



highlighting the impact of taking on the role of a distance education tutor in geographically isolated locations has on women's employment opportunities and financial status and the impact on family businesses when the mother is taken out of crucial roles in the office, paddock and much more, to take up the responsibility of full-time tutor. In a response received from the Minister in September 2022, unfortunately she indicated that the issue was only related to education so did not consider our reference to the impact of this on rural and remote women.

Further, both in a reply received from the Minister for Education and during meeting delegations to Canberra we continue to receive the message that 'the day-to-day operations of schooling, including teaching and supervision, is a matter for State Education Ministers.' This continues to be a great concern for ICPA (Aust) as the role of a geographically isolated distance education tutor is a similar undertaking regardless of what state or territory you live in. The financial burden placed on families is significant and we continue to maintain that the most equitable way to recognise and remunerate the small number of geographically isolated families educating their children via distance education is by an allowance that is closely aligned with the Federal Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance.

During our delegation meeting in May 2023 with the Assistant Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm, we again requested that the topic be tabled at an Education Ministers Meeting (EMM) This meeting is a forum where all State, Territory and Federal Education Ministers collaborate on decision making regarding education across the country.

ICPA (Aust) firmly believes we need to continue to campaign strongly in this space and keep telling the story of the plight of geographically isolated families faced with the task of teaching their own children due to where they reside. Federal Council are seeking involvement from ICPA members from across the country willing to share their stories and a 'face' to our campaign.

Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Eligibility Criteria

ICPA (Aust) continues to work closely with the Department of Social Services and Services Australia on issues relevant to members. Through this positive relationship we have also been able to raise individual AIC cases for members. We have received positive outcomes for some families who had previously been unsuccessful with their AIC-Distance Education (AIC-DE) applications. Federal Council encourages members to reach out should they have any concerns regarding their AIC payments or eligibility and we can endeavour to raise these with the relevant departments if appropriate.

Student Wellbeing Boost

Concerns were raised at last year's conference that due to their context, distance education schools and Schools of the Air may not be considered in student support programs designed by the Federal Government to be implemented in schools, particularly in relation to the Student Wellbeing Boost. In a joint media release earlier this year from Minister for Education Hon Jason Clare MP and Hon Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health it was noted that the Student Wellbeing Boost is a 'delivery of additional one-off funding for extra mental health and wellbeing resources and initiatives', 'with schools receiving on average \$20,000 for use in the 2023 school year.'

In correspondence and meetings with the Federal Minister for Education, we were reassured that these schools would definitely have an opportunity to participate in this program. We would encourage members to contact their school principal regarding how this program is being utilised in their school.

Equitable access to education, regardless of where you live, is an important issue to all of us who live in rural and remote Australia, particularly those of us who live in geographically isolated locations who



have no choice other than to provide our children with the best education possible through distance education. ICPA (Aust) will continue to advocate on behalf of all our members to ensure that all our children living in rural and remote Australia have the best educational opportunities possible.