



2026 Distance Education Portfolio Report

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This is my second year as lead of the Distance Education (DE) portfolio. I have enjoyed the opportunities this role has provided, including meeting with various stakeholders, participating in delegations to Canberra, and working alongside Federal Councillors.

The **2025 Federal Conference**, which I had the pleasure of helping on the convening committee for, saw eleven DE motions carried. These motions addressed a range of important issues, including:

- Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor
- A Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) loading for geographically isolated students through the introduction of a fifth loading
- A wage system for home tutors and supervisors
- An increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children – Distance Education (AIC-DE) Allowance
- Inclusion of secondary students in Regional University Study Hubs (RUSH)
- Recognition and support through RRed Day to raise awareness of Distance Education and support supervisors

Within the Distance Education portfolio, ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate on behalf of geographically isolated families through correspondence, delegation meetings with Ministers and Senators, discussions with the Department for Education and the Regional Education Commissioner, and engagement with key stakeholders.

Letters were prepared and sent to:

The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Social Services, requesting:

- An increase to the AIC-DE Allowance. The current allowance falls short of the actual costs borne by families, particularly following significant increases in fuel and living expenses during early 2026.
- The introduction of an allowance for Distance Education Supervisors/Home Tutors.

The Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, requesting:

- Consideration of remuneration for Supervisors/Home Tutors who are required to be present in the Distance Education schoolroom as part of enrolment requirements.
- Expansion of Regional University Study Hubs (RUSH) to support Distance Education secondary students. This simple yet powerful extension of existing services has the potential to bridge important educational gaps for rural and remote students and encourage stronger transitions to tertiary education.

Responses received included:

- Anthony Flint, Assistant Secretary, Department of Education, acknowledged the important role of the DE supervisor. He noted that Education Ministers agreed to a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan in 2022, which focuses on recognising previous study, work experience and transferable skills. In September 2025, all Education Ministers formally endorsed a new Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Framework for Initial Teacher Education (ITE).



- Kristie van Omme, Assistant Secretary, Higher Education Program Delivery Branch, advised that approximately 300 secondary students are currently being supported through RUSH facilities.

Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor (RICS)

A focus of the 2025 Federal Conference in Adelaide was the recognition and remuneration of Distance Education classroom supervisors. Following feedback from stakeholders, including the Regional Education Commissioner, Ms Fiona Nash, Federal Council presented a floor motion supporting the adoption of the term Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor (RICS) when advocating for recognition of home tutors and supervisors within the Distance Education classroom.

Following the conference, ICPA (Aust) met with Ms Nash to discuss a pathway forward. As a result, the Commissioner convened two national Distance Education roundtable meetings, 27 October 2025 and 18 March 2026, involving representatives from all state and territory education departments, 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, and state and territory ICPA representatives.

The first roundtable brought together twenty-six participants to discuss the current challenges facing geographically isolated families undertaking Distance Education. The second meeting examined three possible pathways for recognising and remunerating classroom supervisors:

1. A wage for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor – a wage paid by state and territory education departments.
2. A new Isolated Classroom Supervisor Subsidy – a subsidy established under a new program outside the AIC framework.
3. An AIC Isolated Classroom Supervisor Subsidy – an additional AIC subsidy paid directly to the classroom supervisor.

The discussions highlighted the vital role supervisors play in supporting approximately 1,700 geographically isolated Distance Education students across Australia. Participants acknowledged the need for remuneration that reflects the skills, responsibilities and costs associated with supervising a Distance Education classroom.

These three options have since been circulated to state and territory ICPA councils for further discussion and feedback. A further meeting with Ms Nash is scheduled for late June to continue discussions on this issue.

Commissioner Nash has consistently recognised the significant contribution made by supervisors and has described the current lack of recognition and remuneration as an injustice.

The Regional Education Commissioner (REC) annual report 2025:

Issue for Consideration 10 (p 32): In recognition of the critical role of geographically isolated classroom supervisors, fund a program to support these supervisors educating geographically isolated students via distance education where there are no alternatives.



Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA)

In April 2026, a submission was lodged with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) seeking recognition of the Distance Education Classroom Supervisor role within the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA).

While Education Assistants and Teacher Aides share some similarities with the role, they do not adequately capture the unique responsibilities and circumstances faced by geographically isolated Distance Education Classroom Supervisors.

The submission highlighted the diverse and complex responsibilities undertaken by supervisors, including:

- Supporting lesson implementation
- Preparing educational resources
- Managing student behaviour
- Maintaining structured learning routines
- Facilitating ongoing communication with Distance Education teachers
- Providing technical support and managing online learning platforms
- Giving feedback to students
- Timetabling daily, weekly and term learning activities
- Establishing daily routines
- Creating a positive and engaging learning environment
- Managing administrative responsibilities

Anna McCorkle and I attended an online forum with Skills Insight and the ABS, where valuable information was provided regarding OSCA, which has replaced the former ANZSCO classification system. The forum outlined the process required for the inclusion of a new occupational category.

A link to the Australian Bureau of Statistics submission:

[ICPA \(Aust\) Submission OSCA April 2026 .pdf](#)

Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) – Geographically Isolated Student Loading

ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate for the inclusion of a fifth student-based loading for geographically isolated students within the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).

This important policy position is now reflected in Federal Council policy and has the potential to deliver more equitable funding outcomes for geographically isolated students across Australia.

Correspondence from Meg Brighton, Deputy Secretary, Schools, has confirmed that ICPA (Aust) will have the opportunity to contribute to the SRS review process. The review is expected to conclude by mid-2027, with a final report due to Education Ministers by mid-2029.

Assistance for Isolated Children – Distance Education Allowance

An increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children – Distance Education (AIC-DE) Allowance remains a key advocacy priority for Federal Council.

Updated costings have been developed to strengthen the case for an increase and better reflect the true costs incurred by families delivering Distance Education in remote Australia.



While correspondence to the Minister for Social Services has not yet received a response, Federal Council has continued discussions with the Minister for Education regarding the financial realities faced by Distance Education families.

Advocacy efforts will continue until a fair and accurate allowance is achieved.

Regional University Study Hubs (RUSH)

A new issue adopted at the 2025 Federal Conference relates to access to Regional University Study Hubs (RUSH) for secondary students undertaking Distance Education.

Federal Council wrote to the Minister for Education seeking support for appropriate safeguards and services that would enable secondary students to access RUSH facilities. In his response, the Minister acknowledged the important role these hubs play in supporting regional and remote Australians.

There are currently 56 Regional University Study Hubs across Australia, with 49 operational and the remainder expected to open this year. While their primary focus is tertiary education, many hubs already provide informal support to secondary students through access to study spaces, internet services and community-based educational activities.

Looking Ahead

Federal Council remains committed to progressing all Distance Education policy priorities and ensuring geographically isolated students have equitable access to quality educational opportunities.

Member feedback and case studies continue to be critical to our advocacy efforts. We encourage branches and members to share their experiences and challenges, as real-life examples remain among the most powerful tools for influencing policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my Distance Education portfolio report.