



PRESIDENTS REPORT NT ICPA

Amanda Murphy

Madam President, distinguished guests, Federal, State and Branch Life Members, Federal Councillors, ICPA members and guests.

On behalf of ICPA NT Life Members, NT Branch Committees, Territory members and our State Council, I am honoured to present my first Northern Territory State President's Report. I sincerely thank Moira Lanzarin, outgoing President, and Bec Osmotherly, outgoing Treasurer, whose terms concluded at our 2026 State Conference. Both have made significant and valued contributions to ICPA NT over the past four years.

ICPA NT has had a busy and productive twelve months, marked by important advocacy, steady progress and continued engagement with relevant stakeholders to ensure that families in rural and remote areas, and the educational journeys of their children, are heard and supported. In 2026, we welcomed changes across both executive and councillor positions, with strong representation from the Top End through to Central Australia. The Northern Territory covers an immense area with a relatively small population, yet the commitment to advancing ICPA's work within the Territory and beyond remains strong.

Our State Council, elected in March at our virtual conference hosted by the Territory Wide Branch, comprises Amanda Murphy as President; Moira Lanzarin as Immediate Past President, Webmaster and Down the Track Editor; Kiya Gill as Vice President; Catherine Atkins as Secretary; Amanda Brown as Treasurer; Bec Osmotherly as Membership Officer; Mel Kerr as Publicity Officer; and councillors Anna Cochrane, Sam Selmes, Kerrie Scott and Steph Lewis. Sixteen motions were presented and carried, addressing issues including:

- annual reviews and increases to the Student Assistance Allowance;
- travel assistance for students, including resident fares and travel options through ABSTUDY travel routes;
- increased Distance Education assistance for internet hardware costs, and ensuring ICPA NT remains a key participant and adviser to the Department of Education;
- formal training and recognition for home tutors, including employment opportunities within the NT;
- annual reviews of the Schools of the Air and the increasing pressure placed on schools by additional-needs students who are not geographically isolated; and
- playgroups in Central Australia.

At the State Conference, the Honourable Jo Hersey, Minister for Education, announced the commencement of a trial of playgroups throughout Central Australia in Term 2 of 2026. This welcome and exciting government-funded project follows many years of advocacy by ICPA NT. Many of you will be familiar with KICS — Katherine Isolated Children's Services — a travelling playgroup for children aged 0 to 5 years that services the Top End of the NT. Central Australia has not previously had an equivalent government-funded model in place, and while government agencies continue to bring this

initiative together, we look forward to the trial's success and to seeing playgroups become a permanent service into the future.

ICPA NT continues to hold a seat at the table of the School Education Advisory Group (SEAG), which meets quarterly and is chaired by the Department of Education Chief Executive. In late 2025, following advice from ICPA NT, the Chief Executive opened Back to School Vouchers to NT resident students who board interstate. The Northern Territory does not have sufficient boarding places for all NT students who need to attend boarding school because of their isolation. While the claiming system remains somewhat cumbersome and requires further refinement, we welcome the inclusion of our interstate boarding students. In addition to Back to School Vouchers, all curriculum-required stationery must now be supplied by government schools, another outcome supported by the advocacy and work of ICPA NT. Although these may appear to be modest gains, they demonstrate the strength of the relationship ICPA NT has developed with the Department of Education and the Minister for Education.

Over the past twelve months, ICPA NT has undertaken two delegations and held 26 meetings with relevant stakeholders, with a further delegation planned for November. We continue to meet quarterly with the Minister for Education, bi-monthly with the Department of Education, and regularly with senior leaders across the education system. Our Student Assistance Schemes remain a regular focus of discussion and are now fully available through an online application process via GrantsNT, including the schoolroom internet subsidy, Distance Education assistance, boarding assistance and tertiary travel assistance.

In partnership with Charles Darwin University, ICPA NT has developed a Vocational Training Program for Home Tutors, a free program designed to support home tutors across the Territory. Kiya Gill has been instrumental in working with CDU to bring this program together, combining online learning with some face-to-face delivery to create pathways into education and agriculture. Six students have completed the course to date. I was invited to speak about the program at the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association Ladies Lunch and was subsequently invited to morning tea with the Administrator of the Northern Territory, the Honourable David Connolly, to discuss a broad range of ICPA matters. Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro was also in attendance at the Ladies Lunch, and I appreciated the opportunity to speak with her following the event.

Catherine Atkins and I attended the Joint Councils Meeting in February. Although I was not yet formally in the President's role, the meeting provided valuable insight into the work of ICPA across Australia. It is both motivating and inspiring to meet people from across the country who face similar challenges and who share the same commitment to supporting our children and families. Thank you to Federal Council and Kate Thompson for bringing us together and for the warm welcome extended to us and your knowledge did not go unnoticed.

With rising costs across Australia, travel assistance for rural and remote students remains a major focus for ICPA NT. The beginning of 2026 was particularly difficult for many families across the Territory, with flooding and exceptionally high fuel prices creating additional pressure. The NT is vast, and some of our families live in the most remote areas of Australia. For some, simply transporting children to a plane to return to boarding school can involve an 1,800-kilometre round trip. Attending a School of the Air contact event can require a 1,200-kilometre round trip, in addition to a week's accommodation at increasing cost. These expenses can significantly affect a family's ability to access quality education. Supporting members in this area remains a top priority for ICPA NT.

ICPA NT is also focusing on member engagement across the Territory as we continue to demonstrate the support we can provide from early childhood through to tertiary education. We love where we live and value the way our lives are shaped by remoteness; however, education in geographically isolated areas can be challenging and costly. Our three branches — Alice Springs, Katherine and Territory Wide — remain active and proactive, working collaboratively to strengthen advocacy and increase membership.

The ICPA NT State Council is made up of dynamic, hardworking rural and remote mothers who are committed to securing the best outcomes for our children. Although mid-year is often exceptionally busy with family responsibilities, work and business commitments, our Council continues to make time for advocacy that is consistent, informed and proactive. I am proud of the strong relationships we have built with relevant stakeholders, and we remain committed to maintaining and strengthening those relationships into the future. Thank you and I look forward to continuing conversations over the next few days.