



PRESIDENTS REPORT NSW ICPA

Annabel Strachan

It is a privilege to be representing ICPA-NSW in our contribution towards establishing equitable access to education for rural, regional, remote, and very remote families. We all passionately believe that an educated and forward-thinking rural population is vital for Australia and now more than ever before.

In September 2025, the Executive returned to Sydney for follow-up meetings arising from our June 2025 deputation. During this visit, we were able to reconnect with many of the same politicians, as well as meet with others who were unavailable earlier in the year.

We were particularly fortunate to secure meetings with Mr Murat Dizdar, Secretary of the NSW Department of Education. These discussions were highly constructive and resulted in the following important outcome for our seven very remote TP1 schools across the state.

Beginning in Term 1, 2026, the NSW Department of Education confirmed that the very remote schools of Weilmoringle, Enngonia, Louth, Wanaaring, Tibooburra, White Cliffs, and Clare Public Schools will each receive a full-time second teacher. This significant outcome follows strong collaboration between ICPA-NSW, the Department, and the Secretary for Education. ICPA-NSW successfully advocated for the original 0.4 FTE proposal to be converted into full-time permanent positions, recognising that small fractional roles were unlikely to attract staff in such isolated locations. This decision will improve continuity of learning, reduce closure risks during staff absences, and provide vital support for teaching principals. It also creates valuable opportunities for early-career teachers to experience remote TP1 schools and pursue permanency within the Department. ICPA-NSW sincerely thanks the Secretary of the NSW Department of Education and the Executive Director, Regional, Rural, Remote and Unique Settings Directorate, for listening to our concerns and responding accordingly.

Another significant achievement for 2026 is the refurbishment of the School of the Air (SOTA) playground, which is now underway. This important project will provide a safer, more welcoming environment for students when they come into the school, supporting both their wellbeing and their sense of connection to the school community.

On 23 October, ICPA-NSW participated in the Premier's Rural, Remote and Regional Advisory Council meeting, convened by Premier Chris Minns. The Council provides direct advice to the Premier and Ministers on issues affecting rural, remote and regional communities, and ICPA-NSW's inclusion is a significant recognition of our credibility, influence and commitment to equitable education for geographically isolated students. Meeting three times yearly, the Council gives us an important platform to ensure rural families' voices are heard at the highest levels of government and to contribute lived experience to policy discussions on rural and remote education.

ICPA-NSW meets quarterly with the NSW Department of Education to share updates, raise issues affecting rural and remote students, and maintain advocacy momentum. These meetings ensure timely feedback from families, keep us informed of policy developments, and allow us to highlight emerging priorities. As the state government remains the major public provider of education, much of our work will continue to focus on ensuring it delivers the support needed to optimise opportunities for regional and remote students. We value the dedicated staff across the Departments involved in

rural and remote education and school travel, who consistently make themselves available when issues arise.

Georgina Luckraft and I attended the Joint Council Meeting of the states in Launceston in February, which was an invaluable and highly informative experience. As it was the first meeting for both of us, we greatly appreciated the opportunity to learn from others, ask questions and build a stronger understanding of the broader work being undertaken across ICPA. Sincere thanks to Louise, Kelly and Kate for organising such a knowledgeable, productive and welcoming meeting. Georgina and I left with far greater insight, confidence and enthusiasm for the work ahead.

The 2026 Annual State Conference was held in Broken Hill, where members considered 59 motions, 16 supplementary motions and 5 floor motions. The Broken Hill convening committee did an outstanding job, and NSW State Council sincerely thanks them for their careful attention to every detail. We were fortunate to have Mr Dean White, Executive Director, Regional, Rural, Remote and Unique Settings Directorate, attend for the full two days. His presence was greatly appreciated, particularly given the number of motions relating to the Department. On behalf of our members and State Council, I extend sincere thanks to Dean for taking the time to listen and engage so thoroughly throughout the conference.

The State Council marked several significant moments of recognition and appreciation. Members farewelled Libby McPhee, who is moving to an off-council role as Membership Officer, and Gabie Le Lievre, honouring not only their dedicated service but also the exceptional leadership, professionalism, and spirit they brought to the Council. Both were acknowledged for their unwavering commitment, their ability to strengthen connections across the organisation, and the lasting impact of their thoughtful contributions. Their work has shaped Council in meaningful ways, and members expressed deep gratitude for the energy, insight, and generosity they consistently shared.

In addition, Kerrie Johnston was honoured with a Certificate of Appreciation for her exceptional work on *The Top Wire*, celebrating her commitment and the impact of her efforts across the organisation.

The Louth Branch also marked a significant milestone, awarding Deborah Nielsen Life Membership in recognition of her long-standing dedication and service to the branch and its members. Deborah's leadership has been extraordinary, having served as President for an impressive 20 years.

Britt Anderson has stepped down from her role as Publicity Officer following Conference. We are grateful that Britt will continue as off-council Webmaster to ensure a smooth transition while a replacement is appointed. Since joining Council in 2022, Britt has been a powerhouse of dedication and professionalism. She has contributed across multiple portfolios including Publicity Officer, Webmaster, Vice President and Merchandise Officer. Her generosity, expertise, and willingness to step up have made a lasting impact. In 2025, Britt joined Federal Council, and while her presence at the State level will be greatly missed. ICPA-NSW sincerely thanks Britt for her outstanding commitment and ongoing support, and we wish her every success as she continues her important work with Federal Council.

Our inaugural ICPA-NSW Sporting Bursary was made possible by the incredible effort of Angus Argent-Smith, who rode 365 km in gruelling conditions to raise awareness for ICPA. The bursary was proudly presented by Sally Argent-Smith, on Angus's behalf, to Grace Kellehan of West Wyalong, marking a remarkable beginning for this new initiative.

I would also like to thank Louise Martin and Sally Brindal for their presence at conference. Their contribution was greatly valued, as they were able to provide clarification and speak directly to several motions, which was extremely beneficial for our members.

As always following conference, our priority has been writing to the relevant Ministers and stakeholders. Our portfolio papers and briefing papers have also been updated in preparation for our annual deputation in June.

Our annual deputation was again a busy and productive week. This year, parliamentary meetings were held over two days to allow more time for discussion and reduce pressure on the schedule. State Council met face to face on Monday and again on Thursday, enabling us to progress a significant number of actions. Tuesday and Wednesday were dedicated to meetings at Parliament House and with key stakeholders, followed by the PRRRAC meeting on Thursday afternoon and our meeting with the Premier on Friday morning. I sincerely thank all State Councillors for attending and contributing so generously. Their time and commitment are invaluable, allowing us to take feedback from these meetings back to our branches and continue working to progress our motions.