

FEDERAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Alana Moller

Distinguished guests, Federal Life Members, fellow ICPA members and friends it is with great pleasure and pride that I have the opportunity to present the Federal President's report, at the beginning of the conference which will mark my last year in the role. Thank you to all of you here who have come from near and far, through dust or mud, on dirt or bitumen, by car or plane, or all of the above and more, to join me and Federal Council as we hold our 52nd Federal Conference.

As I considered which quote to use for my final President's Report, I found myself drawn to this from the novel Lord of the Rings "I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

And as I reflect on the events of the past four years, I feel this. I took on the role of Federal President in 2019, as a very green and rather unskilled individual, high on passion but perhaps low on the practicalities of the role and I could never had imagined what was to come. The past four years have been marked by unprecedented change and adjustment and I hope that what I have done with the time that has been given to me leaves ICPA Australia in a positive position. But enough about me as I am here to update you all on the immense efforts of Federal Council this past year

In the past twelve months, Federal Council have met face to face on several occasions and attended events in person, an opportunity after 3 years hindered by COVID restrictions to come together, reacquaint, collaborate and mingle. This has included two face to face Council meetings, two delegations to Canberra, Federal Councillor attendance at all State Conferences as well as a number of other roundtables, conferences and events.

Following last year's Conference in Perth, the 2022-23 Federal Council Year set off in a "Carpe Diem" frame of mind, we seized the day, with all motion correspondence despatched by the end of September, meetings held, events attended and there were actions aplenty, as we keenly continued the momentum of conference and raised and advocated for the topics that matter most to members at every opportunity.

In October and May, we embarked on delegations at Parliament House covering 33 and 28 meetings respectively, including with the Hon Jason Clare MP Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm, Assistant Minister for Education and Hon Anne Aly, Minister for Early Childhood Education, amongst other new and familiar faces. The opportunity to hold in person delegations again definitely enlivened us. We have also continued to connect regularly with the Federal Department of Education, the

Department of Social Services and Services Australia. This engagement has extended to submission opportunities to Government. Late last year, we lodged our 2023-24 Pre-Budget Submission in which we once again focussed on 6 longstanding topics listed on the screen, as our key recommendations, all of which have been costed to show that a small investment can make a big difference and have been raised with other advocacy across all portfolios at every opportunity.

While throughout Conference you will hear from all of our portfolio leaders and you will find full portfolio reports in your conference booklet, I would like to share some insight into other portfolio activities.

Communications continues to be an eventful, yet often gratifying portfolio particularly with a number of recent exciting and positive developments. However the Portfolio remains focussed on guaranteeing adequate communications services are maintained and continue to be enhanced. We particularly appreciate our opportunity to work closely with the Regional Tech Hub, Telstra, nbn and the RRRCC to raise our members voices. I would be remiss not to mention that it is the current and past Communications Portfolio leader, as well as Immediate Past President, Wendy Hick who I think we need to be forever indebted to for the incredible differences that have occurred and continue to be made in rural and remote communications and for the continued strong voice of ICPA in the communications arena.

NAPLAN testing has been a hot topic in the Curriculum portfolio with changes over the past few years, specifically the move to fully online testing and a change of dates for the testing window, commencing this year and we continue to ensure rural and remote specific topics are highlighted.

Of interest in the Early Childhood Education and Care portfolio is that the Early Childhood Section of the Federal Department of Education is conducting a comprehensive review of early childhood programs and systems and ICPA (Aust) is particularly eager to see positive change within the In Home Care program.

In the schools space, it has been a pleasing to be a part of the National School Reform Agreement consultation, as well as for myself participating in the Ministerial Reference Group.

In the area of Specific Education Needs we have been pleased to welcome new telehealth and rural and remote health worker incentives and will continue to advocate for expansion of these initiatives to further improve services for rural and remote students.

Across Tertiary and Training we were especially pleased to see an increase to youth allowance and rent assistance in the recent Federal Budget. We have also taken the opportunity to contribute to several Tertiary and Vocational Education and Training submissions in recent months, enabling us to raise many of the issues facing rural and remote tertiary and training students.

Over and above our ongoing advocacy, this past year, Federal Council has also embarked on governance training and strategic planning to not only upskill Councillors but to ensure that we continue to represent

members appropriately. Our forebears left our organisation in good hands with processes put in place and it is to the current Federal Council's advantage that we can build on what is already a solid foundation to ensure the longevity of ICPA and ensure that the individuals who make ICPA what it is are supported and valued.

Also, following on from the motion carried at conference last year "that ICPA (Aust) allocates funds each year to an external professional consultancy to advise and mentor on how to best gain traction on some longstanding lobbies", Federal Council has engaged media and communications specialist C7even to enhance our advocacy on some of our long term topics. We are excited at this opportunity and how it may help us to clock some extra wins in the future. We may however need YOUR help – we cannot get our message out unless we have data and stories and we may be reaching out to members in the coming months to ask for your assistance. I thank those who have already contributed to our Member Engagement Survey sent out earlier this year.

In early 2023, Kim Hughes and myself attended a joint councils meeting in Melbourne, to discuss combined advocacy, governance and administrative activities with all state presidents and secretaries. The opportunity to collaborate, share and assist each other where possible is very much appreciated and I assure members that the top priority of all Councils is to our members and all Councils efforts to support their members is admirable.

I wish to also mention the truly valuable and ongoing support ICPA Australia receives from stakeholders and other organisations, including but not limited to the Australian Boarding Schools Association, Telstra, nbn, ACARA, Boarding Expos Australia and Thrive By Five. All engagement and collaboration opportunities are welcomed. Further, may I acknowledge the generosity and financial assistance we receive from individuals, business and other organisations, including branches and state councils, across the country, not only for our Federal Conference but also throughout the year. I particularly wish to once again highlight the generosity of the McDonald family and the Four Seasons Company, with ICPA continuing to be a beneficiary of a percentage of the sales from ZM nutrition blocks for cattle, released in honour of beef industry leader, the late Zanda McDonald. Federal Council feels a true sense of pride and honour to be a part of this initiative and it is a pleasure to be able to utilise this generous financial support to assist 5 branches to attend our Federal Conference in 2021, two branches last year and ten branches to be here this year.

The Federal Council here this week looks slightly different from the 2022 Conference. Regrettably farewelled Suzanne Wilson from Federal Council in light of her commitments to convening this Conference. Suzanne's incredible efforts in her time on Federal Council both as Secretary and then as Publicity Officer made her an invaluable asset to ICPA and we should all be tremendously grateful she put her hand up back

in 2017. I am delighted that Ali Allison, stepped into the role of Publicity Officer role with passion and enthusiasm! We also welcomed to Federal Council over the year, Miffy Waugh from Queensland and Kylie Toynton hailing from New South Wales. This year has also been one of incredible efforts by those who we work alongside in off council positions – Judy Newton, Nikki Macqueen, Sue Shotton, Hannah Calcino and Tracey Dewell in particular, and we have achieved so much in such a short time across membership, the database, our website, and Pedals and I can only see positives ahead in all of these spaces.

Without outstanding individuals willing to come on board, we could not maintain the ongoing work of ICPA Australia. My gratitude to all, new and old, for your commitment and efforts.

This brings me to the here and now and what is ahead for Federal Council in the coming months. Following on from Conference, a new Federal Council team, under the leadership of a new President, will I am sure be once again committed to making sure every effort is made to address motions carried over the next two days. I look forward to remaining on the team as the Immediate Past President, but must acknowledge those current Councillors and our support team who will not be continuing in their roles after this Conference. Kate Thompson, who has ridden the waves alongside me over the past four years as Assistant Secretary, is standing down from the role after completing four years. I highly commend Kate for the incredible heart and soul efforts in this role and ICPA is blessed that she is staying on board Federal Council. While Kylie Toynton's time on Federal Council has been short, it has been a privilege to have her on our team and we hope we have an opportunity to cross paths with her in the future. Laura Stalley, such an inspiring and dedicated, busy, but so very organised and considered teammate you have been. I am so glad that New South Wales will still be graced with your remarkable presence. Sue Shotton, what an incredible and lasting legacy you will leave for ICPA. Without your continued commitment and dedication to ICPA over more years than most of us in this room, I fear we may have found ourselves quite lagging in the everchanging challenging tech space! Of course while you are stepping away now, I know we will still be calling on you regularly as we move toward a new tech process. And lastly, Wendy Hick. I am not sure there are any words that will sufficiently describe the gratitude that ICPA as a collective owe to you as you step down as Immediate Past President. To know that your steady, guiding hand, considered and comprehensive approach, extensive knowledge and experiences along with you as an individual, has always been there for Federal Council has been such a relief. I know all of these things have often been taken for granted but I hope despite that, you realise just how important and respected you are to us all. I hope you get to go forth and conquer elsewhere now, but please always be up for a "what do you think" ICPA call or message!

In case I don't get another chance, I also pay tribute now to not only the entire 2022-23 Federal Council team, but to all of the amazing Federal Councillors and other ICPA volunteers I have worked with over the past four years. Please know how much I cherish and value you. It has been extraordinary to have the

opportunity to laugh, cry, celebrate, commiserate, debate, work, ponder, discuss, reflect, plan (and-replan), adjust, process and so much more with you all along the way.

And members, a reminder that myself and Federal Council advocate on behalf of YOU across early childhood education, distance education, rural schools, boarding, specific needs education, tertiary and training as well as in the communications and curriculum space. We are everyday parents, farmers, graziers, business owners, home tutors, teachers, jacks & jills-of-all trades living and working in rural and remote Australia and we are honoured to be able to assist and represent you. While we cannot do everything, we will always do what we can to continue the legacy of ICPA to achieve equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for our geographically isolated children and ensure that being geographically isolated does not mean you are alone. On a personal note, I hope that what I have done in the time I have been graciously given as Federal President has been enough.

And now let us look towards our 52nd ICPA Federal Conference and may this be your opportunity to express what you need Federal Council to advocate for on your behalf. May there be robust and passionate conversation, debate and collaboration along with a good dash of mingling and merriment along the way. I truly believe that Conferences are where the real magic of ICPA is on show, my love affair with all things ICPA began following my first Conference and I look forward to being inspired all over again in this room over the next two days.