



Federal Conference Report

WA President

29th June 2024

We have had a great 12 months despite facing challenges at times, but that is what makes us stronger and more determined. This year we have not had a full State Council however, at our State Conference in March we welcomed Chelsea Mott from the Lakes District and at our recent face-to-face meeting in June we co-opted Jasmyn Allen from the Midwest Branch and Michelle Abbott, a former State Treasurer, also from the Midwest Branch, rejoined the State Council. Jasmyn and Michelle and fellow councillors Kym Ross and Sally Brindal are here today.

Over the past 12 months, ICPA WA has continued to build and strengthen its positive relationship with the Minister for Education Hon. Dr Buti and Department of Education officials. We have regularly met with Director General Lisa Rodgers, who has always been attentive and proactive in addressing our concerns. Sadly, in May Lisa announced that she will be leaving her role to take up the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) and will be greatly missed by ICPA WA. Minister Buti continues to engage positively both through our correspondence and during in person at delegations.

The 52nd Annual State Conference: “Where Imagination Meets Learning” was held at Aloft on March 15th 2024. We welcomed members from all over Western Australia along with key stakeholders in education.

Dr Tony Buti Minister for Education addressed and officially opened the Conference and announced a review of regional education and the development of a Regional Education Strategy. ICPA WA welcomed this announcement and has met with Wheatbelt District Director Doug Cook who will be leading the project.

Lakes District Branch hosted the Conference and ensured personal connections were made with all attendees receiving personally made and assigned biscuits. John Bailly, Manager of School Bus Services endured a long day with many school bus motions and questions directed toward him, but I believe his spirits were lifted by a beautiful handmade and decorated school bus biscuit.

The conference was a powerful day that continued to build on the amazing work of those that have come before. With weather events and a short, cramped Term 1 it was a challenge for members to attend in person. After the conference and before planning for 2025, we sent a

Survey Monkey questionnaire to all members. This survey covered various aspects of the conference to ensure everyone's voices were heard and to help us better serve our members in the future.

ICPA WA has connected Melesha Sands, Deputy Director of Schools to a dedicated and passionate group of School of the Air (SOTA) parents from across the state. Many of these parents have been feeling a great disconnect with SOTA schools. Changes and uncertainties regarding home visits, curriculum, camps and the overall expectations of home tutors have caused considerable angst. These parents are hoping for positive changes in this very unique method of schooling.

Western Australia has five Schools of the Air, spread across five different districts of education. These schools are essentially standalone and lack a cohesive link to bind them together. In October, ICPA WA representatives along with REVISE representatives and 18 parents from across the state met online with Melesha Sands to highlight this issue. They questioned the absence of collegiate groups to support each other and share best practices across the five SOTAs. After what felt like a very long wait, we have recently received some great news.

The Department of Education will be appointing a networking Principal for the Schools of the Air (0.4 FTE) starting in Term 4. This appointment will allow for the exploration of various strategies to strengthen and align the five SOTAs. Additionally, an external consultant will be engaged to facilitate a session with members of the SOTA School Councils, Principals, and ICPA WA members to consider the establishment of a possible parent advisory body.

These outcomes would not have been possible without Louise Linke who has recently stepped down from State Council. Louise's dedication has won support for greater consultation, consistency in education delivery and communication for our SOTA families.

Late in 2023 ICPA WA welcomed the news prior to Christmas of an increase to the Conveyance Allowance for school travel in regional areas effective Term 1, 2024. The Bus Fair Report - an inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy (STAP) Framework conducted in 2022 by the Public Accounts Committee, recommended the Public Transport Authority review the Conveyance Allowance to ensure it is based on a contemporary benchmark, adjusted in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), and the basis for adjustments is transparent. The increase from 25.24 cents per kilometre to 55.6 cents per kilometre will be very beneficial for our families.

Though this is great news, the report contained over 40 recommendations covering the overarching principles of STAP, student eligibility criteria, forms of transport assistance, processes and response times and local engagement to date only a few have been implemented. Orange school bus concerns continue to be prominent in motions presented at the Conference. Although we maintain good communication with School Bus Services, our issues have yet to be acknowledged as important by our Minister of Transport, who oversees this area and we struggle to engage with the Minister effectively.

Recently ICPA WA State Council held face-to-face meetings at our regular venue, the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE). SIDE has generously hosted us in their student

camp accommodation at a very reasonable cost and provided us with meeting rooms for many years.

As the fastest growing school in the State with approximately 4100 students, State Council was privileged to receive an invitation from Principal Paul Mathews to observe a Design and Technology woodwork class in progress. The students' engagement and rapport with the teacher, along with the impressive quality of their final pieces, truly showcased excellence. Paul and his team at SIDE demonstrate a solutions-based approach that proves there is no limit to what can be achieved in the distance education classroom. He also spoke to us of plans to develop units of competency for distance education support staff and we look forward to meeting with Paul again to discuss this exciting idea.

Consistent staffing in our small rural and remote schools remains an ongoing issue. Case studies from our members have assisted in discussions with Department of Education officials. We are currently awaiting the finalisation of the Commonwealth Funding Agreement and the State School Teachers of WA General Agreement. We have been advised that there are specific measures in these agreements that should greatly benefit our regions.

Jim Bell, Deputy Director General, Department of Education recently provided information regarding the use of international teachers in Western Australian schools. International recruitment is an option available for all schools in Western Australia if they can demonstrate that a suitable and available teacher cannot be found.

The distance education teaching allowance has been a topic of discussion, especially following new motions presented at Conference directing it to be a focus at State level. Minister Buti responded to a recent letter regarding the implementation of an allowance to remunerate home tutors in geographically isolated areas with the following, *"The State Government does not have any plans to introduce a State Government distance education teaching allowance. You may wish to raise your ideas with the Hon Bill Shorten MP, Federal Minister for Government Services."* We are in the process of securing a face-to-face meeting with the Minister of Education to continue this discussion.

With many promising 'wins' this past year, we look forward to the next 12 months.