acceptable that our children attend a school that is bare of such a basic, simple and vital resource as a lawn/oval and water availability for basic hygiene.

Carried

A 39. MOUNT ISA BRANCH OF THE AIR

“That ICPA Qld lobby relevant bodies for the inclusion of special consideration in the new Covid 19 rules for schools regarding accommodation and camps held on school grounds to allow small rural schools and Schools of Distance Education/ Schools of the Air to use existing accommodation facilities at these schools, when deemed safe to hold these activities.”

Explanation:

Recently the use of facilities at some small rural schools and Schools of Distance Education for accommodation and school camps has been prohibited. These facilities have for many years provided geographically isolated school communities a chance to come together during face to face school activities as well as offering school families inexpensive and easily accessible accommodation options for school events. Due to the vast distances' families live from schools, limited opportunity for socialisation for many distance education students, as well as difficulty sourcing affordable accommodation in some rural and remote areas the availability of these facilities as an accommodation option for geographically isolated students and their family's needs to continue. Our branch asks that special consideration should be given to schools in these areas to allow families to continue to utilise accommodation facilities at these schools as they have been previously.

Additional Explanation put to the floor at conference by Wendy Hick:

We apologise if our information or understanding of this situation is inaccurate, and this is why we asked our question regarding the ruling yesterday, however, information on the rule and why it is in place, that prevents camping and overnighting on Qld School's grounds (unless they are a registered camp facility) has been very difficult for parents and the wider school community to access.

We weren't able to find information on the Department's website on this ruling or in other places available to the wider community. At the time of writing the motion, we were told by members that their principal had said the regulation to the school's knowledge was due to Covid-19 restrictions across the board for all QLD Schools unless they were a registered camping facility and that this rule was not limited to Schools of Distance Education and accommodation buildings on school grounds but also impacts camping overnighting on school grounds completely.

Yesterday, we heard about fire and safety concerns with building structures, however, this ruling impacts not only our Schools of Distance Education, but also some of our small schools, in a slightly different way. Particularly in farther reaches of the state, small schools can be 100's kms apart, but they still work together for things such as interschool sports, visiting artists' workshops and other activities.

The towns near these small schools often have very limited accommodation and sometimes non available.

Due to the distance between these schools, the trip to the host school and return as well as the activity can't safely be done all in one day without driving with the children late at night on what can be dangerous night driving roads.

The children, with Supervisors, have in the past camped at the hosting school either in swags or pitching tents on school ovals.

Some remote schools have at times held 'in schools' camping nights to offer a school camp experience without needing to travel far away.

School grounds have also been utilized for overnighting by other community groups at times during large events when accommodation is lacking either by rolling a swag or pitching a tent, which is slightly different to the 'unsafe' building scenario we hear yesterday.

Its our understanding that no camping is allowed on school grounds now. Travelling artists and performers that come from community events and offer workshops for the children at the school are also unable to now overnight at the school if needed under the current ruling. Accommodation is very short in these towns, especially during events, and the community has in the past come together to help these people who bring their talents and skills by offering overnighting at the school with them reciprocating with sessions for students.

As was seen in the case of Beef Week, there seem to be times when there is a community shortage of accommodation there can be certain circumstances where camping on school grounds supports a community and is allowed.

We ask that special consideration be given to schools in Rural and Remote areas to allow families, students and communities to utilize accommodation facilities and camping space at these schools when the school community requests it in agreeance with schools and overnighting can be done safely.

Carried

S 9. CLARKE CREEK BRANCH

“That ICPA (Qld) Inc lobby DOE to work collaboratively with small school communities to ensure that all schools regardless of geographical location are equipped with an adequate water supply in a timely manner.”

Explanation:

Water is a basic and fundamental resource. Attraction and retention of teachers to rural and remote locations is challenging. Poor water quality due to low rainfall adds to the challenges faced by school staff and students. Often there are solutions to water issues but cost, tyranny of distance and failure to utilise local knowledge by those in the driving seats can cause lengthy delays and band-aid solutions that do not address water supply issues in the long term.

Carried

S 10. CLARKE CREEK BRANCH

“That ICPA (Qld) Inc lobby relevant authorities to ensure that schools are not liable for upfront costs incurred to provide water to schools in times of drought.”

Explanation:

Schools should not have to utilise any school-based funding to pay for the supply of water. Schools should not have to compromise their own funding to pay for a fundamental and basic resource that is readily available to our metropolitan counterparts.

Carried

S 11. CLARKE CREEK BRANCH

“That ICPA (Qld) Inc lobby DOE to provide an additional 0.5 teacher allocation to one-teacher schools where the total enrolment exceeds 15 students and number of K-2 students enrolled represents 50 % or more of the total school enrolment.

Explanation:

The implementation of Kindy means that in our one-teacher schools’ children now range in age from 3 years to 12 years. Children representative of such a diverse range in age adds significantly to the workload of a single teacher responsible for the learning outcome of all students. Teacher aides are an invaluable asset to small schools and play a vital role in assisting with classroom management and the implementation of learning activities. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the teacher to plan and adjust lessons to suit the diverse range in age and ability in a small school setting. In addition to planning and teaching, the

workload for a teacher in a one-teacher setting extends beyond the classroom to include the administration and business management of the school as well. The demand of younger students on teacher time should be addressed by increasing the teacher allocation to one- teacher schools with more than 15 students where 50% or more of those students are representative of years K-2.

Carried