



NORTHERN TERRITORY COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT ICPA Federal Conference 2023 (Darwin)

Moira Lanzarin

“Unique Land – Unique Learning”

A very warm welcome to our beautiful northern capital. Where else would you want to be in the middle of winter? My sincere thank you to our hardworking convening committee, ably led by the dynamic Sue Wilson, and the equally impressive Federal Council and generous sponsors for making this amazing gathering possible.

“Unique Land – Unique Learning” perfectly sums up the geographically isolated education scenario. I am excited about our time ahead and I trust so are you.

It is with immense pride and humility that I take my turn to stand before you today as NT President and welcome you to our unique and extraordinary Territory. NT people please wave your hand. I am proud of every one of you and what we collectively stand for and have achieved.

ICPA is an endurance relay of epic proportions. Every person doing their bit – doing what they can, when they can. Together, carrying on. 41 and 1/2 years in the NT, 53 years Federally. These are impressive figures. Even more impressive because it is done from a 100% volunteer work base. An antagonist could suggest that if we were a truly successful organisation, we would have solved all the problems by now and no longer be needed. But by the very nature of our charter, working for geographically isolated children and families, there will always be a need for ICPA. We cannot change the geography, and nor would we want to.

Every three years, the NT holds our State Annual Conference and AGM virtually. This year it was via Zoom. “Advocacy from Anywhere” certainly proved to be correct. Our conference delegates rallied together for vigorous but respectful debate to ensure issues important to their children’s education were heard and actioned. Technology and communication systems have come such a long way. It was great to clearly see so many beautiful faces, joining from many diverse settings and hearing their crisp and clear voices. Thank you to those who persisted despite technical glitches and dropouts and learnt alongside us as we all navigated online voting and correct governance processes. Thank you to Federal President Alana and then Queensland President Louise Martin for assisting with due process when needed. Hosting and participating in a virtual conference can be challenging – so it was very humbling and pleasing to hear and see that the conference was not only efficient and effective but also enjoyable.

Enjoyable and important are key factors I believe to the success of ICPA – they are part of the WHY that keeps people volunteering and working hard to achieve better opportunities and outcomes for our children.

Having two of our new Councillors plus Treasurer and Secretary, join with us face to face for the first time at our AGM, was so valuable. Other Councillors actively participated virtually. I confess some envy as I hear about other state Councils regularly all coming together for full face to face meetings. In my time on NT Council, this has not been achieved. But as said before, the NT has its unique characteristics – one of which is us being spread very thin across a very large junk of land. The day after conference, State Council participated in a Values-based, decision-making training session led by Helen Lewis of Decision Design Hub. This is a living, evolving piece of work which will help guide us

into the future, ensuring we stay relevant, focused and true to purpose. Part of the vision articulated was:

*“As an Organisation we are relevant and resilient.
We are persistent, strong and powerful in the voice and support we give
to GI families which is positive and solution based.
Our intelligence, professionalism, integrity and knowledge are
respected. We are welcoming, compassionate and inclusive.”*

Connections, relationships, partnerships, mateship, community dynamics – looking after each other and working together. These are what makes a society and when they are working well and are positive and strong, growth and success has fertile ground to flourish. Building and strengthening relationships with members and stakeholders is important and an ongoing activity.

The NT has only three branches – Alice Springs and Katherine who are based around the respective schools of the air, and Territory Wide who is our Lones Branch. Both main branches have seen a changing of the guard as older families move through to the next stage of their education and new families enter. It is beautiful seeing these new faces grow in confidence and skill as they step up to lead and participate.

We have achieved so much and there is so much that should be celebrated and excitedly proclaimed from the roof tops. The achievements of ICPA are huge and varied. Many of the things that we simply take for granted in our everyday lives, educating our children whilst being out bush, is thanks to ICPA: All of our allowances and assistance schemes; many of our institutions; and most of the related policy. If there wasn't a door to open, we have built the door ourselves and walked through. And done so with dignity, respect, professionalism and passion.

If ICPA has a weakness, I think that is that we do not acknowledge, own and celebrate our successes anywhere near enough. We are our harshest critic and always striving for more, pushing ourselves further. As an organisation we need to be better at celebrating and acknowledging our wins and kinder to ourselves regarding our contribution. So, in amongst the rush, please take the time to reflect and acknowledge the efforts and accomplishments – not only of ICPA, and others but also yourself.

The past 12 months has been filled with achievements. My ICPA calendar tells me ICPA NT State Council have participated in 98 meetings and this is not counting individual delegation meetings. Geographically isolated families across the NT are having their voices heard, their stories and issues listened to, and action is occurring.

Just yesterday, I represented ICPA and addressed the Developing North Australia Conference, also being held here in Darwin this week. My message was simple.

- 1. For a sustainable north Australia, there must be families.*
- 2. To keep and retain families they need to have good education options for their children (and communications, health and roads).*
- 3. If families are supported, businesses and communities will prosper with far greater resilience and sustainability.*

The core top five issues for Northern Territory ICPA have remained unchanged for some time. 1.) Improve the NT Student Assistance Schemes for Geographically Isolated families. 2.) Maintenance funding & new funding for Mobile Playgroups to reach geographically isolated children (five years and under). 3.) Early identification, diagnosis, and management of special learning needs. 4.) Continued improvements to accessing affordable and reliable technology and communication systems for geographically isolated education purposes. 5.) A Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) to

recognise the substantial financial costs associated with the compulsory role of the remote home tutor. We are making progress but there is still more to be done.

An exciting initiative from ICPA NT this year has been the recognition of the Home Tutor for RPL and the commencement of Certificate 3, 4 or Diploma of Ed, via Charles Darwin University, whilst they are teaching in the home classroom. Congratulations to our first group of Home Tutors undergoing training through Charles Darwin University whilst working full time teaching our bush kids and being recognised for their existing experience in the education journey. This is an exciting pathway, not only for our own children and home tutors but also working towards contributing to solving the national teacher shortage, especially in regional areas.

Through partnership with St Johns, at no-cost to families, first aid training has been able to be made available to home tutors. We are also working closely with Early Childhood Australia (ECA) who are keen to collaborate with ICPA to improve access to early education for young children in remote areas through policy and program reforms.

Strong collaborations and reconnections with NT Cattlemen's Assoc (NTCA) are occurring and we are currently exploring ways as to how we can work more effectively together. Our geographic landscape and many of our membership overlaps.

These achievements are due to the persistent hard work, and passionate commitment of our strong and amazing Councillors (State and Federal), past and present, and thanks to our membership. #TeamICPA. It is a real pleasure and privilege to work with and for you. To my fellow state Councillors, you are a delight to work with. My congratulations and admiration to Alana and your Federal Council team. Well done.

Thank you for joining us today and I trust that you will find the conference enjoyable and productive and your time in the NT memorable and pleasant.