



2024 Presidents Report

Federal Conference Sydney 2024

Louise Martin

Federal Life Members, Rory Treweeke AM, Jack Beach, Judy Newton, Distinguished guests, State and Branch Life Members, fellow ICPA members and friends, it is with great pleasure that I present my first Federal Presidents Report. Just when I thought my days of making ICPA President speeches were over, I find myself here delivering this report as Federal President, a surprise to us all, most of all me! I have just recently retired from Qld State Council after 11 years, 3 of which were as Qld President. For those who don't know me, I am from Tambo Branch, in Western Queensland. My Husband and I have twin daughters who have just turned 18 and finished high school last year. We have followed the DE, Small School, School Bus, and boarding school route for education. We are now trying to navigate tertiary allowances etc, which I am discovering is very challenging.

Following the 2023 Federal Conference in Darwin we set off with enthusiasm to tackle the issues presented by the members at conference.

At October 2023 delegations in Canberra, Federal Council launched a campaign to restore the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance to its original value of 55% of average boarding fees. We worked closely with public relations consultants C7even to build momentum, which has included an e-petition which had over 4,000 signatures and an open letter to the Minister for Social Services, endorsed by over 20 stakeholders in support of the campaign. It was extremely disappointing that the raise in the AIC was not announced in the budget.

Council continued to progress all motions carried at conference. Letters were written to government and education stakeholders, various submissions were lodged and meetings undertaken. Federal Council provided updates on motion action progress to members in early March.

The leaders of each portfolio will provide an update throughout conference of what has been happening in their portfolio through the year and the full portfolio reports are available in the conference booklet.

Secretary Kim Hughes and I travelled to Darwin in early February for the Joint Council Meeting. This year the meeting was hosted and facilitated by the Northern Territory State Council. Yet again it proved to be such a worthwhile exercise to have all the State and Federal Presidents and other representatives from across the country come together to discuss all things relevant to ICPA. Thank you to the NT team for facilitating the meeting and hosting us all. We look forward to heading over to Perth in February for the next annual gathering. Following on from the joint council meeting progress has been made on several issues discussed.

The Distance Education Teaching Allowance was discussed at length between ICPA Councils in Darwin and beyond, particularly the juxtaposition which exists where the Federal Government's position is that it is a State Government issue and vice versa. It is important to flesh out how this issue may look in each State and what are the common links so that going forward we have a more focused and collaborative request drawing on the widespread commonality we all share. We all look forward to debating the upcoming motions relating to this advocacy so a solution can be realised.

After consultation and feedback with all councils, it has been decided that the Geographically Isolated Distance Education (GIDE) day will be reframed with a fresh look going forward, focusing on ICPA as a whole and the many faces and ways of rural learning across our member base. After much debate and discussion, a new name has been settled on RRED, Rural and Remote Education Day. The inaugural RRED day is scheduled for the 12th of September. Members will be asked to help contribute towards this day and I am sure it will be a great success as a result.

At the October council meeting a motion was carried to establish a subcommittee of the organisation to formalise the role of the ICPA Tech Team which will oversee and manage the website and database operations at a Branch, State and Federal level. The formation of the subcommittee evolved from the retirement of Sue Shotten as the Web Manager. As ICPA's reliance on the website and database continues to increase it became apparent that the responsibilities are far beyond the capacity of a single volunteer. We have a wonderful, and extremely knowledgeable, committed, and passionate team of five who ensure that the operation of the website and database is running as smoothly as possible. Thank you, Judy Newton, Kate Thompson, Nikki MacQueen, Tammie Irons and Kym Ross, for all efforts on behalf of all the ICPA family. So, if you are having any technical issues at Branch, State or Federal level please contact the Tech Team and they will endeavour to solve your problem as quickly as possible. Four of the Tech team are here at Conference so please reach out if you need a hand with anything.

This time last year Federal Council engaged C7even, an integrated specialist regional and rural Marketing and Communications Agency based in Tamworth, to support Federal Council in a couple of ways. Firstly, to assist Federal Council with communications and advocacy to progress long standing issues and secondly to develop a strategic plan and a subsequent operational plan to assure the organisation's longevity. This engagement originated from a motion carried at the 2021 Federal Conference in Longreach Qld. The result of the work has been to focus on one or two longstanding key issues at a time, making a concerted push to government through key messaging and at times, the media.

Federal Council travelled to Canberra for delegations in February and met with The Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, the Hon Darren Chester, Shadow Minister for Regional Education and The Hon Michael Sukkar MP, Shadow Minister for Social Services to name a few. We discussed the importance of the increase to the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance, along with the other recommendations in our 2024-25 Pre-Budget Submission. It was a good opportunity to consolidate these key asks prior to the May budget.

Federal Council also participated in a strategic planning workshop during our time in Canberra. It was an uplifting experience to be in the room with fellow councillors, all putting forward their ideas and visions for the longevity of the organisation and how we can work as targeted as possible to reach objectives with the ultimate aim to get the very best outcomes for members. The strategic plan has been finalised and federal council is now progressing forward with the implementation of the accompanying operational plan which will play out over the next five years. The Canberra session also included a media training workshop. It is proving invaluable for councillors to have the opportunity to upskill during their time on council enabling greater participation at a council level and for personal growth.

Federal Council's final round of delegations for the year was in May where the focus was on ensuring positive outcomes from the USO review for rural and remote families and pushing for the inclusion of nanny's and classroom supervisors to be included in the 88 day Working Holiday Maker Program. We also followed up recommendations from the University Accord review to ensure that they are delivered. It is heartening to see further funding for regional study hubs, paid placements for teaching, nursing, and social work students as well as HECS reductions.

ICPA at large made its presence felt at Beef Week this year. Thank you to Qld State Council for liaising and working with the Beef committee to bring together a Panel discussion highlighting the critically important role that access to a quality education plays in the success of our vast agricultural industries. I felt ICPA's influence and the respect in which the organisation is held infiltrated throughout the week at Beef.

I wish to also mention the 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, The Parenthood and Thrive By Five. I also acknowledge the Department of Education, Department of Social Services and Services Australia who we meet with regularly and are always just a phone call away if we need any assistance.

Since the 2023 conference we have had a few changes with councillors. We farewelled both Wendy Henning and Tracy Alder due to other commitments. We thank Tim Fletcher from Monaro, NSW and Melissa Kerr, Katherine Branch NT for being willing to be coopted on to council through the year. Many thanks to the off-council team Judy Newton, Memberships, Nikki Macqueen, Webmaster, Hannah Calcino and Tracey Dewell who both do a fantastic job producing the Pedals magazine. This year we farewell team members who have all contributed greatly to the organisation during their time on council. With this in mind I encourage you to think, is this my time to join the federal council team. There is never a right time of course, you just need to take a leap of faith and be safe in the knowledge that when you join the team, you will be well looked after and nurtured. What an opportunity it is for so many reasons, for our kids, for ourselves and our communities.

A massive thanks from me to Alana, Kim, Julia, Nikki and the rest of the team for pointing me in the right direction this year. Honestly it is surprising I am here in Sydney as I suffered from a few Joe Biden moments and wrote in my speech welcome to Canberra!!

Thank you to all members who contribute countless volunteer hours to enhance educational opportunities for all rural and remote students in your state and across Australia. Thank you again to the NSW State Council and the convening team for all the hard work you have put in and for the warm welcome to Sydney.

I encourage all attendees including guests to participate in robust debate at this conference as this always produces the best outcomes so, please don't walk away after coming all the way to Sydney with any thoughts left unspoken.

Thank you