

DISTANCE EDUCATION

A 10. ALPHA BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby the Department of Education and the Minister for Education to ensure Principals at Schools of Distance Education understand the critical importance of grouping geographically isolated children from similar remote areas into the same ‘on air’ classes.”

Explanation:

Currently at certain SDE’s students are often placed into ‘on air’ classes with no local peers. These classes are often made up of students who are not geographically isolated, leading to poor social outcomes for GI students. Rather than grouping GI students from the same local districts together for ‘on air classes’, they are spread across multiple classes and grouped with students they will never have the opportunity to interact with at minischools or within their local districts. Sometimes non GI students are enrolled in distance education due to having higher behavioural and learning needs, which then impacts those students who are enrolled because of geographical isolation. Our branch has had numerous reports from families that this current structuring of ‘on air classes’ is greatly impacting GI students, with considerable disruption occurring during ‘on air’ lessons. This leads to poorer social and educational outcomes for the GI students. It is critically important that Principals understand how remote GI students engage and interact with their communities, and that these students are grouped together for ‘on air’ with peers that they can build positive social and emotional relationships with. Social development is a critical component of a child’s development, influencing their self-confidence, empathy and the ability to develop meaningful and lasting friendships and partnerships and a sense of importance and value to those around them. Current ‘on air’ arrangements risk GI students becoming even more isolated and less engaged within their local communities, with their education being compromised due to the disruptive groupings of on air classes.

CARRIED

A 11. ALPHA BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby the Department of Education and the Minister for Education to encourage Schools of Distance Education to streamline and reduce the large number of online platforms currently being used to deliver and submit student work and communicate with students and home tutors.”

Explanation:

The current number of online platforms used by Schools of Distance Education to complete and submit student work is not sustainable. Home tutors have to become experts in multiple platforms, some of which are not user friendly, with different platforms being used across year levels. For example, a family with three SDE students in Prep, Grades 2 & 3, needs to use the following list of platforms on a daily basis:

SeeSaw	BlackBoard	Reading Eggs	Math Seeds	Typing Tutor	Wordmania	Dance
Dropbox	One Drive			Mat		
One Note	Gmail					
One School						

Often home tutors have no IT training or skills in navigating their way through the use of these programs, which is causing frustration, wasted time and stressed students and home tutors. There are also multiple methods of communication that require checking each day, including blackboard notices, one school, email to each child's email, email to parents etc.

CARRIED

A 12. ALPHA BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby the Department of Education and the Minister for Education to ensure Schools of Distance Education maintain their flexible curriculum delivery mode and support students and families who choose to complete part or all of their schooling offline.”

Explanation:

It is essential that Schools of Distance Education provide their students the flexibility to complete part or all of their curriculum offline, and allow families to find the balance that provides the best possible learning outcomes for their child. For many students spending multiple hours online per day is not an effective learning environment.

Schools of Distance Education should ensure that students are provided with digital materials that can be printed if the families choose this line of delivery, and ensure that families are aware that this option exists.

Schools of Distance Education should not in any way make families feel that offline delivery is not an available option, to do so removes the flexibility of distance education that for so long has been an integral part of remote learning.

CARRIED

A 13. LONGREACH BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby Education Queensland to limit the amount of ‘compulsory’ on-air lessons and screen time per day, maintaining an option of *flexible delivery* of lessons for geographically isolated students enrolled in Schools of Distance Education.”

Explanation:

Distance Education was initially established to provide education for students in isolated areas. The model has been built on a strong partnership of trust and respect between school and home, enabling geographically isolated students to learn despite the often conflicting demands of life on the land, the vagrancies of weather, or unreliable internet connection. Over the past five years there has been an increasing shift in Schools of Distance Education to more screen time and on-air delivery of lessons, with many students as young as eight required to sit through more than 15 to 20 hours of on-air lessons per week. The students who simply cannot participate in all on-air lessons, whether it be due to unreliable internet, multiple work commitments on the property, itinerant lifestyles or different learning styles, should not be disadvantaged by missing out on these lessons. **These students should be able to access curriculum in a flexible format, either via a paper-based option and/or watching recorded on-air lessons.** Just because the student is not on-air does not mean they are not doing the work. Compassion, understanding and trust between Schools of Distance Education and families, with a flexible but committed approach to learning, has always been, and will always be, the most effective means to provide the best learning outcomes for geographically isolated students.

CARRIED

A 14. LONGREACH BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby Education Queensland to provide the option of printed curriculum/paper-based lessons to School of Distance Education families.”

With the increase in virtual lessons, decline of support to schools for printing a paper-based curriculum, and constant edits/changes to the curriculum, families and students are tied to the computer for most of the school day with very little flexibility. This presents many problems for isolated students enrolled with the Schools of Distance Education who are impacted by unreliable internet/phone issues, who simply do not learn well sitting in front of a screen, or who live a transient lifestyle due to family work/business including shearing, mustering, fencing and heavy machinery contract family businesses. Current delivery of the curriculum by Schools of Distance Education includes an excessive amount of screen time. This is disadvantaging children whose families simply cannot access all of the on-air lessons. Printed curriculum / paper-based lessons provided to these families would enable their children to still access a decent standard of education and learning.

CARRIED

A 15. ARAMAC MUTTABURRA BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby the Department of Education to set clear and flexible guidelines for Distance Education Schools and State Schools to work within, that allows flexible arrangements for students.”

Explanation:

Previously, Distance Education students have attended State Schools regularly as enrolled students 1 day a week. For a geographically isolated student, the exposure to sport and traditional school routine, as well as the social development and inclusion aspect, is invaluable. Early in 2022, the Queensland Department of Education decided that dual enrolments could no longer happen unless multiple subjects were taught and reported on solely by the State School – something that would ultimately be detrimental to State School students. Distance Education students could however attend as a visitor, but not on a regular basis, and in a limited capacity. All Schools involved, as well as parents and caregivers, need flexible guidelines to help create workable solutions for the many and varied situations where dual enrolment can be a positive experience for Distance Education and State school children alike.

CARRIED

A 17. CAPRICORNIA BOTA BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby the Department of Education and the Minister for Education to ensure that the educational needs of geographically isolated students are not compromised by the exponential increase in Distance Education enrolments.”

Explanation:

SDE’s were originally established to service the needs of children that had no feasible education option due

to Geographical Isolation. GI students' numbers have been diluted by increases in other enrolment categories such as medical, single subject, by choice and exclusion. At the recent CSDE minischool there was an influx of attending children who had moved from mainstream schooling to DE with behavioural management plans. The poor, inexcusable classroom behaviour by these students who do have other educational options compromised the social and educational outcomes of GI students who only have a small window of opportunity to spend valuable face to face time with their teachers and peers. Online lesson time has also been disrupted by students who have enrolled in DE, not because they are geographically isolated but because mainstream hasn't served their needs.

GI students are losing their sense of belonging within their school community as they are now a minority in a system that was custom built to service their needs.

CARRIED

A 18. BELYANDO/MT COOLON BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld thank the Department of Education Infrastructure Services Division on the work completed and the ongoing commitment to get overnight accommodation facilities at Distance Education Schools upgraded to meet compliancy standards.”

CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

A 19. LONGREACH BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby Education Queensland to acknowledge the important role Home Tutors play in the delivery of learning, and achieving the best learning outcomes, for students enrolled with Schools of Distance Education.”

Explanation:

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to learning, and families are seeing significant declines in student engagement, enjoyment and understanding due to the increase in virtual delivery of lessons through the Schools of Distance Education. We all know the importance of providing a range of learning opportunities for students that help each child thrive. The benefit of a strong partnership between home and school is that they both provide a range of strategies that help the student. We feel that the advantages of “home-based” learning with a Home Tutor has been significantly diminished, as the current philosophy implies qualified teachers are the only ones able to achieve quality outcomes for our students. We feel that Home Tutors play a significant role in a student's education, and can greatly enhance the delivery of curriculum if the partnership between school and home is valued and respected. Home Tutors can sometimes bring curriculum alive for students in ways that the teacher cannot simply because they are on the other side of a screen.

CARRIED

A 20. CLERMONT BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld raise with the Minister for Education and the Department of Education the necessity for staff in distance education schools to have an understanding of the unique circumstances of geographically isolated families, compared to those undertaking distance education by choice.”

Explanation:

Schools of Distance Education were largely set up in Queensland to cater for geographically isolated children

so these students could receive more equitable education opportunities despite where they reside. With the changing face of distance education in Queensland, with geographically isolated students now a very small minority within these schools, our Branch feels it is imperative that staff are aware of the unique circumstances and needs of these families who have no other choice but to educate their children by distance education due to residing in some of the most geographically isolated locations of the state.

CARRIED

A 21. CLERMONT BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld raise with the Minister for Education and Department of Education and other relevant parties the need for Schools of Distance Education to continue to cater adequately for the unique needs of geographically isolated students and their families, who have no other choice for accessing education.”

Explanation:

Schools of Distance Education were largely set up in Queensland to cater for geographically isolated children so these students could receive more equitable education opportunities despite where they reside. Despite geographically isolated students now being a very small minority within these schools, it is essential that they continue to cater adequately for the unique circumstances and needs of these families who have no other choice but to educate their children by distance education.

CARRIED

A 22. CLERMONT BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby the Minister for Education and Department of Education to address the often unrealistic, unfair, unmanageable and excessive learning expectations placed upon geographically isolated students and their tutors in distance education schoolrooms.”

Explanation:

The expectations on geographically isolated distance education students and their tutors to complete schoolwork is extraordinary and our Branch has numerous examples of this. The issue was extenuated in term one this year, following the delay of school commencing, which saw distance education students given assessed work to complete in the weeks prior to school commencing, despite mainstream students remaining on holidays. In order to make up missed work from the two week delay, students and their tutors were given extra workloads to complete, with regular days in the schoolroom exceeding the hours of 8am to 5 pm, often with weekend and night time work as well to be able to complete the excessive amount of work set. Even in a ‘normal’ term however, the work required to be completed and the timeframes given, as well as a lack of understanding of the unique circumstances of geographically isolated families is unjust. At times schools require schoolwork to be completed on public holidays, student free days and on days when families are travelling many hours to attend school events for example. If a teacher is absent it is up to the home tutor to cover any lessons not being taught by that teacher. For geographically isolated distance education families, should they have a day off, be this for a medical appointment, a trip to town to get groceries or even to attend a school event (remembering that a trip to town is often an all-day event where these students live), it is expected that the home tutor will ensure anything missed on the given day is made up before they return. As an example, recently when a DE school was holding their swimming carnival, which families may travel up to 7 hours or more to attend on the last day of school, one teacher informed a parent that she expected students to complete work she had set for that day when they returned home, despite the fact that this was a school event and on returning home it was school holidays.

CARRIED

S 4. ARAMAC MUTTABURRA BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby Distance Education Schools to set clear and flexible guidelines for the ability to deliver content both on and off air, and for the timelines of uploading completed work.”

Explanation:

Previously, many Home Tutors and Distance Education students have been able to arrange their schoolwork timetable to fit into the ever-changing schedule that is required in their lives and family businesses (ie family run farms, shearing, mustering, feeding etc) - a lifestyle that generally necessitates them to attend an SDE in the first place. This may have been done by paper or online, but was flexible in delivery, especially in relation to timing of lessons, and deadlines of work completed.

In recent years there has been a shift to more daily online lessons and work to be either completed online during the lesson or uploaded immediately. This means a day of much more screen time, and a sometimes inflexible timetable. In an environment where internet access is an issue, or the home tutor who is required to supervise the lessons also has other business responsibilities this is becoming a burden on students, Home Tutors and teachers alike, causing frustration to all parties. Some families talk of leaving due to their inability to work with the current system, or going to solely paper based which is undesirable socially for the students. The creation of more flexible individual arrangements for attendance on-air and /or home delivery of lessons, as well as submission of completed work, by the Schools of Distance Education would return the flexibility that is required within many home schoolrooms and boost the attendance of geographically isolated enrolments.

CARRIED

S 6. SPRINGSURE ROLLESTON BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby the Department of Education to recognise that Schools of Distance Education are no longer prioritising Geographically Isolated students.”

Explanation:

Enrolment figures within Capricornia School of Distance Education (CSDE) for 2017 show 499 enrolments with approximately 150 or 30% of those enrolments being Geographically Isolated (GI) students. Figures from 2021 show 4733 students enrolled which included 159 or 3.5% GI students. Of those 4733 enrolments, only 620 were fulltime students. With such disproportionate figures, it is unrealistic to presume that the unique needs of GI students can be fully met in the intended purpose the school was created.

Year	Non GI	GI	Total	% Non GI	FTE Teaching Staff	Teacher: Student ratio
2017	~ 340	~ 159	499	68%	59	1:8
2018	~ 1380	~ 159	1539	89%	93	1:16
2019	~ 3078	~ 159	3237	95%	110	1:29
2020	~ 3430	~ 159	3589	95.5%	120	1:29
2021	4574	159	4733	96.6%	No data	No data

CARRIED

S 7. QUEENSLAND STATE COUNCIL

"That ICPA Qld lobby the Department of Education to establish an Enrolment Management Plan for Schools of Distance Education to ensure parity with other State government delivered schooling plans and policies."

Explanation:

Currently Schools of Distance Education have no Enrolment Management Plan. For Distance Education schools defining a 'catchment' is challenging but Geographically Isolated students identified by remote postcodes, could define a 'catchment' in this instance.

Currently Schools of Distance Education seem to be accepting every student that completes an enrolment application even when some SDE's are at capacity with infrastructure confinements. In addition to infrastructure, medical enrolments are increasing and some SDEs don't have the staffing capacity, either physically or the training required to offer the high level of support required to support these students. These situations further emphasize the need for enrolment management guidelines for schools of distance education in order to safeguard the needs of Geographically Isolated students who are increasingly becoming a minority in the schools specifically designed for them.

CARRIED