2025 Motion Updates to Members

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Introduction

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (ICPA Aust) annual conference was held on 30 and 31st July 2025 in Adelaide, South Australia. At the conference 89 portfolio motions, 1 miscellaneous and 2 Floor motions were presented. 88 motions were carried by delegates from Branches and State Councils from all over Australia. All motions have been actioned by Federal Council since the conference. This Progress Report outlines these actions across each portfolio.

Boarding/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio

A1. Walgett Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA(Aust) advocate to the relevant federal government departments to continue and expand the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program pilot"

and

A2. South Australia State Council

"That ICPA(Aust) advocate to the relevant government departments to reestablish the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program (CRSP)"

Following the conference ICPA(Aust) once again wrote to The Hon. Anthony Albanese PM to request and update in relation to the CRSP pilot.

ICPA(Aust) have received a reply, and this time, *we believe,* they have made their intentions for the CRSP pilot clear.

1. It will not be reviewed until towards the end of the program in 2029.
2. Discussion on if the CRSP is continued or expanded will not proceed until the review is completed.

Included are <u>some excerpts</u> from our September 2025 letter to the Prime Minister:

"...To date, ICPA(Aust) has had no meaningful response in relation to the continuation and expansion of the CRSP beyond its pilot
<u>Australian families weigh in on the CRSP:</u>
Families from Walgett NSW:
We would like to advocate for this program to continue and be expanded by increasing the number of scholarships on offer. This will allow many more families the opportunity to stay in their rural or remote communities where local alternatives don't exist and send their children to a school that offers boarding...
<u>Working towards a solution:</u>
...Assistance as outlined in the 'CRSP intended outcomes' should be afforded to all families who fit the criteria, not just a select few.
ICPA(Aust) would like to express gratitude in establishing the CRSP initiative and urgently seeks your commitment to support the Australian families who voted you and the Labour Government into a second term of office, by applying our following recommendations.
<u>Recommendations:</u>

1. *Publicly announce the review date and findings for the CRSP pilot, and share with ICPA(Aust)*
2. *That the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program continues beyond the pilot.*
3. *That the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program Pilot be expanded to include all eligible candidates who apply.*
4. *Acknowledge that the CRSP has been a highly successful initiative that has been supported to continue beyond its pilot program and expand by:*

- *Regional, Rural and Remote Families from across Australia*
- *The ICPA(Aust) Members*
- *Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA)*
- *The Busy at Work group*

Closing:
It is important for ICPA(Aust) to highlight the concerns of its members who live, work, and educate their children in some of the most remote locations in Australia.
As stated in previous correspondence, April 2025, from the Prime Minister and Cabinet, "The Government is committed to ensuring that every child regardless of socioeconomic background or geographical location has access to high quality education".
Please demonstrate your ability to take action by applying steps that support your words of commitment by applying our recommendations to the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program – pilot..."

On the 24th October 2025 ICPA(Aust) received a response from:
Pam Banerjee, Assistant Secretary, Wellbeing & Equity Branch.

Pam notified us that the issues raised in the letter fall within the portfolio responsibilities of the Hon Jason Claire MP, Minister for Education and the letter was referred to his office.
ICPA(Aust) were thanked for:
- our ongoing engagement and support of the CRSP pilot
- the valuable feedback provided in 2024 (initial evaluation of the program)

Response to recommendations:
- "The CRSP is a six year pilot running from 2024-2029"
- "A more comprehensive review of program outcomes is planned toward the end of the pilot"...
- "ICPA (and other stakeholders) will again be invited to contribute input as part of the review process"

In Addition
"A broader dataset on student outcomes and experiences will be available" (if the review is completed toward the end of the pilot)
"This evaluation will help inform advice to the Minister for Education on the future of the program, as well as on other initiatives supporting students in regional areas."

A3. Queensland State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government and all relevant departments for the permanent establishment of a Rural Hardship Education Fund (REHF) to support rural and remote families eligible for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance to meet educational costs during times of unforeseen and unprecedented natural disasters."

Included are some excerpts from the letter to the Prime Minister:

... *"ICPA(Aust) call on the Australian Federal Government and all relevant departments for the permanent establishment of a Rural Hardship Education Fund (RHEF), to support rural and*

remote families eligible for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance to meet educational costs during times of unforeseen and unprecedented natural disasters.
The development of a permanent RHEF would provide emergency relief to families eligible for the AIC allowance in disaster-stricken regions, ensuring their children have access to schooling, tertiary and trade opportunities and provide relief to parents who are educating their children via Schools of Distance Education when their families are struggling to recover.
Recommendations:

- *A permanent Rural Hardship Education Fund (RHEF) is established to provide financial assistance to rural and remote families ensuring their children can continue their education during and after periods of natural disasters and to reduce educational disadvantage.*
- *The RHEF is linked directly to the Assistance for Isolated Children allowance to ensure timely identification of children enrolled and educated via Schools of Distance Education or Geographically Isolated areas."*

On the 26th March 2026, ICPA Australia received correspondence from the Minister for Education, The Hon. Jason Clare.
included is an excerpt of this letter for your information:
... *"The Department of Education provides support for families and early childhood education and care services in an emergency, including bushfires, cyclones, and floods. This includes gap fee waivers, additional absences and support for service closures. Further information is available at:*
www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/providers/extra-support/ememency

The $1.2 billion Choice and Affordability Fund assists non government schools affected by unexpected special circumstances such as drought, bushfires and other natural disasters.
The fund is administered by independent and Catholic non government representative bodies (NGRBs) on the basis that those most directly connected to schools are best placed to determine the relative need..."

Though this reply does not specifically mention the term you have used (REHF) in your motion, the response and information provided by Minister Clare may provide you with a path to investigate moving forward with your pursuit of the motion.
I have not yet received any direct correspondence from the Prime Minister on this matter.
If this changes, or we receive correspondence regarding this Motion from other Ministers or Departments, we will be in touch with their feedback.
In addition, Federal Council are taking opportunities during various meetings to discuss and raise awareness for support of this motion.

A4. Tambo Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and relevant ministers to ensure that the Commonwealth's recurrent school funding model includes provisions for boarding schools to receive a Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemption on accommodation provided to essential boarding staff, where the school accommodates students from remote and very remote areas as defined by the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) score."

On the 26th September 2025 ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Financial
Services regarding your motion. We would like to share an expert from the letter that was sent:

...“Exemption of the FBT Should be based on the children’s location of origin, not the location of the school. ICPA(Aust) considers that the following mechanisms be employed as the framework to identify what is considered remote:
1) Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance
2) Accessibility / Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) Score
Recommendations:

- *Ensure that the Commonwealth’s recurrent school funding model includes provisions for boarding schools to receive a Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemption on accommodation provided to essential boarding staff, where the school accommodates students from remote and very remote areas as defined by the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) score.*
- *The Federal Government support and advise the Treasury to change the policy on Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) to provide an exemption for schools with boarding facilities for essential boarding school staff required to live on site to perform their duty of care for residential students in metropolitan boarding institutions.*
- *The Treasury enable all Boarding Facilities who have students enrolled from rural and remote areas (identified through the Assistance for Isolated Children, AIC) to require that they are exempt from FBT under the existing guidelines: 58ZC Exempt Benefits – Remote Area Housing Benefits (on campus accommodation)”...*

To date, we have not received a direct reply to the letter sent on the 26th September 2025.
Please note ICPA(Aust) continued and historical advocacy on this issue.
Previous correspondence includes:
23rd September 2024 ICPA(Aust) wrote to Hon Anthony Albanese PM outlining the need for an exemption of the Fringe benefits Tax (FBT) for schools providing on site accommodation for essential supervising staff.
9th October 2024 ICPA(Aust) attended face to face delegation in Caberra to discuss this issue at length with (over 20) Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives.
4th February 2025 ICPA(Aust) wrote to Hon Anthony Albanese PM and Minister of Education, Jason Clare, to further highlight this issue and share increased support from Boarding School across Australia and other like-minded organisations such as the Australian Boarding Schools Association.
ICPA(Aust) remains focused on keeping this item on our agenda until we can reach an outcome for this issue.

A5. ICPA Federal Council

"That ICPA(Aust) advocate that the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) continue discussions with the Federal Government to lobby for a Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemption for schools/boarding facilities providing on site living facilities for essential supervising staff who must live on site"

For many years ICPA Australia and other constituents, including ABSA, have been shining a light on the FBT issues that impact financial strain on families who are sending their children to boarding school because local secondary options are limited, not available or not suitable for their child.
In the lead up to the 2025 Federal Conference, ABSA played a key role in providing a direct link to boarding facilities across Australia to assist in our information gathering. This allowed us to present key information to the Australian government and further our mission to have FBT exempt from boarding facilities who provide on site living facilities for essential supervisory staff.
Moving forward, we will work with ABSA to advocate to the Federal Government for the real & meaningful results in this area.

A6. Louth Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant ministers to support the removal of the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) for businesses who would like to provide financial assistance to employees residing in geographically isolated areas to enable their children to attend board school."

On the 26 September 2025, we wrote to the Minister for Financial Services regarding your motion.
We would like to share an expert from the letter that was sent by ICPA(Aust):

..."Currently, when employers offer financial assistance towards the cost of schooling, the payment is deemed a 'Fringe Benefit' and taxed at their applicable rate of 47%.
Any contribution made by the employer is compounded with almost half of the amount again in tax.
The cost of accessing compulsory education for geographically isolated children should not be taxed, irrespective of who is bearing the cost.
Affordable access to boarding schools for employees who work in remote areas provides their children with equitable access to school facilities as those in non-remote regions.
It also serves to keep valuable families in remote Australia, supporting an already challenged workforce."

<u>Recommendations:</u>
Removal of the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) for businesses who would like to provide financial assistance to employees residing in geographically isolated areas, to enable their children to attend boarding school...."
To date, we have not received a direct reply to the letter sent on the 26 September 2025.
Please note ICPA(Aust) continued and historical advocacy on this issue.

<u>Previous correspondence regarding FBT includes</u>:

23rd September 2024 ICPA(Aust) wrote to Hon Anthony Albanese PM outlining the need for an exemption of the Fringe benefits Tax (FBT) for schools providing on site accommodation for essential supervising staff.

9th October 2024 ICPA(Aust) attended face to face delegation in Caberra to discuss this issue at length with (over 20) Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

4th February 2025 ICPA(Aust) wrote to Hon Anthony Albanese PM and Minister of Education, Jason Clare, to further highlight this issue and share increased support from Boarding School across Australia and other like-minded organisations such as the Australian Boarding Schools Association.

ICPA(Aust) remains focused on keeping this item on our agenda until we can reach an outcome for this issue.

ICPA(Aust) will be contacting the Minister for Financial Services again to request comment and will keep you updated with any future correspondence.

A7. South Australia State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the federal government to significantly increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance so that it more accurately reflects the real and rising cost of boarding school education for geographically isolated students."

The gap between the AIC BBA and actual cost of boarding continues to widen, increasing the financial burden faced by rural families.
Boarding fees increased annually by 4% to 8%, yet the BBA only increased by 3.79% in 2025.
This is not fair, nor is it equitable.
Members continue to have their most basic needs ignored when it comes to accessing and providing an education to their children.
The Basic Boarding Allowance must align with the rising costs of boarding.
Attending Boarding School for secondary education, for many geographically isolated students, is their only option. Boarding school fees continued to rise due to increasing operational costs including staffing, accommodation, transport and pastoral care. Meanwhile, the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance (BBA) has seen only minimal adjustments over the years, resulting in a growing gap between the financial support provided on the actual expenses to the family space.
This widening gap places an unsustainable burden on isolated families and erodes their educational choices. As an equity measure, the AIC must be sufficient to ensure that students living in remote and rural areas can access quality education on a level playing field with their urban peers.
Without adequate support, families are forced to make difficult decisions that may compromise their children's educational opportunities, well-being and stability.
If the Federal Government is serious about delivering equitable access to education for all Australian children, regardless of post code, it must commit to a meaningful increase to the AIC BBA and index it appropriately to reflect ongoing increases.

A8. South Australia State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to Services Australia and the federal government for a review of the eligibility criteria for the Additional Boarding Allowance under the Geographically Isolated (GI) category of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) scheme so that entitlement is determined solely on the basis of actual boarding costs incurred as a family, without being subject to parental income testing."

The Additional Boarding Allowance (ABA), currently capped at $2965 per student annually, is designed to support families whose boarding school expenses exceed the AIC BBA. However, access to this component is currently means tested based on parental income, regardless of the actual financial burden incurred.
Many families who do not meet the income threshold for the **ABA** still struggle to meet the genuine increasing cost of boarding. This income test unfairly penalises families who may appear ineligible on paper but are experiencing substantial financial stress due to high boarding costs and additional educational expenses.
The purpose of the AIC scheme is to provide equitable access to education for geographically isolated students. To uphold this principle, the **ABA** should be based on demonstrated boarding costs, not on parental income. Removing the means test would better reflect the true cost of accessing education for isolated families and ensure that the support provided meets their actual need.

A9. Broken Hill Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for changes within the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) criteria to address the inequity of assistance provided to Geographically Isolated (GI) students"

ICPA members would like the Government to recognise that families who live in significantly geographically isolated areas face greater challenges and barriers when accessing education for their children because of where they live and work. Their ability to access equitable education opportunities is greatly affected.
In its current format, the eligibility criteria for the assistance available for families does not recognise the significant and unique challenges, therefore families strongly believe that a more equitable approach would be to have an additional criterion for significantly geographically isolated students within the AIC. An additional, significantly geographically isolated category would only be applicable to those families who live a certain distance from their nearest education facility and where there is no option for transport to any educational facility.
All rural and remote families face challenges when educating their children, but the vast distances and additional costs that families in significantly geographically isolated areas face clearly demonstrate that equal assistance does not ensure equity of access.

Members of the Broken Hill Branch (NSW):
46% of members live in excess of 100km from their closest secondary school.
50% of members have over 50km of unsealed roads to access secondary school.
All Members travel at least 600km round trip to their closest boarding school.

The ICPA (Aust) calls on Government to:
Acknowledge boarding facilities as essential education infrastructure for rural and remote students.
Increase and secure, long-term operational funding, particularly for facilities supporting First Nations and geographically, isolated students.
Reduce the financial burden on families by increasing boarding related allowances and subsidies.
Support culturally appropriate pastoral care and well-being programs for borders to ensure students thrive while living away from home.
If Australia is committed to improving outcomes and closing the gap for regional and remote students, it must begin with fully funding the services that make education possible, starting with boarding.

Moving towards a solution:
The Australian Federal Government needs to implement the necessary legislation and funding to stand by its statement…"ensuring that every child regardless of socioeconomic background or geographical location has access to high quality education…"
The AIC Basic Boarding Allowance is an Education ACCESS payment and should be treated as such by every level of Government.
The AIC Basic Boarding Allowance needs to remain equitable, allowing isolated parents' choice in education that is equivalent to their city counterparts.
Boarding School fees continue to rise at a greater rate than CPI. The alignment of the AIC - Basic Boarding Allowance to the Education Sub-Index would ensure the allowance does not erode overtime and would more closely reflect the true costs of educational expenses.

Recommendations:

– Policy Costing 14th March 2025 (Option 1) Assistance for Isolated Children, Basic Boarding Allowance be aligned to the Consumer Price Index: Education Sub-Index
– Policy Costing 14th March 2025 (Option 2) Restore the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance to cover at least 55% of the average cost of boarding (and no less than $4000) as was its original intent when created in 1973.
– Federal Government review the eligibility criteria for the Additional Boarding Allowance (ABA) under the Geographically Isolated (GI) category of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) scheme, so that the entitlement is determined solely on the basis of actual boarding costs incurred as a family, without being subject to parental income testing.
– The Federal Government review the eligibility criteria for Geographically Isolated under the AIC and explore options for the creation of "Significantly Geographically Isolated" category.
Closing:
It is now more critical than ever for ICPA(Aust) to highlight the concerns of its members who live, work, and educate their children in some of the most remote locations in Australia.
You have been elected to office by the Australian people, to advance our country.
ICPA (Aust) are the voice of families and children from rural, remote and geographically isolated Australia. Our Children have the right to have equitable access to education, and you have the ability and our support to do so. Please implement our recommendations..."

On the 24th November 2025, a reply was received by Minister Plibersek (**MC25-007460)**

..." We acknowledge the particular barriers facing rural and remote families including the extra costs to board children away from home when they do not have access to an appropriate local school. The payments you refer to seek to address these challenges.

The Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme (AIC) provides contributions towards costs incurred by families in accessing schooling where there is no appropriate local schooling option. AIC allowances are available to families of children who have reached the minimum primary school entry age for their state or territory.

The Basic and Additional Boarding Allowances under AIC are intended to help with additional costs incurred by isolated families in boarding a student away from home. As you note they are not set to cover a particular percentage of boarding costs but are indexed annually in line with the Consumer Price Index to maintain relative value.

The Additional Boarding Allowance is intended to provide additional support for lower income families.
Parental income testing for the Additional Boarding Allowance considers the number of dependent children in the family, with higher cut-offs linked to the number of children. This income testing arrangement reflects long standing arrangements in the social security system to target support to those most in need....

We acknowledge your detailed motions in relation to the levels of these payments and eligibility for access to them we will retain your correspondence to inform future government consideration of these options.
State and Territory governments also provide a range of allowances eligible rural and remote families can access in addition to AIC allowances to assist with boarding school costs"...
Advocacy regarding AIC, BBA & ABA continues to provide ICPA(Aust) with significant challenges in regard to 'cut-through' and enacting the changes we desperately seek. With your motions and our ability to provide recommendations directly to Ministers and Departments who

help shape Federal policy and financial mechanisms we will keep forging ahead with the task at hand.

It is endlessly frustrating that we continue to be stuck in this cycle without resolving the AIC discussion.

ICPA(Aust) are open to investigating new approaches to this issue and remain optimistic that the years of tireless effort at all ICPA levels (branch, state & federal) the membership will one day see these motions resolved.
Please reach out if you would like to discuss other angles or additional information, we can submit to Min. Plibersek.

We are attending face-to-face meetings in Canberra in mid-May and we would be happy to take specific examples with me to support the information I have previously shared with the Minister. Any individual example should have names removed and include the area of the family for reference.
Eg: family 1 lives 400km from their closest town (Alice Springs) and sits within the Federal seat of Lingiari.... Son (yr9) ... Daughter (y11) ...

After the Federal Conference concluded, ICPA(Aust) set to work to compile a robust joint letter in regard to Motions: A7, A8, A9 & S3.

Here is a detailed excerpt from my letter to Minister Plibersek:
..."Federal Government Commitment:
In April 2025, ICPA(Aust) received correspondence from the Prime Minister and Cabinet, stating that: "The Government is committed to ensuring that every child regardless of socioeconomic background or geographical location has access to high quality education".

Despite this strong, supportive commitment, our members children, continue to be disadvantaged due to the in-action of the Federal Government to stand by their statement or apply our recommendations to the issues faced by our members in accessing education for their children.

Families in Crisis – help needed to access education:
ICPA Members agree with the Prime Minister and Cabinet; Children in rural and remote locations across Australia should not be disadvantaged by distance or geographical location, especially when they have no other option for secondary education.
Some of these students live hundreds of kilometers from their closest town and high school.
Some of these students have no high school options in their small town / community.
Yet, these families are not adequately financially supported, to access compulsory secondary education.

S1. Far North Queensland Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Services Australia to assess the payment times for the AIC applications for Year 12 students, to coincide with the beginning of Term Four so parents are able to budget for the balance owing at the completion of the senior school year."

Following the conference, September 2025, ICPA(Aust) wrote to The Minister for Social Services, Minister Tanya Plibersek, to request that the timing of the AIC Payment be reviewed.
Included are some excerpts from our correspondence below:

...*"Over the past 2 years ICPA(Aust) have been working closely with Services Australia and the Department of Social Services by engaging in quarterly 'on-air' meetings, regular emails and annual face to face meetings to discuss an update / change in the timing of AIC payments (especially yr.12 students)*

During these discussions, ICPA(Aust) have demonstrated support from families across Australia who have been negatively affected by the in-efficient timing of the AIC payments (especially for yr. 12 students)
ICPA(Aust) membership have presented and supported consecutive motions to the ICPA Federal Conference supporting a change in the timing of AIC payments. Members are looking to you to support and help direct the relevant department to implement these changes...

<u>Australian families speak up</u>
Receiving the final Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) payment earlier (especially for yr.12 students) would allow parents and caregivers to have their accounts finalised prior to Week 3, Term 4, when a lot of non-ATAR school leavers are graduating and schools require accounts to be settled.

Updating the timing of AIC payments (see potential solutions below) would alleviate overpayments and assist with more accurate budgeting for families.

<u>Moving towards a Solution</u>
It has been suggested that in order to complete and resolve this request, the Department of Social Services will need to complete a policy change.
The reality is, families are not concerned how the change is implemented, Australian families are in support of the solutions provided above and effort to implement this change in a timely matter will be appreciated.

<u>Recommendations</u>
Payment of Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) (especially students in Year 12).
Suggested Options:
1. *The 4th AIC installment to occur at the beginning of Term 4.*
2. *An option of 3 AIC payments (instead of 4) for students in Year 12."*

ICPA(Aust) received a reply 17th October 2025, from the Department of Social Services (DSS):
... *"The Department of Social Services (the Department) appreciates ongoing engagement with the ICPA(Aust) on ways to improve the AIC policy and student outcomes.*
I am aware of the issue you raise regarding the financial impact on families due to compressed invoicing arrangements for boarding students and note the recent discussions around proposed changes to AIC Scheme allowance payment timeframes.
The Department continues to work with Services Australia to investigate possible solutions to reduce impacts on families and will provide you with updates in our quarterly meetings, or out of session as required.
Thank you again for writing"...

ICPA(Aust) have an update from the face-to-face meeting held on 6th November 2025 with DSS & SA in Canberra.

..."*Most feasible option = bring Term 4 payment forward. Working through systems impacts and potential costs with tech delivery partners*"...

We are hopeful that the group of people who ICPA(Aust) meet with regularly, within DSS & Services Australia, continue to press forward to bring this motion issue/ask to fruition.
As indicated in their reply, the DSS is leaning to Recommendation 1;
The 4th AIC BBA installment to occur at the beginning of Term 4.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to keep this item on our standing agenda and up-date you with progress on this issue.

S2. Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) lobby the Minister for Social Services and Services Australia to reduce the claim processing times for ABSTUDY"

The Director of Abstudy and AIC Programs was in attendance during the Federal Conference and commented to the floor in regard to this motion.
ICPA(Aust) enjoys the opportunity to hold quarterly meetings with Services Australia, Department of Social Services and other key stakeholders.
It is during these important meetings that we can discuss motions put forward at conference.
On the 16th February the Boarding Portfolio received an email from the (then) director of Abstudy and AIC Programs, Josh Graham.

Please see some excerpts from the Abstudy Director email:

"I am formally writing to you in respect of motion S2...
I can confirm Services Australia have invested in a staff upskill into ABSTUDY that has resulted in claim processing times to exceed KPI (70% claims processed within 21 days) constantly since August 2025.
I am confident the lengthy wait time that ABSTUDY students received historically will no longer be a feature and can recommend the retirement of the relevant motion. "

We appreciate the swift action taken by Services Australia in dealing with this issue and unless there are further issues with this service, would like to deem this **Motion S2 resolved**.

S3. ICPA Federal Council

"That ICPA(Aust) advocate to all levels of government for increased and sustainable funding to ensure the viability and accessibility of remote boarding facilities for students from rural and remote areas"

ICPA(Aust) must be congratulated for their hundreds of volunteer hours of dedication and unwavering determination to ensure a brighter future for rural and remote children who are simply trying to access education from some of the most challenging environments in Australia.
ICPA consistently carry members voices, concerns and issues (relating to access of education) to all levels of government and consistently demonstrate their ability to have an audience with Ministers, Senators, Directors of Departments, Services Australia, Social Services and be included in intimate high-level, round table discussions.

ICPA(Aust) have ensured that the 'voice of the bush' is respected and sort after from Ministers in Canberra to the radio station & newspaper in your local town. There is always more to do, ICPA(Aust) have ensured the internal framework and support exists to ensure their advocacy will continue into the future.

Communications Portfolio

A10. Kindon Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government and all stakeholders to address the continuing decline of mobile coverage in rural areas which affects small rural schools and rural school bus services.

Following the 2025 Federal Conference, ICPA (Aust) wrote to Telstra raising your members' issues and received a detailed reply.

"Telstra acknowledges the concerns raised by the Kindon Branch regarding mobile coverage challenges following the closure of the 3G network. We understand the critical importance of reliable connectivity for regional and remote communities, particularly for education, safety, and access to essential services.

The retirement of 3G was a necessary step to modernise our network and repurpose the 850MHz spectrum to improve 4G and 5G services. This transition has enabled us to improve capacity and speeds at thousands of mobile sites across Australia. However, we recognise that these improvements have not been evenly felt, and some areas continue to face challenges.

We note that the Wyaga and Captains Mountain towers, which service the Kindon area, have experienced growing demand since the 3G shutdown. We are continuing to explore other opportunities and options for site upgrades and uplift capacity in regional areas such as Kindon. A small cell solution is being assessed in collaboration with the Goondiwindi Council and the Department of Education with an aim to add capacity to help improve the customer experience in this location.

Telstra has also been actively working with the Queensland Department of Education to improve connectivity for schools like Kindon State School. This includes:

- *Installation of mobile repeaters to extend 4G coverage on school grounds. *Note that the use of signal Boosters remains illegal and is a source of wider signal and customer experience degradation. Only carrier certified Repeaters can safely improve mobile reception without causing detriment to another user*
- *Deployment of Starlink-bonded solutions, which were commissioned in September 2024 to provide more reliable internet access."*

Telstra also provided additional information regarding other improvements with their network that I have included for your information.

Telstra launched Satellite Messaging via Starlink Satellite-to-Mobile earlier this year, which is now available on all Telstra Upfront Mobile Plans (compatible mobile device required). While messaging is only available at present, as this technology evolves, they anticipate the service to expand to voice calling and low-speed data in the future.

Telstra have conducted extensive in-field drive testing, rigorous network data checks, and engaged independent benchmarking through Umlaut within Accenture—the same firm selected by the Federal Government for its mobile coverage audit. Telstra continue to monitor both network data and customer feedback and investigate any reported substantial differences in coverage.

Telstra acknowledge that some customers live or travel in areas outside their predicted mobile network footprint. Also, this was true prior to the 3G closure and remains a reality due to the

inherent variability of terrestrial mobile coverage. For those outside their footprint, Telstra offers alternative solutions including:

- Telstra Mobile Satellite services via the Iridium network
- Satellite Messaging via Starlink (SMS only, included in all Telstra Upfront Mobile Plans, with compatible mobile devices)
- Wi-Fi calling using Starlink internet data services

Telstra admit that it is possible some customers may have previously accessed 3G services outside their predicted coverage areas due to favourable signal conditions. This 3G coverage was not reflected in their maps because it's vulnerable to various factors that affect wireless signals. These factors include minor changes in customer use or device types, local vegetation growth, the appearance of new buildings, and user traffic. Telstra suggest customers seeking to improve connectivity might consider using Blue Tick devices or installing Telstra Go Repeaters, which can help enhance mobile signal reception and overall experience.

Telstra remain committed to working with customers to identify the best-fit solutions for their needs. Telstra encourage anyone experiencing connectivity issues contact their Regional and 3G Helpline on 1800 990 853, available 7 days a week from 7am to 11pm AEST. Their regionally based agents understand the realities of living and working in remote Australia and are trained to troubleshoot and escalate issues as needed.

Telstra welcomes ongoing dialogue with ICPA and affected communities to clarify concerns, provide updates, and work together to deliver reliable telecommunications services that meet the needs of rural and remote Australians.

Federal Council will continue to progress and raise the profile of our members' issues at every opportunity and advocate that internet connectivity and reliable voice services are a key priority for ICPA (Aust) members and seek assurance regarding access for the purpose of education.

A11. Katherine Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Minister for Communications to ensure all rural and remote students have adequate internet access regarding reliability, speed, quality, and cost of the service."

and

A12. Katherine Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Minister of Communication to ensure Telstra meets their Universal Service Guarantee of providing quality, efficient, and reliable voice services to rural and remote premises to access education, including fixed address pastoral leases, remote communities, and remote roadhouses."

Following the 2025 Federal Conference, ICPA (Aust) wrote to the Hon Anika Wells MP, Minister for Communications, citing all communication motions carried at the conference.

Minister Wells is new to the Communications Portfolio, having previously been the Minister for Aged Care, and when appointed to the portfolio a lot of her existing staff accompanied her. ICPA (Aust) included an introduction to our organisation and expressed our appreciation for our interactions with the former Minister for Communications and looked forward to continuing our relationship with the Australian Government.

Unfortunately, to date we have not received a reply to motion A11. ICPA (Aust) will be following this up and will provide an update on any future correspondence received.

ICPA (Aust) also wrote to Telstra regarding motion A12. We received a very detailed response which I have summarised below.

In their response:

1. Telstra acknowledged the importance of reliable voice services for education access in regional and remote communities. Telstra expressed that they remain committed to meeting their obligations under the Universal Service Guarantee (USG) and ensuring that all Australians—regardless of location—can access dependable voice services.

2. Telstra supports reforms that modernize the USO to reflect current technologies and community needs. In their submission to the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC), they advocated:

    - Replacing outdated copper networks with modern alternatives such as mobile and satellite voice services.
    - Aligning USO and Statutory Infrastructure Provider (SIP) standards to ensure consistency and reliability. (The 2024 RTIRC report, released in December 2024, recommended the Federal Government expedite modernising the USO and the Statutory Infrastructure Provider (SIP) regime by merging them into a unified service obligation. They also recommended the modernised USO be technology neutral).
    - Maintaining public phone infrastructure in areas where it remains essential. Telstra have invested $7.5 million to upgrade over 1,000 payphones in disaster-prone areas in all States and Territories, including more than 100 payphone upgrades in remote First Nation communities. These upgrades include providing backup power, free Wi-Fi access, and USB charging ports to enhance connectivity when a disaster strikes.

3. Telstra is actively working to improve service quality and resilience in remote areas through:

    - Upgrades to mobile networks, including transitioning sites to 4G and 5G, where feasible. Over the last 5 years their 4G coverage has been more than doubled including 360,000 sq. km. of entirely new coverage (added since 2021) while over the same 5-year period their 5G has been expanded from a handful of metro sites to now reach around 95% of the population including coverage in over 500 regional towns, and this expansion is ongoing.
    - Leveraging satellite innovations, such as Low Earth Orbit (LEO) technologies, to enhance coverage and reliability.
    - Supporting backup power solutions to help provide continuity during adverse weather conditions, particularly for education-critical services.

4. Telstra continues to invest in initiatives that support rural education, including:

    - A$187 million partnership with the Queensland Government to deliver faster internet to public schools, with speeds reaching up to 5Mbps per student by 2026. (Given this motion is from the NT, I am unsure why this information was even provided!)

5. Telstra value their relationship with ICPA and remain committed to:

    - Listening to community feedback and addressing service gaps through direct engagement.
    - Collaborating with government and industry to ensure funding and policy frameworks support rural, regional and remote connectivity.

- Providing transparent updates on network changes and support options, including through our webpage and regional helpline.

6. Telstra is committed to partnering and contributing so that all Australians—regardless of geography—can participate fully in the digital world. For families in isolated and remote areas, this means not only providing connectivity but also working collaboratively with governments, industry and the community sector to provide them with skills and support to use it confidently and safely.

7. Telstra will continue to advocate for a modern, inclusive, and resilient voice service framework that meets the needs of remote Australians—especially those relying on connectivity for education. Telstra welcomes ongoing dialogue with ICPA and government stakeholders.

Despite Telstra's continued assurances that they remain committed to meeting their obligations under the Universal Service Guarantee (USG) it is imperative that all future developments meet the needs of rural and remote families.

Federal Council will continue to progress and raise the profile of our members' issues at every opportunity and advocate that internet connectivity and reliable voice services are a key priority for ICPA (Aust) members and seek assurance regarding access for the purpose of education.

S4. Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) thank the Federal Government and previous Minister for Communications (the Hon Michelle Rowland), nbn and the Low Income and Digital Inclusion Forum (LIDIF) for the nbn School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI) that benefited many rural and remote students"

S5. Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government that the current Regional, Rural and Remote student nbn School Student Broadband Initiative recipients continue to benefit from this initiative beyond the end of June 2028 to ensure that these students continue to receive free internet for the entirety of their educational journey."

and

S6. Mt Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate the Federal Government for an expansion of the nbn School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI)for Regional, Rural and Remote students."

Following the 2025 Federal Conference, ICPA (Aust) wrote to the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, former Minister for Communications, thanking her and the Government for the SSBI program and expressing our gratitude for the benefits it has provided rural and remote students.

We also wrote to the Hon Anika Wells MP, the new Minister for Communications providing her with the details of the program, how beneficial it has been for rural and remote students, and the concerns members have raised.

Nbn continue to be avid supporters of the SSBI but unfortunately have little influence over any further extension of the program. ICPA (Aust) have not received a reply, to date from the Minister, which we are in the process of following up. A number of other stakeholder groups are also experiencing frustration at the lack of engagement from the Minister. But we will persist!

Curriculum Portfolio

A13. Motion Lost

Distance Education Portfolio

A14. Northern Territory State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to add an additional loading category to the School Resourcing Standard (SRS) for Geographic Isolated (GI) students."

and

A15. South Australia State Council

"That ICPA (AUST) advocate to the Commonwealth Government to formally recognise geographically isolated students as a priority equity cohort by introducing a fifth student-based loading, a Geographically Isolated Student Loading, within the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS)."

Adding a fifth student-based loading for Geographically Isolated (GI) students to the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) is now reflected in Federal Council policy. It is an important step toward more equitable funding for our GI students. If it's achieved, it has the potential to create positive flow on effects across all areas of education for GI students.

Federal Council meets quarterly with the Department of Education (DoE), and at each meeting we continue to advocate for GI students to be recognised as a distinct category within the SRS.

A letter was sent to Meg Brighton, Deputy Secretary, Schools, to ensure ICPA (Aust) has a voice in discussions regarding the inclusion of GI students in the SRS loadings. In her response dated 9 January 2026, Ms Brighton advised that ICPA (Aust) will have the opportunity to participate in the review process. The review is expected to be settled by mid-2027, with a final report due to Education Ministers by mid-2029.

This matter remains a key priority for Federal Council, and we will continue to advocate strongly at our quarterly meetings.

Federal Council welcomes any feedback or additional information from members to further support this advocacy.

A16. Northern Territory State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) support the formation of a Distance Education Supervision subsidy (name is not important) to assist geographically isolated families whose only choice for their children is Distance Education."

A17. Alice Springs Branch (NT) *DEEMED COVERED By A16*

"That ICPA (Aust) continue to advocate to the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance, in recognition of the

essential role that the home tutor plays in educating rural and remote students via distance education."

A18. Katherine Branch (NT) *DEEMED COVERED By A16*

"That ICPA (Aust) continue to advocate to the Federal Government to establish an allowance / subsidy for families in recognition of the cost families bear in providing the compulsory home tutor when educating rural and remote students via distance education."

A19. New South Wales State Council *DEEMED COVERED By A16*

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Social Services to provide funding for a Distance Education Supervisors Subsidy (DESS) to be paid per term to eligible geographically isolated families for safely and actively supervising students in a home classroom."

These motions represents one of our three key advocacy issues, Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor (RICS) and has been raised at all external stakeholder and Ministerial meetings. Federal Council spent a dedicated week in Canberra in November 2025 progressing this issue and continues to pursue it at every opportunity.

To date ICPA (Aust) has had two online roundtable meetings.

The first roundtable, held on Monday 27 October 2025, brought together 26 participants representing many sectors of Distance Education and the second meeting, held on Wednesday the 19 March 2026 looked at the three options collated by Commissioner Nash.

Both meetings were hosted by the Commissioner for Regional Education, Fiona Nash. Stakeholders included representatives from every state and territory education department, the Commonwealth Department of Education, the Australasian Association of Distance Education Schools (AADES), the Department of Social Services, the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), Federal Council ICPA, and all state and territory ICPA representatives.

The roundtables were well received by all participants, with strong support for progressing a clear pathway forward. The primary focus was geographically isolated children completing their schooling through Distance Education.

Commissioner Nash highlighted the challenges, opportunities, and barriers involved in establishing a RICS program (Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor). She emphasised the need to find a solution that recognises and values the work of supervisors supporting isolated children. Commissioner Nash has stated on several occasions that it is an injustice for supervisors not to be recognised and paid for their vital role.

Key points of note from the Roundtables:

- There are approximately 1,700 geographically isolated Distance Education students in Australia, representing around 850 DE classrooms.
- Remuneration should reflect the annual cost of having someone in the classroom.
- Clear criteria are essential to determine eligibility for payment, given the wide range of reasons for Distance Education enrolment.
- Recognition of industry is important. Australia relies on agriculture and resources located in rural and remote areas. Supporting Distance Education supports these industries and the communities that sustain them.
- Remuneration should acknowledge the skills required. DE supervisors undertake tasks such as resource preparation, lesson support, behaviour management, time management, and communication.

- Professional development opportunities for supervisors should be promoted to recognise their role and the value of education in rural and remote regions.

- The supervisor role is currently not formally recognised and does not appear on any job classification list, creating challenges for recognition of prior learning and award payment.
- Constitutionally, the Commonwealth has limited involvement in school operations. Supervision sits largely with the states and territories, which receive funding and determine how it is allocated.
- Three options were proposed following the initial roundtable:
  - A wage for the Classroom Supervisor
  - A new program providing an Isolated Supervisor Subsidy
  - An additional AIC subsidy for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor
- The advantages and challenges of each option were discussed.
- Commissioner Nash will collate feedback and provide further comments to ICPA (Aust) on all three options.

Updates will continue to be provided through the Federal Focus.

This matter remains a key priority for Federal Council. We will continue to advocate strongly for a pathway forward. Distance Education supervisors must be paid, legally and fairly by the Government. Their work is not voluntary.

Federal Council welcomes any feedback or additional information from members to further support this advocacy.

A20 MOTION LOST

A21. MOTION LOST

A22. Katherine Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Social Services for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children Distance Education Allowance to reflect and assist with the true cost of educating geographically isolated children where distance education is the only choice."

This issue continues to be a priority for Federal Council and remains firmly on the agenda at all delegations. We have updated our costings to support a case for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children Distance Education (AIC-DE) Allowance and will continue to advocate strongly for an increase at every opportunity. A letter was sent to the Minister for Social Services, however there has been no reply.

While we have been unable to secure a meeting with the Minister for Social Services, we were able to raise and discuss the true costs associated with Distance Education with the Minister for Education. We remain committed to pursuing this issue and will continue to advocate for a fair and accurate allowance that reflects the genuine cost of delivering Distance Education in remote Australia.

A23. Monaro Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education and the Department of Education to further enable Regional University Study Hubs (RUSH's) to provide support services with appropriate safeguards to local secondary students who are learning by distance."

Following the Conference, a letter was sent to the Hon. Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, requesting that appropriate safeguards and support services be put in place for secondary students accessing Regional University Study Hubs.

In his response, the Minister acknowledged the important role that RUSH's play in supporting regional and remote Australians to access and complete tertiary education. He noted that, in response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report, the Government committed $66.9 million to double the number of university study hubs across the country.

There are now 56 RUSH's located across Australia. Of these, 49 are operational and supporting students, with the remaining hubs expected to open later this year. While the RUSH program primarily focuses on tertiary students, many hubs also provide informal support to secondary students, such as access to quiet study spaces and internet. These are subject to local context, safety considerations, and capacity. This is in addition to the aspiration building activities that hubs undertake within their local communities.

As of June 2025, 300 secondary school students were being supported by Regional University Study Hubs.

A24. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) expand the publicity campaign for RREd Day to include key messaging, increase awareness, and reach a wider audience whilst boosting the visibility of being a home tutor in rural and remote areas."

Rural and Remote Education Day (RREd Day) was held on 9 October 2025, and this year's annual event will be held on 16 September 2026. Amazing photos were shared from across all rural and remote education settings, with particularly strong representation from Distance Education families. Federal Council will continue working to make this day bigger and better each year. If you have any ideas on how we can expand the publicity campaign to increase awareness and further promote the important role of home tutors/supervisors in rural and remote areas, we would love to hear from you.

F1. Katherine Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Employment, workplace relations and all other relevant Government agencies to recognise and implement a wage system for Home Tutors (HT) under suitable awards that reflects living and working in a remote and rural location regardless of industry."

Since my motion responses were compiled, I have attended an online forum with Skills Insight and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). They manage the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA), which replaced the former Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO).

Submissions for new wage classifications are due by 24 April 2026. ICPA (Aust) will be lodging a submission, however, this is a process that will need to be developed over time, as there is a significant amount of information to gather and analyse.

Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolio

A25. Bourke Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant Federal Ministers for funding to be sought to address Early Childhood Teacher pay parity to assist with access to early childhood education in rural and remote communities."

and
A26. Louth Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant Federal Ministers to amend the lack of salary parity between four year trained early childhood teachers and four year trained primary and high school teachers in rural and remote areas."

and

A27. Tambo Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to develop and implement targeted incentives to attract and retain early childhood educators in rural and remote areas, to ensure the sustainability and reliability of early childhood and care services in these regions."

A sustainable workforce remains one of the sector's biggest challenges. The government has introduced a **15 percent wage increase for ECEC workers**, supported through a $3.6 billion worker retention payment to improve recruitment and retention. Despite these measures, providers continue to report shortages of qualified educators, particularly in regional and remote communities.

A28. Katherine Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Minister for Social Services to urgently commit to increasing the In-Home Care (IHC) Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Hourly Rate Cap, to ensure that families with no alternative child care options are not forced to shoulder inequitable financial burdens."

The Federal Government acknowledges the importance of the In-Home Care program for families without access to other child care options, including many rural and remote families. However, current policy settings maintain the standard CCS hourly rate cap framework, with annual indexation applied across all care types.

While broader reforms to affordability and access in early childhood education and care are underway, a specific commitment to increasing the IHC CCS hourly rate cap beyond indexation has not been announced, meaning the issue raised in this motion remains an ongoing advocacy matter for organisations representing geographically isolated families.

A29. Cunnamulla Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education to act on recommendations from the 2023 In Home Care (IHC) review, The Parenthood's Choiceless report, and the ACCC 2023 Childcare Inquiry, and develop a tailored In Home Care (IHC) system for geographically isolated families that effectively delivers fit for purpose, financially sustainable, quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) to rural and remote families. "

The Federal Government acknowledges the findings of the 2023 IHC Review, The Parenthood report and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission inquiry and recognises the importance of ensuring the In-Home Care program meets the needs of families in rural and remote Australia.

However, rather than committing to a standalone tailored IHC system, the Government is progressing broader ECEC reforms, with the IHC program to be considered within this wider policy framework.

A30. Katherine Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education amend the In-Home Care rules for families in remote areas to allow:

1. ***An educator to care for children from more than one family at the same time.***
2. ***An educator to care for their own child whilst caring for children from another family(ies) under In Home Care."***

The Federal Government acknowledges the access challenges faced by families in remote areas and the importance of maintaining flexible child care options such as the In-Home Care program. However, current program settings require educators to care for children from one family at a time and generally do not allow educators to care for their own children while providing subsidised care.

Any changes to these arrangements would require significant policy and regulatory amendments, and at present the Government has not indicated plans to introduce these specific changes. As such, the issues raised in this motion remain matters for ongoing advocacy, particularly in relation to improving flexibility and workforce availability for families in geographically isolated communities.

A31. Marree Air Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Early Childhood and the relevant departments for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services, to consider the unique needs of rural and remote families when it comes to the eligibility criteria for funding and benefits such as the Child Care Subsidy (CCS)."

and

A32. Balranald Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Education for continued funding and ongoing commitment into the early childhood sector in rural and remote Australia."

ICPA (Aust) notes that the Federal Government is already making significant and ongoing investments in the early childhood sector, including targeted support for rural and remote communities. The Federal Government recognises Early Childhood Education and Care as a national priority and has committed significant ongoing funding to improve

access, affordability and quality across the sector, including in rural and remote Australia. Through initiatives such as the Child Care Subsidy, Community Child Care Fund and Building Early Education Fund, the Government says it continues to support services and families in geographically isolated areas and remains committed to further reform and investment.

A33. Bourke Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to relevant Ministers for sufficient funding from streams such as the Community Childcare Fund (CCCF) Sustainability stream (or any other funding streams that may be similar), be made available for services in remote and very remote locations to meet their operational costs which are unable to be met through the Childcare Subsidy (CCS)/Parent Fee model."

In 2026, the government announced up to $106.9 million in new CCCF funding to support early childhood education and care services, particularly those in regional, rural and remote communities

Recent funding rounds provide grants for up to three years, extending the previous two-year support period to give services greater financial certainty.

This funding can be used for: covering operational costs during a transition to a viable model, supporting services operating in underserved or unserved markets**,** improving business practices for long-term financial sustainability, workforce training or backfilling staff.

The program runs on periodic competitive grant rounds, meaning funding is not automatically guaranteed each year for minor infrastructure or facility upgrades. The government acknowledges that some services cannot operate solely on CCS and parent fees.

The CCCF is specifically designed to address this issue.

However, the funding is grant-based and competitive, meaning many rural or remote services still face uncertainty and ongoing financial pressures.

A34. New South Wales State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for legislative change to section 5(1) of the Children (Education and Care Services) National Law to enable the provision of Early Childhood Preschool Programs on rural and remote school sites, available to both three- and four-year-olds, not governed by the school itself."

The Children (Education and Care Services) National Law is applied through state and territory legislation under a national partnership framework, rather than being solely a Commonwealth law. It is administered and regulated by states and territories, with national oversight provided through bodies such as the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (ACECQA)

As such, any amendment to Section 5(1) of the National Law would require: agreement of all states and territories, consideration through Education Ministers' meetings and national regulatory processes, legislative changes at the state and territory level, not just a decision of the Australian Government.

The Australian Government recognises that co-location of early childhood services on school sites can be an effective way to improve access in **rural and remote communities**, particularly where standalone services are not viable.

- The Government has supported similar approaches through:infrastructure funding that allows early learning services to be built on or near school sites**,** integrated service delivery models, particularly in regional and remote areas, broader efforts to increase
- preschool participation, especially in the year before school.

However, governance arrangements—such as whether a service is operated by a school or an independent provider—are typically determined by state and territory education systems and regulatory frameworks.

A35. Cunnamulla Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education and relevant early childhood organisations to deliver regular and reliable appropriate early childhood programs for highly vulnerable and remote locations across Australia."

The Federal Government is already investing in a range of programs to support early childhood education in vulnerable and remote communities, including targeted initiatives such as Connected Beginnings and funding through the CCCF.

However, ensuring that programs are regular, reliable and appropriate for each community remains an ongoing challenge, and the Government would consider this an area of continued reform and collaboration with states, territories and community organisations such as ICPA (Aust) and this remains an important area for continued advocacy and reform.

A36. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant Minister to establish funding to deliver mobile early learning programs to geographically isolated children, aged 0-5 year, who are currently without access to any such service because of where they live."

The Federal Government recognises the importance of providing early learning opportunities to children in geographically isolated areas and supports a range of programs aligned with the EYLF, including initiatives such as FaFT and Connected Beginnings.

While mobile early learning services are acknowledged as a potential solution, there has been no specific commitment to establish a dedicated national funding program for mobile early learning services, and such approaches would **generally be considered in partnership with states, territories and community organisations.** As no specific national program has been established this remains an area for ongoing advocacy.

A37. Bourke Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to relevant Ministers for funding to support the infrastructure needs of Community Based early childhood education providers to deliver Childcare and Preschool services in remote towns."

The Australian Government has acknowledged infrastructure shortages in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and has introduced several funding measures aimed at increasing the number of early learning facilities, including in regional and remote areas.

1**. BEEF - Building Early Education Fund** (major new infrastructure program) The main federal initiative addressing infrastructure is the Building Early Education Fund, a $1 billion program established to increase the supply of early childhood education and care services across Australia.

Key elements include:

- $500 million in capital grants to build new or expand existing ECEC centres.
- $500 million for a government build-own-lease model, where the Commonwealth may build facilities and lease them to providers.

Projects targeted to areas of need, including regional communities and locations with limited access to early learning services.

- **Disappointingly,** although infrastructure funding now exists, several limitations remain:
- Much of the Building Early Education Fund is aimed at larger providers, particularly those able to deliver multiple centres.
- Funding is competitive and project-based, not guaranteed for all remote communities.
- Small community-based services in very remote towns may still struggle to access capital funding or meet grant requirements.

A38. Bourke Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant Ministers for universal access to early childhood education and care in Rural and Remote Australia."

The Australian Government has stated that it intends to move toward a universal early childhood education and care (ECEC) system, but this goal has not yet been fully achieved. Current policy reforms are generally described as **"steps toward universal access"** rather than a fully universal system. The introduction of the Three Day Guarantee in January 2026, which provides all Child Care Subsidy-eligible families with at least three days of subsidised early learning each week, is considered a key step toward this goal; however, access to services and affordability challenges—particularly in rural and remote communities—remain ongoing issues.

A39. North West Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate for the extension of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance to include geographically isolated children enrolled in eligible pre-compulsory early childhood programs."

and

A40. Katherine Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance to be extended to include all Geographically isolated pre-school students enrolled in a distance education programme."

Following the 2025 Federal Conference, ICPA (Aust) wrote to Senator the Hon Dr Jess Walsh, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Youth, outlining the issues raised through this motion. The correspondence was also copied to several other ministers and senior departmental officials.

Disappointingly, ICPA (Aust) has not received a response from Senator Walsh or from those copied into the correspondence. The letter was resent; however, no replies have been received to date.

Through broader engagement in the early childhood sector, including involvement with organisations such as the **Minderoo Foundation** and the **Thrive by Five** campaign, it is clear that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) remain a major national policy priority in Australia. Governments are currently undertaking reforms aimed at improving access, affordability, safety and workforce sustainability across the sector.

While these developments represent positive progress, continued attention is required to ensure that reforms effectively address the needs of families living in regional, rural and remote communities. The examples of inequity highlighted in your motions are important in demonstrating the challenges faced by rural, remote and geographically isolated families.

ICPA (Aust) encourages Branches to continue advocating strongly on this issue by writing to their local sitting Federal Members of Parliament and Senators. Regular communication with elected representatives helps ensure the challenges faced by rural and remote families remain visible and encourages parliamentarians to raise these matters with their colleagues in Canberra.

Branches may also find value in maintaining strong connections and engagement with other rural organisations such as the **National Farmers' Federation** and the **Country Women's Association**, along with rural publications such as Graziher and the Stock Journal, so that concerns around Early Childhood Education and Care are reinforced through a coordinated, multi-organisational voice.

This multi-pronged approach helps ensure these issues continue to be highlighted at both local and national levels. ICPA (Aust) will continue to advocate for equitable access to Early Childhood Education and Care for all Australian children, regardless of where they live. **The ongoing involvement of Branches and State Councils—particularly through active participation at Federal Council and Federal Conference—is essential to maintaining strong, informed advocacy on behalf of rural, remote and geographically isolated families.**

Members are encouraged to continue sharing their experiences and perspectives when considering motions for Federal Conference, as this grassroots input plays a vital role in informing and strengthening ICPA (Aust's) advocacy for equitable educational opportunities for all Australian children.

S7. ICPA Federal Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education and the Commonwealth Department of Education for future Preschool Reform Agreements and national partnership agreements to include funding for, and the condition to provide an access payment to enhance funding equity for geographically isolated (GI) distance education preschool students."

Federal Council continually raises the issue of funding for distance education pre-school children across many sectors of the Australian Government and departments.

The Government states it is already investing heavily in preschool access and equity. However, this is being actioned using a uniform per-child funding and state-delivered models.

Federal Council will continue to advocate for a policy expansion and for Federal Government to work together with state and territories to achieve a more equitable outcome for distance education preschool children.

S8. ICPA Federal Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education and the Commonwealth Department of Education for a separate Geographically Isolated In Home Care (IHC) Early Education Service Delivery Price Project to accurately represent the actual cost of delivering IHC in geographically isolated homes."

The Australian Government continues to engage with ICPA (Aust) and other key stakeholders to explore how the IHC model can evolve to meet the needs of families and educators. The lived experience of our members assists greatly in our advocacy and continues to be vital in shaping effective and practical solutions for the ECEC sector.

Although the Federal Government acknowledge there is a problem, currently there is no support for a separate pricing project with the Government's considerations based within existing frameworks.

The Australian Government has stated that it intends to move toward a universal early childhood education and care (ECEC) system. Nevertheless, Federal Council will continue to raise awareness of the access challenges faced by families in remote areas and the importance of developing and maintaining a tailored, flexible, fit for purpose and affordable In-Home Care program

Rural Schools Portfolio

A41. Marla Oodnadatta Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant ministers to permit the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) for students travel to Canberra to be calculated from their geographical place of learning for rural and remote Students."

and

A42. Marla Oodnadatta Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant ministers for the additional loadings for the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) rates for students traveling to Canberra to be permanently implemented."

With regards to two conference motions dealing with PACER, we received acknowledgement from several Ministers and Senators and held productive discussions with Meg Brighton (Deputy Secretary for Education). Statistics indicate the increased loadings are having an impact on participation in the PACER program so there is appetite to make the loading permanent. It was also acknowledged the department would further consider other points raised such as distance travelled to point of departure in the upcoming review of PACER.

We took the opportunity to raise School Resourcing Standards with Meg Britton in other correspondence too and this is her response.

"Thank you for your letter of 12 December 2025 about the future Review of the Schooling Resource Standard Base and Calculations Methodology (SRS Review) and consideration of geographically isolated students.

The SRS Review is a National Enabling Initiative under the Better and Fairer Schools - Heads of Agreement and the terms of reference for the Review will be settled by mid-2027 with the final report due to Education Ministers by mid-2029.

The SRS is designed to assist schools with the additional costs and operational expenses regional and remote areas incur as their distance from metropolitan centres increases. It also recognises economies of scale available to larger, metropolitan schools may not be available for smaller regional and remote schools.

I appreciate the concerns expressed by ICPA about geographically isolated students. I anticipate consultation and submissions will form part of the SRS review process and I would encourage you to contribute once this commences. I will keep you abreast of the reviews planning at our regular Department and ICPA meetings."

ICPA (Aust) have been attending National Teaching Roundtables to ensure rural and remote contexts remain on the agenda.

S9. Goldfields Eyre (WA)

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the federal government for funding to be sought to further encourage and incentivise experienced teachers to take up contract and long term rural, regional and remote positions."

Follow conference a letter was sent to the Minister for Education. The response from the Ministers office is that The Australian Government is working with states, territories and non- government sectors though the Better and Fairer Schools agreements to prioritise academic success for students from regional and remote locations and build a strong and sustainable workforce.

The Department of Education convened a National Teacher Workforce Roundtable in September 2025.

ICPA (Aust) have been attending National Teaching Roundtables to ensure rural and remote contexts remain on the agenda.

Specific Education Needs Portfolio

A50. Julia Creek Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to allow NDIS participants attending boarding school to utilise funding for individual support workers within boarding facilities."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme regarding this motion.

A response was received from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) on behalf of the Minister.

The response outlined the current NDIS pricing framework, including how supports and travel costs are determined through the Annual Pricing Review. It noted that travel costs remain claimable within existing rules and that higher loadings apply in remote and very remote areas to reflect the additional costs of service delivery.

The NDIA also advised that further work is being undertaken through a therapy pilot under the Quality Supports program, which will help inform future approaches to pricing and service delivery.

While the response provided information on current pricing arrangements, it did not directly address the request to allow NDIS funding to be used for individualised support within boarding facilities.

ICPA(Aust) recognises this remains a significant gap for rural and remote families and will continue to advocate for equitable access to disability supports for students who must live away from home to attend school.

A51. South Australia State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for targeted funding for speech pathology services in rural and remote schools."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the relevant Ministers regarding this motion.

A response was received which acknowledged the challenges faced by rural and remote families in accessing timely paediatric services and broader workforce shortages.

The response outlined Government initiatives including the National Medical Workforce Strategy and the Specialist Training Program, which aim to improve the distribution and availability of specialist medical professionals over time.

While these initiatives support long-term workforce development, the response did not address the need for immediate, targeted funding for speech pathology services, particularly for students in distance education.

ICPA(Aust) recognises that access to speech pathology services remains a critical issue and will continue to advocate for targeted funding and improved service delivery for rural and remote students.

A52. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to ensure federally funded health clinics and physicians are accessible to all geographically isolated children."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Health and relevant departments regarding this motion.

A response was received from the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

The response acknowledged the importance of timely access to health services for rural and remote communities and outlined existing programs designed to support outreach services, including the Rural Health Outreach Fund and targeted programs for priority populations.

These programs support the delivery of medical and allied health services in regional and remote areas through outreach models and service planning undertaken at a jurisdictional level.

While the response outlined existing initiatives, it did not directly address the barriers raised in this motion regarding restricted access to federally funded clinics due to service eligibility criteria.

ICPA(Aust) recognises that access to timely diagnosis and treatment remains a significant issue and will continue to advocate for improved accessibility and accountability within federally funded health services.

A53. Hughenden Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) work with ABSA and relevant bodies to develop an information resource for families of children with specific education needs transitioning to boarding school."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) commenced engagement with the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) regarding this motion.

Progress has been made toward developing an information resource to support families navigating the transition to boarding school for children with specific education needs.

ICPA(Aust) recognises the importance of providing clear and practical information to families, particularly where boarding school is the only option for secondary education.

Work on this resource is ongoing, and ICPA(Aust) will continue to collaborate with ABSA and other stakeholders to progress this initiative and support families through this transition.

A54. Bourke Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to improve access to specialist paediatric services for geographically isolated children."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Health regarding this motion.

A response was received acknowledging the challenges faced by rural and remote families in accessing paediatric services and the impact of workforce shortages.

The response outlined Government initiatives including the National Medical Workforce Strategy and the Specialist Training Program, aimed at improving the distribution of specialist medical professionals over time.

While these initiatives demonstrate a commitment to strengthening the workforce, the response did not directly address the immediate barriers to accessing paediatric services in rural and remote areas.

ICPA(Aust) recognises that timely access to paediatric care remains a critical issue and will continue to advocate for improved access to specialist services for isolated children.

A55. Bourke Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for improved access to and utilisation of Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) funding."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme regarding this motion.

A response was received from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

The response acknowledged that access to NDIS supports in remote and very remote areas remains challenging due to distance, workforce shortages and infrastructure limitations.

The NDIA outlined measures introduced to improve service delivery, including dedicated teams providing end-to-end support for participants without local service partners, and initiatives to facilitate connections with providers and improve local service access.

While these measures aim to improve access, the response acknowledged that further work is required to ensure equitable service delivery.

ICPA(Aust) recognises that many families continue to face significant barriers in accessing early intervention services and will continue to advocate for practical solutions to improve utilisation of ECEI funding.

S10. New South Wales State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate against changes to NDIS travel allowances impacting rural and remote service delivery."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme regarding this motion.

A response was received from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

The response outlined that NDIS pricing arrangements are determined through the Annual Pricing Review and that travel remains a recognised and claimable cost within the framework.

It was noted that remote and very remote areas continue to receive higher loadings and are not subject to travel time caps, and that providers may still claim travel-related expenses within current guidelines.

The NDIA also advised that a new therapy pilot program will inform future pricing approaches.

While the response outlines current arrangements, it does not address concerns regarding reduced service availability in rural and remote areas as a result of travel limitations.

ICPA(Aust) recognises that access to allied health services remains a critical issue and will continue to advocate for equitable service delivery for students in geographically isolated communities.

Student Travel

A43. Northern Territory State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to work with all Australian airlines to offer capped or discount fares to families of Geographically Isolated students for travel to/from boarding school."

and

A44. South Australia State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant bodies to provide a subsidy for rural and remote boarding and tertiary students accessing flights in areas of Australia where no student fare is available."

and

A45. South Australia State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to work with regional airlines, including Regional Express (REX), to establish a national fixed-fare scheme for students required to travel to and from rural and remote areas for education purposes, similar to Queensland's 'Bush to Boarding' initiative."

and

A48. Alice Springs Branch (NT) *DEEMED COVERED by A43*

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant bodies for a 'Capped Student Fare' for rural and remote students attending educational institutions within Australia who need to travel between their home residence and the educational establishment they attend."

and

A49. Noth West Branch (SA) *DEEMED COVERED by A43*

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to work with commercial airlines servicing regional and remote areas across Australia to introduce equitable, capped student fares or establish discount codes for rural and remote school-aged children and tertiary students required to travel for educational purposes."

The above motions were all actioned cohesively. ICPA (Aust) sent a letter to the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, The Hon Catherine King, outlining the motions. Examples were provided and this letter was also sent to the Minister for Education, Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development as well as other relevant MP's / Senators.

A reply was received from Minister King's office in December 2025, directing us to an inquiry into the determinants of regional airfares to improve regional services, access to capital cities and reliability. Additionally, we were referred to the Remote Air Services Subsidy (RASS) Scheme

Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

It was noted that state and territory governments have primary responsibility for the economic regulation of intrastate regional and remote aviation and as such, we are advised to work with state and territory governments to discuss the affordability of airfares.

A46. Port Augusta Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to and work collaboratively with airlines servicing remote and regional areas to develop and implement a dedicated student airfare to support equitable access to education for geographically isolated students."

and

A47. Broken Hill Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for QANTAS, REX and other regional airlines to offer reduced, capped priced fares on available seats to rural and remote secondary, tertiary and TAFE students travelling between their place of education or training and their home at any time on any flight."

A letter was sent and we have not had a response from the transport minister to date.
School travel is under the control of state and territory governments, and I have discussed this with ICPA members at that level. It is a mixed bag as to what and how each state assists students travelling to school.
We recently met with and subsequently put a written submission to the Productivity Commission about "Regional Airfares". We specifically included capped school travel fares in that.

Tertiary Portfolio

A56. Tambo Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for improvements to the Youth Allowance application process."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the relevant Minister regarding this motion.

To date, no response has been received.

ICPA (Aust) recognises the challenges faced by rural and remote families when navigating the Youth Allowance application process, particularly in areas with limited internet connectivity and access to support services.

This issue remains on the agenda for upcoming meetings with Services Australia.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate for improvements to accessibility and usability of the system and will provide updates as further information becomes available.

A57. Louth Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for increased rent assistance for geographically isolated students."

And

A64. Port Augusta Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for a rural and remote rent assistance program independent of parental income."

Following the conference, ICPA (Aust) wrote to the relevant Minister regarding these motions.

A response was received from the Minister for Social Services in relation to rent assistance and broader support for rural and remote students.

The Minister acknowledged the financial pressures faced by families, particularly the significant costs associated with students needing to live away from home to access education.

The response outlined existing support available through the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme, including Basic and Additional Boarding Allowances, and noted that these payments are indexed annually and targeted through income testing arrangements.

While the response did not commit to the establishment of a new, dedicated rent assistance program as proposed, the Minister acknowledged ICPA(Aust)'s concerns and advised that this correspondence will inform future government consideration of these issues.

ICPA(Aust) recognises the significant financial burden of accommodation for rural and remote students and will continue advocating for increased and more equitable support in this area.

A58. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate regarding the timing of HELP debt indexation."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) raised this matter with the appropriate Ministers.

To date, no response has been received.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate on this issue until it is resolved.

A59. Balranald Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for streamlining the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) application process."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Education regarding this motion.

On the 23rd October 2025, a response was received from the Department of Education on behalf of the Minister.

The response acknowledged ICPA(Aust)'s advocacy on behalf of rural and remote students and clarified that the Department of Education is responsible for TAP policy settings, including program guidelines, while Services Australia administers the program and manages the end-to-end application process.

It was advised that Services Australia is responsible for customer communication, decision-making processes, complaints and feedback, and that any concerns regarding the application process should be directed to Services Australia.

While the response did not commit to specific changes to streamline the application process, it confirmed that Services Australia has dedicated TAP processing staff and is responsible for considering practical feedback and recommendations.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to engage with Services Australia to address operational issues raised in this motion and advocate for improvements to the accessibility and efficiency of the TAP application process.

A60. Julia Creek Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate the relevant government departments, ministers, and the tertiary sector to extend the Commonwealth Prac payments to include those studying medicine, veterinary and allied health degrees who undertake mandatory practicum placements in/from rural and remote areas."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Education outlining the concerns raised in this motion and advocating for action to address the challenges faced by rural and remote students.

At this time, no response has been received from the Minister.

While correspondence has highlighted the importance of equitable access and support for geographically isolated students, the absence of a response means the specific issues raised in this motion remain unaddressed.

ICPA(Aust) recognises the significance of this matter for rural and remote families and will continue to follow up with the Minister and relevant departments to seek a formal response and progress outcomes.

ICPA(Aust) remains committed to advocating for equitable support measures and will provide updates as further information becomes available.

A61. Kindon Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for prioritisation of rural and remote students for residential college accommodation."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to relevant stakeholders regarding this motion.

To date, limited engagement has been received. The only response advised that this matter falls within the remit of individual Student Unions; however, no further response has been received despite follow-up attempts.

While this response indicates decentralised responsibility for accommodation allocation, it does not address the systemic disadvantage faced by rural and remote students when accessing residential college placements.

ICPA(Aust) recognises that equitable access to safe and affordable accommodation is critical for students who must relocate to undertake tertiary education.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate for prioritisation mechanisms that recognise geographic isolation and will pursue further engagement with universities, accommodation providers and student bodies to progress this issue.

A62. Blackall Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for recognition of Home Tutor experience as prior learning."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) raised this matter with the relevant departments.

To date, no response has been received.

ICPA(Aust) recognises the value of Home Tutor experience and will continue to advocate for recognition pathways that acknowledge and support this contribution.

A63. MOTION LOST

A65. Port Augusta Branch (SA)- Tasmania Branch (TAS)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for the Federal Government to provide a placement and travel allowance to support rural and remote students attending mandatory university placements and/or residential schools that is not contingent on receipt of other commonwealth student payment."

and

A66. Winton Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Education (DoE) to ensure time spent working under the Permission to Teach program or equivalent programs, counts towards the time required to access the reduction of Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) in very remote areas."

and

A67. Bourke Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for reform of the Liquid Assets Waiting Period for Youth Allowance."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Social Services regarding these motions.

A response was received which acknowledged the financial pressures experienced by rural and remote families, particularly in relation to accessing support when students are required to live away from home.

The Minister outlined the current framework of assistance available, including the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme and associated payments, noting that these are indexed annually and targeted through income testing arrangements.

While the response did not specifically commit to reform of the Liquid Assets Waiting Period, the Minister acknowledged ICPA(Aust)'s concerns and advised that the correspondence would inform future government consideration of these matters.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate for fairer eligibility criteria that do not disadvantage students who have saved responsibly.

A68. Bourke Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for improved financial support for students undertaking mandatory placements."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the relevant Ministers regarding this motion.

To date, no response has been received.

ICPA(Aust) recognises the additional financial burden placed on students undertaking mandatory placements, particularly those from rural and remote areas who face increased travel and accommodation costs.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate for improved financial support to ensure equitable access to placements.

S11. Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for simplifying assistance criteria for geographically isolated students."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the relevant Minister and departments regarding this motion.

To date, no response has been received.

ICPA(Aust) recognises that complex eligibility criteria create additional barriers for geographically isolated students attempting to access financial support. Simplifying these processes remains a priority to ensure equitable and timely access to assistance for rural and remote students.

This issue will be discussed at upcoming meetings in Canberra with Services Australia and the Department of Social Services.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate for fair and simplified access to financial support and will provide updates as further information becomes available.

S12. St George Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for universities to offer agricultural subjects as a pathway within secondary teaching degrees."

And

S14. Tambo Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for the promotion of agricultural teaching specialisations within university teaching degrees."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the relevant Ministers and stakeholders regarding these motions.

To date, no response has been received.

ICPA(Aust) recognises the ongoing shortage of qualified agricultural teachers, particularly in rural and remote areas, and the importance of ensuring students have access to appropriately trained educators in this key industry area.

Encouraging universities to offer agricultural subjects as a clear pathway within teaching degrees, along with promoting agricultural electives and specialisations, is an important step toward addressing workforce shortages and strengthening agricultural education.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate for increased opportunities within university programs and will pursue this matter until meaningful progress is achieved.

S13. Nyngan Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for financial support for the National Farmers' Federation AgCAREERSTART program."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry regarding this motion.

On the 7th November 2025, ICPA(Aust) received a response from the Hon Julie Collins MP.

The Minister advised that since 2022, the Australian Government has provided $5.8 million to support the AgCAREERSTART pilot program, including funding through the 2024–25 Federal Budget to extend delivery of the program to include intakes in 2025 and 2026.

In relation to outcomes of the pilot program, the Minister noted that limited survey responses (22 responses from 178 participants) have restricted the ability to draw firm conclusions about the program's overall impact.

The Minister also highlighted that the Government is supporting the agricultural workforce more broadly through initiatives such as the AgConnections program and investment in agriculture-related training through the Fee-Free TAFE program.

In relation to future funding, the Minister advised that decisions regarding ongoing support for the program will be considered in the context of Government budget priorities and processes.

While this response acknowledges the value of the program, it does not provide a commitment to ongoing or expanded funding beyond the current pilot.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate for this program and highlight its importance to rural and remote communities and the agricultural workforce.

S15. Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for increased inclusion of graduates with agricultural degrees in the High Achieving Teachers (HAT) Program."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Education regarding this motion.

To date, no response has been received.

ICPA(Aust) recognises the importance of attracting individuals with agricultural expertise into teaching, particularly given the growing demand for agricultural education in rural and remote schools.

Expanding the HAT Program to include agricultural graduates would assist in addressing workforce shortages and ensure students are provided with industry-relevant education.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate for this initiative.

S16. Lakes District Branch (WA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to extend eligibility for the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) to students undertaking a Graduate Diploma in Education."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the Minister for Education regarding this motion, advocating for the inclusion of Graduate Diploma in Education students in the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP).

The correspondence highlighted the financial pressures associated with mandatory teaching placements, particularly for students from rural and remote areas who face additional travel and accommodation costs.

At this stage, no response has been received from the Minister.

While the issue has been formally raised, the lack of response means there has been no commitment to extending eligibility under the CPP to include these students.

ICPA(Aust) recognises the importance of equitable financial support for all students undertaking required placements and will continue to follow up with the Minister and relevant departments to advocate for expanded eligibility criteria.

ICPA(Aust) will provide updates as further information becomes available.

S17. Kindon Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for a review of the Dependent Youth Allowance parental income threshold for rural and remote students."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) wrote to the relevant Minister regarding this motion.

To date, no response has been received.

ICPA(Aust) recognises that rural and remote families face significantly higher costs associated with accessing tertiary education, including relocation, accommodation and travel expenses.

The current parental income thresholds do not adequately reflect these realities and can act as a barrier to further education.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate for a fairer system that recognises the unique financial pressures faced by geographically isolated families.

S18. Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for the inclusion of rural, remote and very remote students as eligible under exceptional circumstances for the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP)."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) raised this issue with the Minister and relevant departments.

To date, no response has been received.

ICPA(Aust) recognises the additional financial burden faced by students from rural and remote areas when undertaking mandatory placements, particularly where travel and accommodation costs are significantly higher.

Without appropriate support, these barriers may discourage students from completing placements in regional and remote locations.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate for expanded eligibility criteria to support equitable access to placements for all students.

S19. Hay Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) acknowledge recent changes to the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) and advocate for ongoing improvements."

Following the conference, ICPA(Aust) acknowledged the recent changes to the Tertiary Access Payment, including extended eligibility for students who have taken gap years.

To date, no further correspondence has been received from the relevant Ministers regarding additional improvements or future developments.

While these changes are welcomed, ICPA(Aust) recognises that continued refinement of the TAP is necessary to ensure it adequately supports rural and remote students transitioning to tertiary education.

ICPA(Aust) will continue to advocate for further improvements to the TAP to better meet the needs of geographically isolated students.

Training Portfolio

A69. Richmond Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) be thanked for its long-time advocacy for an increase to the commonwealth Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA), which has been announced recently by the Prime Minister."

The acknowledgement of Federal Council's ongoing advocacy is most appreciated. The LAFHA increase was welcomed, along with its indexation. These changes will bring some certainly to the allowance capacity to assist recipients as the cost of living continues to rapidly rise.

A70. Balranald Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Education to extend the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) to include rural and remote students who must live away from home to complete a Trade Apprenticeship."

This 2025 motion sits within the key issues of the Training Portfolio and has been voiced to Ministers and relevant departments throughout Council's 2025-6 advocacy.

It is disappointing not to be able to share a firm outcome on this motion but know there has been progress. Although we have not received replies from our letter with your motion details from Ministers, following the 2025 conference we sought assistance from Rural Education Commissioner Hon Fiona Nash. As a result, Federal Council were able to have an extensive meeting with Jobs and Skills Commissioner Barney Glover. Following this meeting we have shared our members concerns around the possibility and sustainability of rural and remote Apprenticeships, including this motion. We continue to work with Jobs and Skills and are planning to meet again during our final delegation for the 2025-6 Council year in May.

In October 2025 ICPA (Aust) included this motion in the submission put to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations within our response to the discussion paper on the need for a revised methodology for the Australian Apprenticeship Priority List.

Miscellaneous

A71. Tambo Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Minister for Health and relevant government bodies to review and amend the current restriction of a maximum of two duplicate Medicare cards per family, to better accommodate families with multiple children living away from home for the purposes of education."

It is great to share that shortly after the 2025 Conference this motion was advocated for during Council's meeting with stakeholders and it received a swift response from the Medicare Branch of Services Australia. This as members may already know led to ICPA (Aust) placing a Medicare Fact Sheet on our socials and within Federal Focus.

The communication and links ICPA (Aust) received from Services Australia are as follows-

"If a child under 15 would like their own Medicare card to use while at boarding school, a request can be made to provide them a Medicare card of their own, as well as remain attached to the family card. This is called a copy card. Parents can request this by completing an MS011