

SPECIFIC NEEDS PORTFOLIO CONFERENCE REPORT – June 2024

The Specific Needs Portfolio had two motions to action from the Julia Creek Conference. The State Council team travelled to Brisbane for Delegations where ICPA Qld Councillors met with numerous Departments and stakeholders including the Autism Hub, Autism Qld, Autism Qld, Distance Education Principal, and Leading Educator. During these meetings Specific Needs policies and Key Issues were discussed.

Following discussions and questions with the Department of Education (DoE) it was conveyed that the support for students and schools is the same across the state. All state schools can access a range of allied health services such as specialists, therapists, Guidance Officers and more for a range of disabilities/learning differences. The difference between departmental health providers who tailor their service to support the student in learning and private/community providers are complimentary to and focus more on the child's development.

The DoE are currently implementing a borderless model in the regions to address Allied Health shortages by attracting people to metro areas and then flying them to regions. This borderless model is attracting more experienced allied health providers. The DoE is committed to equity and face to face opportunities 2-3 times a term. These Allied health professionals will be mentoring school staff including teacher aides on how to use tele-practice services. Teacher Aides will be provided with the necessary upskilling to be able to implement the program in the providers absence. The allied health professional who has provided the program will need to check in with the school to make sure the program is progressing at an approved rate. Support is determined by needs of individual student and school. The travel cost associated with the borderless model will come from the regions travel budget.

Within education clusters, located throughout the state, there are Head of Special Education (HOSE) positions. It was recommended that Principals and their (Head of Special Education Services) HOSSES work collaboratively to ensure the schools in the cluster are working towards outcomes for students. It was discussed that HOSSES need to visit each school for face-to-face evaluation with follow ups such as teleconferences to take place after; in a timely, accessible, and flexible manner. Issues around travel, distance and accommodation need to be considered

DoE updated ICPA Qld on the lack of suitable applicants for the numerous positions that are vacant in this sector which means there are no quick answers or solutions to these shortcomings. Likewise, the lack of acceptable accommodation is impacting rural and remote schools, however this has been identified and solutions are being investigated.

If your members feel that the schools in your area are not being adequately supported, please ensure that there is clear communication firstly between the families and the teacher, then the principal and if required you may need to have discussions with the regional director for your area. The DoE also informed us that information about support services for students, new to a school, is available, through your school principal.

Reminder to any members interest in upcoming webinars or seminars focused on specific needs to visit the ICPA Qld website or feel free to email or message me.

Exciting news today is that there will be a breakout Information Room during lunch for Specific Needs Information. I would like to thank the providers who have made their time available to attend conference and I encourage you to visit the breakout room to investigate what is on offer

I thank you for your support and I would encourage any feedback so that I can represent you and our members in the best way possible

Robyn O'Brien
Specific Needs/Portfolio Leader