

2023 ICPA Federal Conference
Queensland State Council President's Report

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Federal President, Mrs Alana Moller, Federal Life Members, State Life Members, Branch Life Members, Distinguished Guests, fellow ICPA members, Ladies and Gentlemen: It gives me great pleasure to present my first Queensland President's report for the 2023 Federal Conference.

It is hard to believe (at the time of writing this report) that nearly a month has passed since the 52nd Queensland ICPA conference was held in Julia Creek. This also means that I do feel fraudulent delivering this report on the past twelve months of activity for Queensland State Council as it was under Louise Martin's tenure as President that the majority of activity has occurred. Truth be told also, it is an "Oh my goodness" moment: fancy me having to write a President's Report for ICPA Qld!

On with ICPA QLD business and this report writing and reflecting on the year that was.

Mid-Year Meeting for Council is such an integral part of the ICPA Qld year. In 2022 it was held in October, with State Councillors packing their bags and heading to Texas. As we all know, travelling and co-ordinating the team to travel always delivers stories and this was very much a part of the 'road trip' with rainfall and flooding being elements in all directions leading to Texas. We were hosted by Southern Downs Branch, and we thoroughly thank the branch for showing us around their part of Queensland and its history too. Two solid days of meetings and strategic planning were achieved whilst Councillors also enjoyed the branch's hospitality and the opportunity to have most of the Council together.

Our November delegations were again very successful. A highlight was learning that the accommodation facilities at the Distance Education Schools was being constructed. Most are now completed except for Longreach, as there has been challenges with sourcing builders so some delays have occurred. It will be a relief to all when this chapter of uncertainty is complete, and the schools and their families can return to having not only access, but the students feeling welcome and a part of their school campuses.

In February, Queensland State Council attended a joint council meeting with Federal Council and all the other State Councils in Melbourne. Annette Boyle and Louise Martin represented Queensland. These meetings are such a valuable experience, with each Council offering such unique perspectives and experience. There is also the opportunity to support the sharing of ideas for the greater benefit of the organisation and our members as a collective.

State Councillors travelled to Brisbane again in February for our first face-to-face meeting and delegations for the calendar year. Our week was packed with meetings, and we appreciate the effort from our Department of Education for continuing to be supportive of ICPA and genuinely listening to the issues in rural and remote education. Upon returning home, Councillors gave motion feedback to branches as the lobbying year was quickly drawing to a close. State Council received positive feedback for the new initiative of compiling all motion feedback into one document for branches to use as a reference when writing future motions.

March became the "ICPA Qld Living Away from Home Allowance Scheme (LAFHAS)" Month, as we embarked on an awareness campaign. After a solid workload for the Financial Assistance Portfolio and Publicity Officer over the Christmas period, it was time for the carefully calculated publicity schedule and campaign to begin! The Financial Assistance portfolio made a submission to Treasury

seeking a raise in the LAFHAS to further meet the rising cost of accessing education away from home, where there is no other choice. A special mention must be made of Kate Bradshaw and Melissa Iland for their dedication and commitment to ensuring there was no leaf left unturned. This meant the government had all details, including about the emotional impact of educating our bush kids. Thanks must go to all the Councillors, members and stakeholders who supplied 'media' by providing milk bottle videos, and sharing their own raw and emotive stories about what it would mean to them for a raise in the LAFHAS and why boarding is the only choice for secondary schooling for their families. The piece-de-resistance for ICPA Qld was to hold a press conference outside of Parliament House in Brisbane – to say there were not a few nervous moments, and “oh my goodness, we really are doing this” moments, would not be honest! The press conference was a success with several media outlets (who were not rural based) in attendance, resulting in widespread media coverage and no arrests...and ultimately success!

Over the past twelve months, the Department of Education has seen more inhouse name changes, and streamlining within overarching departmental branches than a hit TikTok release video! Despite this, and with reassurance that Rural and Remote remains an integral part of the Department/Branches, we give thanks to Department of Education Rural and Remote Team for facilitating the meetings with all the relevant representatives. Post Conference, all the motions are collated and sent to the relevant areas for consideration. This process has not only streamlined our meeting process but the foot traffic of ICPA Qld traipsing through Education House.

At our recent conference in Julia Creek, we were grateful for the strong representation from the Department and the answering of questions and offering of clarification on the Conference floor. Leanne Wright and Dr Grant Webb showed not only their deep understanding of educating and the challenges that all aspects of rural and remote education face, but also listened and immersed themselves in the debate, topics and reality.

ICPA's relationship with the Department of Education continues to reflect the high value they place on our organisation and they have given us an opportunity to sit on several key reference groups, including but not limited to - Rural and Remote Education Reference Group, Early Years Forum, Qld Schools Ethics Committee and Outside School Hours Care Committee. Key Stakeholders are an integral part of ensuring our lobby and connectivity and ICPA Qld is very proud of the great working relationships we have with ABSA, QCAA, AgForce, Telstra, Nbn, QCEC, ISQ, P&Cs Queensland and many others. Knowing that we can communicate with these organisations at any time to assist in our advocacy is invaluable not only to us but also their organisations.

When State Council congregates in Brisbane, a meeting venue is often a topic at the post conference meeting. For the past years we have been very fortunate to be the recipient of the generosity of Carmel Nash and the team at the QCEC offices in Brisbane for the use of their boardroom and web conferencing facilities for our Council meetings along with smokos, lunch and smiling faces. Over time, our Boarding Schools in Brisbane, along with ABSA, ISQ and other stakeholders have also offered to accommodate us when we are in town and the decision was made to share ourselves around, whilst also enjoying and appreciating other venues across Brisbane. To date, we have met at Brisbane Boys Grammar School and Stuartholme School and shortly we will meet at Brisbane Boys' College and Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ).

State Council has undertaken training in how to use Office 365 and the suite of associated products more effectively, as we have recently transitioned from using Dropbox and Zoom to using the suite of Office programs. In August Qld State Council will also partake in Governance Training through Directors Australia, an opportunity for our tireless volunteers to also receive new skills and knowledge.

The 2023 Qld State Conference was such a wonderful conference in so many ways and I would love to pass on my thanks and congratulations to the Julia Creek Branch and Convening Committee. With over 200 in attendance, motions pertaining to every portfolio, awards presented, nominations accepted and perfect winter weather in North Queensland, it was a recipe for an enjoyable and productive few days. The AGM on day two, saw a full State Council elected and ready to begin the council year going forth.

Louise Martin stood down as President and moves into the Immediate Past President role. I would like to thank Louise for her three years as President and look forward to being able to build and capitalise on her knowledge and wisdom, not only of her experience in the role as President, but also her depth of knowledge about all things ICPA. With no Councillors retiring this year, Kate Bradshaw remains as Vice President and is joined by Kasie Scott, who has been a Councillor for four years. Annette Boyle continues as Secretary along with Amanda Clark as Treasurer, both so capable and efficient in their roles. Three new Councillors were elected; new Councillors always bring with them so much excitement to existing council with new perspectives, new considerations, new ideas and thoughts. It can be daunting when thinking of stepping onto Council, but we thank them for putting their hands up and stepping forward. We welcome Sancia Fegan from Mount Isa BOTA Branch, Robyn O'Brien from Far North Queensland and Sonya Shelley from Capricornia BOTA Branch. Returning Councillors – Kylie Camp, Anneli Day, Megan Easton, Loretta Goodwin, and Tammy Bailey complete Council and this year also continue in their previous portfolios to assist with the transitions within council. Qld State Council really is now represented by a very large array of geography along with varied educational experiences too.

State Council said, 'Thank you' to Louise Winten as our Membership Officer and Christy Bredhauer as the Fundraising Officer, two roles that are so vital to the ongoing success of the organisation and we wish them both all the best as they fill their days with non ICPA activities. Off Council Positions in Queensland are filled and we are thankful to these ladies for putting their hands up and dedicating their time. Tina Barrett from the Mount Isa BOTA Branch joined in the Off-Council position of Membership Officer and Fiona Murray, Charters Towers Branch to the position of Fundraising Officer. Lisa Southern, St George Branch was elected as the solo Editor of *News & Views* after previously being Co-Editor with Jacque Hemming. We thank Jacque for her time and contributions. Tammie Irons is the Qld Web Co-ordinator and Judy Treloar completes the team with the Hospital Schools role.

One major highlight at Julia Creek was presenting Mr Jack Beach with his State Life Membership. Jack has previously received life membership to Federal Council as well as to Julia Creek Branch, so it was fitting to be able to bestow an ICPA Qld Life Membership badge in front of his home branch and his hometown. Jack's knowledge and wisdom of all things ICPA through the three tiers and his experience really are something so beneficial to the organisation historically, but also for the future. I know certainly as the incoming President, I enjoyed my opportunity to speak to Jack and learn so much from him.

Christine McLean was also presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for her tireless work and efforts with all things ICPA, and we would especially like to acknowledge her dedication in producing the 50 Year book that was launched at the Blackall Conference last year.

Neville Dolinski was also presented with a Certificate of Appreciation. Neville is synonymous with Conference, and he has travelled the state ensuring that the sound, recording and audio visuals all run smoothly. Neville is certainly the quiet knowledge-bank of ICPA issues, debates, names and faces having attended more conferences than most in the room!

Unfortunately, Minister Grace MP was unable to join us at Conference, but I am sure anybody who has read any Queensland media at all over the last month will also know that the Director General of Education, Mr Michael De'Ath attended and was able to deliver the news that there was going to be an increase to the LAFHAs. It was really one of those moments that ICPA will talk about for years to come! There was emotion, there was applause, there was gratitude and there was finally just relief that this will make such a change and be felt not only by families but by children and their education.

As we all know, ICPA will continue to make sure that this increase is not the only increase we receive and that families will continue to be considered going forth. It is heartening to know not only from the conference comments, but also, with budget announcements in Queensland, that rural and remote education is currently at the fore of the minds of the current government. State Council should give themselves a pat on the back that we have carved and maintained a positive and respectful relationship with the current Queensland government, and we look forward to continuing to maintain our lobby of all issues at hand.

Conference attendees were extremely delighted to hear from and engage with the Digital Child team as Professor Susan Danby presented their latest research findings and engaged with members. They also had the opportunity to listen firsthand to discussion on the conference floor about the amount of time children are in front of their screens each school day along with the expectations. ICPA QLD looks forward to sharing further information on how to be involved and useful information on children's digital education and wellbeing.

Queensland State Council representatives are looking forward to heading to Darwin for the Federal Conference. It really is such an opportunity to be able to make sure that our Queensland members' motions and needs are raised and discussed. Queensland State Council has put forward motions again this year. We look forward to attending; we always come back refreshed and motivated. This year we will only just have time to get home unpack and repack before State Council will be heading to Brisbane for delegations in August, where we will raise all the motions that were carried at the 2023 conference, and those motions that we are still working on.

Sponsorship and Partnerships are so valuable to Council, and we are truly grateful for any financial support the organisations give to ICPA Qld. Without them, our lobby would not be able to be run as effectively and efficiently. Every contribution makes a genuine difference and assists all rural and remote children's education in our state.

This year as I look at my role of President with ICPA Queensland, I think one of my main focuses is making sure ICPA becomes a conversation topic for everybody who lives rural and remote. Membership and Conference attendance are two areas of particular interest – we all know how important being a member is, but with that needs to be the increased awareness of how important it is to the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation; likewise with physical attendance at conference. It doesn't matter if you live in town, it doesn't matter if you live just out of town or a long way out of town, ICPA is there for you, your children, your grandchildren and anybody else you know as well. We would love your conversations to also be about ICPA and ensuring everybody you know is aware we are there for them and their children's education. The best thing that they can do for the organisation is to become a member and the next best thing after becoming a member is becoming an active member!

These are two areas of genuine concern not only for Queensland, but the organisation as a whole. Along with rural and remote Australia, and all levels of industry and employment, inequitable access to education does not encourage families to live beyond the perimeter of urban settings. It is as

essential now, if not more so, than it has been over the past 52 years, and we need you and everyone else around you to step forward and be a part of our advocacy and our organisation.

Delivering this report is not something I ever imagined I would ever be doing. I am just me, a mum trying her best and yet this incredible organisation has not only given so much to my family, particularly my girls, but little did I know, to me as well. My time given is equalled by what I have gained back as an individual with growth and knowledge for which I shall always be humbled and grateful.