
Rural Schools and Curriculum Report

Madam President, Fellow State Councillors, Federal Vice President and Councillor, Members and Guests,

I would like to thank Central West Plains for hosting last year's 52nd Annual Conference in Dubbo. It was a remarkably successful conference.

After the conference in Dubbo a letter was forwarded to the Deputy Premier of New South Wales with Distance Education, Rural Schools, Early Childhood, Health and Well Being along with Allowances, with all the motions from conference.

Our meetings have continued with RRREI (Regional, Rural and Remote Education Implementation) which afford the opportunity for ICPA-NSW to talk to the most appropriate person when dealing with our motions.

At the conference in Dubbo, there was an announcement that single-person accommodation would be erected at Louth Public School. This has been a motion for many years and a great outcome for ICPA-NSW and Louth Public School. We would like to thank the relevant departments for making this happen.

ICPA-NSW was contacted by one of our members regarding the 482 Visa asking that the \$6,000 per annum visa holders pay for their children to attend a public school in rural and remote NSW be abolished. A letter was sent to the Deputy Premier of New South Wales and Minister for Education and Early Learning, Prue Car, from ICPA-NSW asking that the \$6,000 that employees pay to the public school be brought into line with other States.

In Queensland and Victoria there are no fees charged and in South Australia no fees are charged if you attend a rural and remote school. It is an advantage to have more students attending our rural and remote schools and they do not need any deterrents for people to relocate to our rural and remote areas.

We would like to thank the Deputy Premier for her response, and this has now been changed so that 482 Visa holders in NSW rural and remote schools no longer pay the \$6,000 per annum in school fees. This is a great outcome for all concerned.

State Councillors attended the annual deputation to Sydney in May. This is a busy time for Councillors but generally positive. This is when we have our face-to-face meetings with politicians and other relevant people who relate to our portfolios.

The motions you as members bring to conference are on the agenda when we attend these meetings. Deputation is a constructive way to receive positive feedback for the motions that we discuss.

The ICPA-NSW hosted the Federal Conference in July 2024, I was fortunate to be on the convening committee. I would really like to thank Laura and Karen, as our convenors along

with Cath as treasurer and Bree as registrations. We all came to Sydney early to help but I must say the professionalism of work that had been done prior to Sydney made the last-minute necessities such a pleasure, it was such a great committee to be involved with. The whole conference, including venues etc., was a great success.

The motion regarding secondary schooling as a pop up, pop down model, in our rural and remote TP1 and TP2 schools, for students who do not have a suitable home environment for their schooling and for various reasons cannot go away to boarding school, suggests an innovative solution which has worked in other states.

In NSW, the above-described remote students attempting their preschool or secondary education via distance education, in reality have no practical access to public education.

The way forward for this motion is that legislation must change to allow these students to attend their local TP1 or TP2 schools. Currently, in TP1 and TP2 schools, whether it be secondary or preschool, the teaching principal believes or feels they need to be in the 'line of sight' of these students.

Legislation must be implemented to relieve principals in TP1 and TP2 schools, to allow pop up and pop down models in public schools.

Potentially this is a win/ win for the small rural and remote schools, as currently in the far west of NSW, the population is declining due to assorted reasons. If these small schools became educational hubs for preschool to year 12, this could keep very remote and remote small schools operational. Comprehensive education services are an incentive for new people to come to our villages as schooling is often a priority.

In a flow on effect liveability attracts and helps retain service people and staff so the shire and wider area also benefits.

There have been instances where the Teacher Housing houses in rural and remote and very remote areas were left in bad repair. ICPA-NSW would like to ask the Minister for Housing to ensure that contractors who oversee teacher housing visit at least every three months. This should guarantee that these public houses are maintained to an appropriate standard without the need for major work to be done after the tenant has gone. A leaving principal should vacate early in the new year, this would allow for an inspection and any work needing to be completed for the new principal to move in prior to the first term.

This would permit the new principal to settle in the house before having to be in the classroom for Term 1. In small TP1 schools in very isolated areas it is sometimes confronting enough without the added pressure of unsatisfactory housing.

ICPA-NSW Rural Schools and Curriculum Portfolio would like to see some of our older motions made into policy, these have all come from our rural and remote TP1 and TP2 schools and would benefit the community, students and teachers. One is the handover, as it would be as beneficial to students as well as the incoming principal. It must include at least a five-week program, to relieve the pressure for the principal allowing them time to understand

the best strategies to use in a multistage classroom and the resources they have at their disposal in their new position.

I would like to thank all our Councillors who do such a fantastic job volunteering their time to achieve some great outcomes for our rural and remote children. Thank you to our members for coming to conference, it is a wonderful opportunity to hear about other issues rural and remote children face but also it gives you a chance to voice your issues.

Annabel Strachan
Rural Schools and Curriculum Portfolio Leader