



ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION
OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED
MINUTES
OF THE
51ST ANNUAL STATE CONFERENCE

Theme: "A Long Way Down the Track"



Friday 17th March 2023

HELD AT THE

Pagoda Resort & Spa, Como.

CONVENED BY

MIDWEST BRANCH

ICPA (WA)

KINDLY THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGES THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS AND DONORS OF THE
 2023 STATE CONFERENCE

Platinum Sponsor:



ICPA (WA) would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of the Department of Education, WA. Thank you.





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ICPA (WA) STATE COUNCIL 2022 – 2023 (March 2022 AGM)

PRESIDENT
Sally Brindal

VICE PRESIDENT
Jane Cunningham

SECRETARY
WEBMASTER
Kym Ross

TREASURER
Michelle Abbott

PUBLICITY OFFICER
Samantha Greay

LONES OFFICER
Michelle Abbott

COMMITTEE
Jasmine Carmody

COMMITTEE
Louise Ford

COMMITTEE
Jane Hughes

COMMITTEE
Chandra Ridley

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IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Sally Brindal

SECRETARY
Louise Ford

TREASURER
Jasmine Carmody

PUBLICITY OFFICER
Sally Brindal

LONES OFFICER
Michelle Abbott

WEBMASTER/COMMITTEE
Kym Ross

COMMITTEE
Samantha Greay

COMMITTEE
Chandra Ridley

COMMITTEE
Arlene Sutherland

COMMITTEE
Jareth Forrester

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

- **Acknowledgement to Country** Wesley College
- **National Anthem** Wesley College
- **Welcome** Sally Brindal President ICPA (WA)
- **Welcome by Convener** Mrs Sam Messina Midwest Branch
- **Conference Address** Ms Meredith Hammat, MLA Parliamentary Secretary to Hon. Dr Tony Buti, Minister for Education, Aboriginal Affairs; Citizenship and Multicultural Interests
- **Official Opening** Ms Lisa Rodgers Director General, Department of Education
- **Introduction of Guests/Delegates** Kym Ross Secretary ICPA (WA)
- **State President's Report** Sally Brindal President ICPA (WA)
- **Portfolio Report** Kym Ross State Councillor ICPA (WA)
- **Branch Report** Mrs Fiona Hobley Lakes District Branch President
- **Speaker** Ms Catrina Aniere CEO Millennium Kids Inc, WA Local Hero Nominee 2022
- **REVISE Report** Mrs Denise Hilsz Chairperson REVISE
- **Speaker** Ms Justine Rowe Chief Sustainability Manager, Telstra Platinum Sponsor
- **Panel Session** Roma Heath Branch, State and Federal Life Member
 Roxanne Morrissey State Life Member
 Raelene Hall
 Rossco Foulkes-Taylor
 Mr Richard Hudson Host: ABC Journalist
- **Speaker** Ms Elise Petty Executive Manager - Education & Regional Stakeholder Relations, nbn Gold Sponsor
- **Portfolio Report** Jane Cunningham Vice President ICPA (WA)
- **Speaker** Mr Richard Stokes CEO Australian Boarding Schools Association
- **Portfolio Report** Chandra Ridley State Councillor ICPA (WA)
- **Federal ICPA Report** Mrs Alana Moller Federal President ICPA (Aust)
- **AGM of ICPA (WA)**
- **Presentations, close of business.**

▪ **Confirmation of 2022 Conference Minutes**

Moved: Kym Ross (State Council)
 Business Arising: Nil

Seconded: Chandra Ridley (State Council)

CARRIED

CONFERENCE MOTIONS

Agenda Motions: Allowances

A1 Lakes District Branch

Allowances

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Education and the State Government to substantially increase the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) to reflect the cost of education more accurately for students in rural and remote areas and for this allowance to be reviewed annually.”

Explanation:

The BAHA is an important subsidy that assists families living in remote areas of our State who send their children away to school. Many of these students face having to leave home and attend a boarding school as they do not have access to a local high school.

The boarding cost incurred by regional families less any eligible allowances are listed in the table below.

WA Residential Colleges boarding facility cost for 2023 which covers bed, meals, facilities, and pastoral care.	\$14,823
Federal government assistance (if eligible) with the Assistance for Isolated Children Basic Boarding Allowance (AIC)	\$ 9,396
Additional Boarding Allowance (if eligible and income-tested)	\$ 2,695
Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA)	\$ 1,350
Total potential reimbursement:	\$13,441

This reflects a shortfall of \$4,077 for AIC and BAHA recipients or \$1,382 for AIC and BAHA recipients (if in receipt of the Additional Boarding allowance) per student per regional family.

In addition, families face the added cost of transporting students, from their place of residence to school.

An increased contribution from the State Government to the BAHA would aid in enticing families to remain in the regions, fill employment roles and sustain communities by assisting in making boarding school an affordable option.

In 2010 the BAHA payment increased from \$1,320 to \$2,105 (or an extra \$785 allocated per student, per year) under the Royalties for Regions for Western Australia to address the inequality in accessing education.

In 2018 the State Government reduced the BAHA rate to \$1,948 with further decreases annually to only \$1,320 in 2022. The failure to have this Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjusted over recent years and consistently reduced is ignoring the needs of regional families to access affordable education.

The State Government wrote to ICPA (WA) advising of an increase by CPI from \$1,320 in 2022 to \$1,350 in 2023, which equates to 2.27%; yet the CPI index for the September 2022 quarter from Reserve Bank non-adjusted was 7.3%. Therefore, a current CPI increase would be \$96.36, totalling \$1,416.

Regional areas are suffering the most with increased pricing across all sectors and although we are grateful for this slight increase, families continue to feel disadvantaged. It is imperative we keep regional families in regional boarding facilities.

Moved: *Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch)* **Seconded:** *Arlene Sutherland (Lakes District Branch)* **CARRIED**

A2 **Goldfields Eyre Branch** **Allowances**

“That ICPA (WA) continues to advocate the State Government and the Department of Education for a substantial increase to the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) to take into account the significant annual rise in boarding fees.”

Explanation:

In September 2017 Minister Sue Ellery announced that the BAHA would reduce over four years due to the Royalties for Regions (RfR) funding ceasing after 2017. The RfR program started funding support for the BAHA in 2013 with an increase in the BAHA of \$785.

Boarding fees continue to rise annually throughout Western Australia by up to 8%. This is causing a significant gap between what is charged and what is received by parents as support from both Federal and State Governments. Families who have no choice but to send their children away to boarding school are increasingly under financial pressure to provide their children with suitable educations. Currently, there is a gap of \$4,077, at Residential Colleges in WA, that isolated families must pay after receiving the AIC and BAHA payments (without AIC additional) from both the Federal and State Governments.

We, therefore, request that ICPA (WA) lobby the State Government to increase the Boarding Away from Home Allowance to minimise this financial pressure put on parents in the effort to provide their children with a suitable education.

Moved: *Jasmine Carmody (State Council)* **Deemed covered by A1** **CARRIED**

A3 **Meekatharra Air Branch** **Allowances**

“ICPA (WA) continues to advocate to the Minister for Education and the State Government for an increase in the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA).”

Explanation:

While we appreciate that BAHA will now be increasing each year with Consumer Price Index (CPI), it is an important subsidy that rural and remote families rely heavily on each year when sending their children away from home to provide them with an adequate education. An increase in this allowance would significantly help rural families as boarding fees are increasing annually.

Moved: *Tracie Blair (Meekatharra Air Branch)* **Deemed covered by A1** **CARRIED**

A4 Goldfields Eyre Branch Allowances

“That ICPA (WA) requests ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Federal Government for all pre-compulsory students, who are enrolled in a distance education program, to be granted the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education allowance.”

Explanation:

Under the current guidelines, part-time distance education students are ineligible for the Distance Education (DE) component of the AIC allowance, which means families enrolled in the 4-year-old programme must bear the costs of maintaining and setting up the classroom in that first year of schooling. Early Childhood Education is a materials/resource heavy time which translates to expensive. This coupled with the costs associated with setting up a classroom for the first time means that many families are under undue financial pressure at an already stressful time in the isolated education journey.

Moved: Jo-Anne Tonkin (Goldfields Eyre Branch) **Seconded:** Jasmine Carmody (State Council) **CARRIED**

Agenda Motions: Communications**A5 Goldfields Eyre Branch Communications**

“That ICPA (WA) consult with telcos regarding the impact that the phasing out of the 3G network 850Mhz spectrum will have on very remote locations. The 4G and 5G Networks have far greater download speeds but they range significantly less than 3G which will leave many areas without phone service.”

Explanation:

The 4G and 5G Networks have far greater download speeds but the range is considerably less than 3G which will result in a much smaller footprint of service areas leaving many areas without phone service, which previously had it with the 3G network. This completely contradicts the blackspot eradication programme that has been successful in delivering service to many locations that may become blackspots again in the 4G/5G rollout.

Moved: Jo-Anne Tonkin (Goldfields Eyre Branch) **Seconded:** Jasmine Carmody (State Council) **CARRIED**

Agenda Motions: Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum**A6 Goldfields Eyre Branch Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum**

“That ICPA (WA) requests ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate the Federal Government to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) in recognition of the role the home tutor plays in educating geographically isolated students via distance education.”

Explanation:

The service provided by Home Tutors in the delivery of education to students in rural and remote Australia who have no choice but to be educated via the distance education mode of delivery needs to be acknowledged. Home Tutors provide what the government simply cannot cost-effectively supply and as such should be recognised and remunerated fairly.

Moved: Jo-Anne Tonkin (Goldfields Eyre Branch) **Seconded:** Jasmine Carmody (State Council)

CARRIED

Agenda Motions: Rural & Remote Schools

A7 Lakes District Branch

Rural and Remote Schools

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Education ensures our regional and remote schools can access suitable staff to fill short to medium-term vacancies to allow teachers to take appropriate leave such as Long Service Leave when it is due.”

Explanation:

In 2022 a teacher was recalled from planned and preapproved Long Service Leave (LSL) after the teacher appointed to cover the position moved to another job. Another teacher was then secured but was unable to continue on in the position shortly after she started. Eventually, the permanent teacher was asked to return from LSL to complete the year. There were numerous teachers flowing through the class and this proved very disruptive for the students.

The same teacher had then arranged for 18 weeks of LSL starting at the beginning of Term 1, 2023. After much searching and a vast amount of time spent, a teacher could not be secured for this time frame. The permanent teacher has had to come back from LSL to start this school year until a member of the Flying Squad can be secured.

These staffing difficulties and uncertainties are having a vast impact on the teacher, the Principal, students and their families.

Moved: Fiona Hopley (Lakes District Branch)

Seconded: Arlene Sutherland (Lakes District Branch) **CARRIED**

A8 Lakes District Branch

Rural and Remote Schools

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Education and the Department of Education to ensure the Focus 2023 strategic direction extends to regional, rural and remote schools, including Schools of the Air.”

Explanation:

In late 2022 *Focus 2023* was released by Director General Lisa Rodgers for the purpose of providing strategic direction and priorities for schools for the year ahead.

Regional, rural and remote schools are specifically mentioned just once in the six main points. In point 2 it states, ‘support for schools will provide funding and support to strengthen secondary education in district high schools’.

Ms Rodgers states in the introduction, “There are residual challenges of recent years with the impact of disruption on student attendance, mental health and wellbeing, and achievement.” This comment is very true and the real impact has been much longer than ‘recent years’ for our rural and remote students and their families.

There are greater complexities that attribute to challenges in rural and remote areas including distance, access to services and multi-age classrooms (at times there may be four year levels in one class) and it is requested that the Minister provide documentation pertaining to the application on these *Focus 2023* strategies and priorities for regional, rural and remote schools, including Schools of the Air.

Moved: Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch) **Seconded:** Arlene Sutherland (Lakes District Branch) **CARRIED**

S1 **Meekatharra Air Branch** **Rural and Remote Schools**

“That ICPA (WA) lobbies the Department of Education and Fairbridge Western Australia Inc. to keep the camp school facilities well maintained, to a high standard and affordable so that the hiring of the camp schools remains accessible for our rural and remote schools.”

Explanation:

In 2018 Fairbridge took over the running of the 6 WA camp school facilities which were previously operated by the WA Government and the Department of Education. Prior to the Fairbridge takeover, the camp schools were run at a high standard and remote students, teachers and parents from rural and remote properties could access these facilities at a reasonable cost to the schools utilising the facilities.

In March 2023, Kalgoorlie School of The Air (KalsOTA) hired the Goldfields camp school in Kalgoorlie for their annual Home Tutor’s Seminar during Term 1 camp for the children. KalsOTA has up to four camps per year and has been accessing the fabulous Goldfield camp facilities for the past 40 years to provide their geographically widespread families with the opportunity to engage with their school principal, teachers and most importantly their peers in a safe environment.

This year the cost of hiring the Goldfields camp facilities has increased exponentially and needs to be reviewed immediately.

Moved: Tracie Blair (Meekatharra Air Branch) **Seconded:** Natalie Beven (Meekatharra Air Branch) **CARRIED**

S2 **Goldfields Eyre Branch** **Rural and Remote Schools**

“ICPA (WA) lobbies the Department of Education and Fairbridge Western Australia Inc. to keep facilities at camp schools at a high standard whilst also keeping the fees associated with using those facilities low for rural and remote schools in particular.”

Explanation:

Fairbridge took over the running of 6 previously owned and operated government camp schools in 2018 under the proviso that they would continue to deliver quality camps to government schools and Schools of the Air in particular.

The Kalgoorlie School of the Air (KalsOTA) has been using the Goldfields Camp School up to four times a year for over 40 years. However, since Fairbridge took over there has been a dramatic reduction in both the quality and amount of services offered whilst fees have continued to increase.

We understand that some fees, such as the cost per head for food and beds, need to rise due to inflation however undisclosed set-up fees and additional fees for the use of empty rooms are unacceptable.

For example, during KalsOTA’s Term 1 camp in 2023, Fairbridge charged exorbitant daily rates for access to single rooms that were once considered part of the package. These rooms were once well appointed activity rooms but are now mostly bare. They are no longer equipped with audiovisual resources, games or activities for the students. (See attached pricing schedule).



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By raising their prices it is the opinion of our Branch that Fairbridge is trying to price out public school access to government-owned camp schools so that they can extend their alternative schools that are also run onsite.



2023 KALGOORLIE CAMP BOOKING FORM – SCHOOL GROUPS

ORGANISATION INFORMATION					
School Name					
Postal address					
City				Phone	
Primary Contact Name			Email		
Billing Email Address					
EVENT INFORMATION					
Check-In Date	Arrival Time	Check-Out Date	Departure Time		
TOTAL Guest	Male Students	Female Students	Supervisors		
24-Hour Contact Person (During Event)		Mobile no:			
CATERING INFORMATION					
Catering Required? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No					
ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION – RATES					
		Student:	\$26.00 per night		
		Teacher / Adult:	\$34.00 Per night		
Dorm Name	Select	Additional Rooms / Activity Rooms <small>(*for additional charge - they apply for each night)</small>	Half Day	Tick	Full Day
Asay – Sleeps 24 2 Rooms x 6 Bunks in each room 2 staff rooms x 2 single beds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cap Lamp Activity Room*	\$210	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$420
Staff Quarters – Sleeps 17 1 Room x 4 Bunks 1 Room x 3 Bunks + 1 Single bed 1 Room x 2 Single beds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Raylet & Ford*	\$150	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$300
Prospector – Sleeps 5 1 Room x 3 Singles + 1 Bunk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Finlayson & Shea*	\$150	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$300
Gimlet – Sleeps 4 1 Room x 2 Single Beds 1 Room x 2 Single Beds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff Kitchen*	\$150	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$300
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gimlet Activity Room*	\$210	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$420
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preferred Accommodation (Subject to availability) Beds have a protective cover ONLY. Groups are required to supply their own bedding, pillowcase, and towel. Linen packs available to hire On Prior Booking for \$15.00 per pack. 					
Disability access - there is one separate universal access toilet (UAT) and shower. The campsite has ramp access to the internal courtyard area. Please note Dorm access is 2 pm & check-out is 10 am.					
Notes / Special Requests:					

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2021 Department of Education School Group Rates			
	STUDENTS	ADULTS	
Accommodation	\$28.00	\$34.00	*Meals include continental breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert. Fruit and biscuits are provided for self-serve morning and afternoon Tea.
Meals	\$44.00	\$50.00	
Sub Total (inc. GST)	\$72.00	\$84.00	
OPTIONAL ADD-ONS (excl. GST)			
			YES NO
Cooked Breakfast - \$ 9.00pp/day			YES NO
Substantial MIA Tea- \$6.50pp/day			YES NO
Billing Information:			
Purchase Order Number:			
Deposit - \$500 made by: (please tick) <input type="checkbox"/> EFT Invoice or <input type="checkbox"/> Credit Card (complete details below)			
Card Holder Name:			
Card Number:	Expiry:	Security Code:	
Card Holders Signature:	Date:		
If you are paying your deposit by EFT our bank details are below. Please put your booking number and surname as reference.			
Bank: Westpac			
Account Name: Fairbridge Western Australia Inc			
BSB: 036-171			
Account Number: 209057			
Booking Conditions			
TERMS AND CONDITIONS			
CONFIRMATION			
Signed confirmation of the booking must be received within 14 days of the original booking being made along with a \$500 deposit and Credit Card details to secure the reservation. Once the deposit is received, you confirm & agree with our Terms & Conditions. The Management reserves the right to cancel the booking and reallocate the accommodation if a deposit is not received.			
CANCELLATION			
Deposits paid to Fairbridge Western Australia Inc are refundable if cancellations are received up to 14 days prior to check-in date. Cancellations with less than 7 days' notice will be charged 100% of the expected revenue.			
CATERING			
The final number of guests including all dietary requirements is required 10 days prior to check-in			
PAYMENT			
Full payment is due before arrival.			
RESPONSIBILITY			
Management will not accept any responsibility for damages to or loss of property left in the camp prior to, during or after the booking. The group organiser is financially responsible for the make good of any damage or reinstating buildings to their original state whether in the area reserved or another part of the camp. Any charges will be deducted from the Credit Card details on file.			
Confirmation			
I confirm that the details above are true & correct. I have read and understand these terms and conditions. I agree to abide by them and understand that it is my responsibility to inform the group of these conditions.			
Signature of applicant		Date:	

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Moved: Jo-Anne Tonkin (Goldfields Eyre Branch) **Seconded:** Jasmine Carmody (State Council) **CARRIED**

Agenda Motions: Specific Education

A9 Lakes District Branch Specific Education

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health work collaboratively to increase the allocation of services by psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and speech pathologists that are provided by the State Government to better support students in regional, rural and remote schools.”

Explanation:

Health professional positions are often unfilled and/or understaffed in regional, rural and remote WA and it can be difficult to attract and retain staff thus leading to months and sometimes years of waiting for appointments.

Additionally, a high turnover of staff slows down the process for our students in receiving the assistance they require; as health professionals need to make their own observations and assessments before they can act.

Due to the lack of access to health professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic, our students have been missing out on much-needed support to ensure they have their needs met to reach their full potential.

Alternative solutions such as:

- Pooled staffing resources across regional and rural schools as opposed to set days/times to ensure demand is matched with staffing
- The employment of health professionals by the Department of Education
- Greater collaboration between the Education and Health departments.
- Earlier implementation of key learning programs in early childhood i.e. Katanning Oral Language Program (KOLP).

Moved: *Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch)*

Seconded: *Arlene Sutherland (Lakes District Branch)* **CARRIED**

A10 Lakes District Branch

Specific Education

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education ensures health professionals that service regional and remote schools (physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, school psychologists) are replaced when they are taking leave.”

Explanation:

In Term 1 at a local school, the Occupational Therapist that services the school is taking leave for all of March. The school has been told there are two dates later in the term that the Occupational Therapist will be able to see students who have been referred. Given the lack of services provided to students and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is unacceptable to have to wait a whole term for an appointment with an Occupational Therapist. Early intervention is the key to good development and our children have been missing out and continue to do so.

Moved: *Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch)*

Seconded: *Arlene Sutherland (Lakes District Branch)* **CARRIED**

A11 Lakes District Branch

Specific Education

“That ICPA (WA) approach the Minister for Education to investigate how the implementation of Autism Specialist Learning Programs in larger schools can be adapted to support students in regional, rural and remote schools.”

Explanation:

In 2022 an additional six Autism Specialist Learning Programs (SLP) have been set up in schools. There are currently twenty-four schools. None of these schools would be classed as regional or remote. There are several very small regional and remote schools with four year levels being taught by a single teacher that have multiple children with autism. We would like to be able to support our children the best we can.

Expanding the use of Specialist Learning Programs to support students with autism is specifically mentioned in Point 5 of the *Focus 2023*.

Moved: *Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch)*

Seconded: *Arlene Sutherland (Lakes District Branch)* **CARRIED**

S3 Lakes District Branch***Specific Education***

“That ICPA (WA) advocates for the Western Australian State Government to introduce a direct speech pathology service in schools.”

Explanation:

Access to speech pathology services in regional and remote Western Australia is challenging, both with distance and excessive wait times. Speech pathology services are vital for many students and can help with:

- Developing their speech sound system
- Understanding and using language for thinking, discussing, reading, writing, numeracy and learning
- Managing social interactions within the school setting
- Speaking fluently
- Having a healthy voice so that they can manage to talk throughout the school day
- Safely eating and drinking at school

Most states in Australia currently provide some form of school-based speech pathology service, in Western Australia there is no direct speech pathology service provided. Queensland, for example, offers a comprehensive school-based program to support students, their families and education teams.

Moved: *Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch)*

Seconded: *Arlene Sutherland (Lakes District Branch)*

CARRIED

Agenda Motions: Student Accommodation**A12 Midwest Branch*****Student Accommodation***

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Education, Minister for Disability, and other relevant ministers provide funding for students with a disability in boarding houses facilities so that their needs can be met, and reasonable adjustments and accommodations can be implemented in accordance with The Disability Standards for Education 2005.”

Explanation:

When a student with a funded disability (e.g. Autism) is enrolled at a school, the school is eligible to apply for schools plus funding or special education funding from the WA Education Department, via their individual system dependent on what type of school they are classified as. The amount of funding given per student is in accordance with their diagnosis and needs. This funding is then dispersed at the school’s discretion for the purpose of education.

A boarding student (24 hours per day, 7 days a week in school term) gets the same level of funding as a day student. The boarding house has a duty of care, responsibility and accountability for the increased needs of a student with a disability. This is inclusive of wellbeing, medical, social, homework/prep education, nutrition, extracurricular school activities such as sports or choir and boarding house excursions and activities. Students with a disability require extra support in their daily lives to reach their full potential. Currently, there is no clarity on whose jurisdiction or agency the needs of a person with a disability fall under in the secondary boarding house systems. Access to funding for a person with a disability in a boarding house is not currently provided in any way.

The relevant bodies included in the shared response to the needs of a person with a disability in WA include the Department of Education, the Department of Communities, the NDIS and NDIA. Relevant Standards and Registrations that cover off on schools' compliance to meet the needs of a student with a disability include Registration Standards for Non-Government Schools (in accordance with section 159 of the School Education Act 1999), Boarding Standard for Australian Schools and Residences 2015, The State Disability Strategy 2020 - 2030 and The Disability Standards for Education 2005.

Moved: *Fiona Mann (Midwest Branch)*

Seconded: *Jasmyn Allen (Midwest Branch)*

CARRIED

Agenda Motions: Teacher Training

S4 Goldfields Eyre Branch

Teacher Training

“That ICPA (WA) approach universities who offer the Bachelor of Education to investigate whether preservice/student teachers’ time spent as home tutors on stations could count towards their practical placements as part of their degree.”

Explanation:

By working with universities’ isolated families who educate their children through School of the Air (SOTA) could offer student teachers an immersive experience that would benefit themselves, their families and SOTA’s.

This scheme would likely encourage preservice and student teachers to apply for positions with SOTA’s once they graduate and would benefit isolated families by providing them with a home tutor dedicated to education, who understands the system and can more confidently deliver the curriculum.

Moved: *Jo-Anne Tonkin (Goldfields Eyre Branch)*

Seconded: *Jasmine Carmody (State Council)*

CARRIED

Agenda Motions: Travel

A13 Midwest Branch

Travel

“That ICPA (WA) continues to advocate the Minister for Transport to increase the payment per kilometre for the Public Transport Authority (PTA) Conveyance Allowance to better reflect the costs of running a vehicle, noting that it is currently paid at 25.24 cents/km, whereas the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) business expense rate is 78 cents/km.”

Explanation:

The Conveyance Allowance is an important payment to support rural families travelling long distances daily to meet school bus services. As per Recommendation 14 of the Bus Fair Report by the Public Accounts Committee (August 2022): “The Minister for Transport should ensure the Public Transport Authority review the Conveyance Allowance to ensure it is based on a contemporary benchmark, adjusted in line with the Consumer Price Index, and the basis for adjustments is transparent.”

This recommendation was accepted in principle by the State Government. Further work was to be undertaken by the Public Transport Authority in consultation with the Department of Treasury to investigate whether the conveyance allowance appropriately relates to the cost of running a vehicle. (December 2022).

At a rate of 25.24 cents/km (from Term 3, 2022), it is only a third of the rate used by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) for claiming business kilometres (78 cents/km) in a private vehicle.

Moved: *Jasmyn Allen (Midwest Branch)*

Seconded: *Fiona Mann (Midwest Branch)*

CARRIED

A14 **Lakes District Branch**

Travel

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Transport increases the payment per kilometre for the Public Transport Authority conveyance allowance to better reflect the actual costs associated with running a vehicle.”

Explanation:

Recommendation 14 of the ‘Bus Fair’ report review into the Student Transport Assistance Program (STAP) recommended this allowance be adjusted. The current payment of 25.24 cents/km as a contribution towards the cost of fuel, tyres, repairs and maintenance of a private vehicle is no longer reflective of the rising costs associated with running a vehicle and is approximately ⅓ of the rated used by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) when claiming car-related expenses (78 cents/km for 2022-23).

It is accepted that the rate of the allowance is not intended to fully reimburse families for the cost of transporting children to school, however, the rate has not increased in line with Consumer Price Index (CPI) over the past 10 years.

Moved: *Fiona Hopley (Lakes District Branch)*

Deemed covered by A13

CARRIED

A15 **Lakes District Branch**

Travel

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Department of Education and the Minister for Education ensure that any bus hired and/or used by any school be fitted with suitable seatbelt restraints.”

Explanation:

In the last few years, there have been instances when regional, rural and remote students have travelled to excursions and camps on buses without fitted seatbelts. We understand there are difficulties at times with securing affordable and appropriate vehicles to hire but believe that our students’ safety must come first.

Moved: *Fiona Hopley (Lakes District Branch)*

Seconded: *Arlene Sutherland (Lakes District Branch)*

CARRIED

A16 **Lakes District Branch**

Travel

“That ICPA (WA) requests the Minister for Transport to promptly implement recommendations as presented in the ‘Bus Fair’ report, following the inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework.”

Explanation:

In August 2022, the report 'Bus Fair' was tabled and contained forty (40) recommendations covering the overarching principles of the Student Transport Assistance Policy (STAP).

For example, some of these points included a number of key recommendations into:

- Eligibility criteria to the nearest appropriate school
- Access to gifted and talented programs
- Adequate notification of the alteration of services
- Reviewing and administration of the conveyance allowance
- Improved sharing of school bus services information to local schools and families
- Establishment of a complaint's management process
- Guidelines for safety requirements, construction and maintenance of bus stops.

Travel costs and transport accessibility continues to be a barrier to appropriate education for rural and remote families.

Moved: *Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch)* **Seconded:** *Arlene Sutherland (Lakes District Branch)* **CARRIED**

S5 **Midwest Branch*****Travel***

"That ICPA (WA) requests the Minister for Transport implement a safety awareness program for all buses that carry children in rural areas to follow the Queensland Government's initiative of "Look before you Lock," to help prevent unintentionally leaving a child in a vehicle."

Explanation:

The Queensland Government's "Look before you Lock" safety campaign was first launched in 2020 following the tragic death of a young boy who was mistakenly locked in a bus. The campaign warns parents, carers, and service providers to be vigilant and always check the seats before leaving a vehicle.

Across Western Australia rural children, some as young as 3½ are strapped into their seatbelts and driven to school, sometimes a 90-minute journey.

Safer lap, sash seatbelts come with a higher seat which makes it difficult for the driver to see all students from the driver's seat. Upon arrival at the destination and the absence of any alarm system to warn drivers that they may have a small passenger still onboard, it is hoped that all children are disembarked and not left on the bus. "It only takes one shortcut on safety to have a devastating, lifelong consequence and that is why look before you lock needs to be a habit, every single time." (Source: QLD Government)

A driver alert system is the ultimate safety device, but while we wait for technology to reach our buses, the safety campaign currently run in Queensland would hopefully go some way to prevent any further tragedies in Western Australia.

Moved: *Fiona Mann (Midwest Branch)* **Seconded:** *Jasmyn Allen (Midwest Branch)* **CARRIED**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Opened 4:07pm

- **Treasurer's Financial Report** Michelle Abbott

AGM Motions:

AGM 2

State Council

“That the 2022 Financial Statement and report be accepted as presented.”

Moved: Michelle Abbott (State Council)

Seconded: Kym Ross (State Council)

CARRIED

AGM 3

State Council

“That Barris Accountants Perth WA is appointed as the ICPA (WA) Auditor for 2024.”

Moved: Michelle Abbott (State Council)

Seconded: Kym Ross (State Council)

CARRIED

AGM 4

State Council

“That ICPA (WA) state affiliation fee remains at \$50 per member family for 2024.”

Moved: Michelle Abbott (State Council)

Seconded: Kym Ross (State Council)

CARRIED

AGM 5

State Council

“That the amendment to the ICPA (WA) Tertiary, Trade and Training Policy as circulated be adopted.”

Moved: Kym Ross (State Council)

Seconded: Michelle Abbott (State Council)

CARRIED

AGM 6

State Council

“That the amendment to the ICPA (WA) Specific Education Policy as circulated be adopted.”

Moved: Kym Ross (State Council)

Seconded: Michelle Abbott (State Council)

CARRIED

AGM 7

State Council

“That the amendment to the ICPA (WA) Student Accommodation Policy as circulated be adopted.”

Moved: *Kym Ross (State Council)*

Seconded: *Michelle Abbott (State Council)*

CARRIED

AGM 8

State Council

“That the amendment to the ICPA (WA) Teacher Training Policy as circulated be adopted.”

Moved: *Kym Ross (State Council)*

Seconded: *Michelle Abbott (State Council)*

CARRIED

AGM 9

State Council

“That the Priority Country Areas Program (PCAP) Policy is removed from ICPA (WA) Policies.”

Moved: *Kym Ross (State Council)*

Seconded: *Michelle Abbott (State Council)*

CARRIED

Election of State Council for 2023 – 2024

All positions were declared vacant and the Returning Officer, Roxanne Morrissey took the chair.

President

Nominated: Chandra Ridley

Jane Cunningham

Seconded: Kym Ross

Duly Elected

Vice President

Nominated:

(VACANT)

Seconded:

Duly Elected

Secretary

Nominated: Chandra Ridley

Louise Ford

Seconded: Jane Cunningham

Duly Elected

Treasurer

Nominated: Sally Brindal

Jasmine Carmody

Seconded: Kym Ross

Duly Elected

Publicity Officer

Nominated: Jane Cunningham

Sally Brindal

Seconded: Kym Ross

Duly Elected

Webmaster

Nominated: Jane Cunningham

Kym Ross

Seconded: Chandra Ridley

Duly Elected

Lones Officer

Nominated: Kym Ross

Michelle Abbott

Seconded: Sally Brindal

Duly Elected

Committee

Chandra Ridley



2023: 51ST ICPA (WA) STATE CONFERENCE.
AGENDA MOTIONS, AGM, FINANCIAL REPORT, PORTFOLIO and BRANCH REPORTS,
ATTENDANCES and APOLOGIES. icpa.com.au/wa



Nominated: Jane Cunningham Seconded: Kym Ross Duly Elected

Committee

*Nominated: Jane Cunningham **Kym Ross** Duly Elected*
Seconded: Chandra Ridley

Committee

*Nominated: Kym Ross **Samantha Greay** Duly Elected*
Seconded: Sally Brindal

Committee

*Nominated: Lara Jensen **Jareth Forrester** Duly Elected*
Seconded: Louise Ford

Committee

*Nominated: Kym Ross **Arlene Sutherland** Duly Elected*
Seconded: Jane Cunningham

Annual General Meeting declared closed at 4:28pm

REPORTS

2023 ICPA (WA) President's Report

Sally Brindal

In the words of Slim Dusty, *“Looking forward, looking back, I’ve come a long way down the track, got a long way left to go”*. ICPA WA has certainly come a long way down the track in 50 years but we too still have a long way left to go.

Hon Dr. Tony Buti, Minister for Education; Aboriginal Affairs; Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, Mr Peter Rundle, Deputy Leader of The Nationals; Shadow Minister for Education and Training; International Education; Sport and Recreation; Racing and Gaming; Deputy Leader of the Opposition; Manager of Opposition Business, Ms Lisa Rodgers, Director General of Education, Federal and State Life members, members and guests welcome to the 51st annual State Conference of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Western Australia (ICPA WA).

Today we are celebrating 50 Years of ICPA WA. For those of you who may not know ICPA began in 1971 at Bourke, NSW. Margaret Lacy (now Hoare) from Polelle Station called a meeting of parents on the RFDS radio network on October 1, 1971 and the first branch was formed in WA: Meekatharra Air Branch with Margaret as President. Other Branches soon followed. WA’s first State Council was elected at Pastoral House in 1972 with Margaret Lacy as President. Over the course of 50 years there have been 31 different branches with 12 now remaining.

50 years is a fantastic milestone for an organisation that is a parent body group of volunteers. One of the reasons I believe that ICPA WA is still forging on 50 years later is because it has never lost sight of the true cause of the organisation.

The origins of ICPA WA may have been through the School of the Air network but over the years the focus has expanded to include all rural and remote students in Australia living on farms, pastoral properties, in mining camps – in fact, any non-metro area.

ICPA WA is driven by people at the grass roots level that are those who regularly face challenges and adversity in a bid to educate their children; and while barriers and disadvantage remain for our children, ICPA will always have a role to play. ICPA WA is the voice of our children. Without ICPA who is that one united voice to represent rural and remote families, that encompasses everything to do with accessing education, from kindy all the way through to tertiary, training and trade. There is no other organisation like us, and therefore we have a responsibility to make sure that we educate people, so they understand the isolation, barriers and disadvantage that rural and remote families face in accessing an education.

As I look back over the last 50 years of the struggles and the achievements of ICPA I am in total awe of the tenacity of the early founders. There were no emails or mobile phones back then. It was one finger typing with carbon paper and static on the radio.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the people who have been involved with ICPA since that first Meekatharra Air Branch meeting in 1971, to all the many members who have supported us and continue to support us, to the many organisations who have listened to our stories and to the leaders who have invoked change.

Over the course of the 50 years there have been many members on the executive and 20 presidents, of which 7 are here with us today. Unfortunately, Mrs Margaret Hoare the founding President of Meekatharra Air; the first ICPA



Branch in WA, and the founding President of ICPA WA is unable to be with us today, so I would like to take the liberty to replay a brief message Margaret sent to us for our 50th celebration last year when we were online.

We have put together a small display highlighting some of the issues that have occurred over the last 50 years and some of the wins we have had along the way. So, please, if you have time over the course of the day have a look. If you do, you will notice there are plenty of common themes. Many of today's current issues are still as pertinent today as they were 50 years ago. While the umbrella of those issues remain the same, the specific nature and detail has changed over time. Education is constantly evolving and sometimes some hard fought wins and gains are simply removed with the stroke of a pen when we have a change of government leaders. And so, the battles begin again.

The rules are constantly changing in the education system, seemingly at the whim of whoever was in government., and the state of the economy. But one thing hadn't changed, and that was the status of rural and remote families

As we reflect on the achievements of the ICPA we also continue to look forward to the next 50 years and beyond. ICPA WA is still as relevant today as it was 50 years ago as we continue to address disadvantage and barriers that impact the access to an appropriate education for all regional, rural and remote children.

Thank you for taking the time to join us in the 50 years celebrations.

Treasurer's Report

Michelle Abbott

2022 was a very busy time for ICPA (WA) State Council. We held our Annual State Conference in March online due to COVID-19. In August, we hosted ICPA Australia's Federal Conference. It was a wonderful two days of networking and collaboration, but I would like to acknowledge the enormous amount of work State Council did in the months leading up to the event.

I will now summarize the financial statements.

There was an increase in total income of \$11404.00. There are a few accounting reasons for this.

Note the figure for \$9,161 as reimbursements. At times State Council used this account for Federal Conference costs with the funds being reimbursed.

There is also a jump in donations, registrations, and sponsorship. There were donations that came into the State account which was for the Federal Conference account. This income is also offset in expenses against the Federal Conference costs when the funds were transferred back to Federal Conference.

We were also very grateful that Lotteries WA provided us a grant of \$21761.30 to encourage ICPA (WA) members to attend conference. We used this to help our members with travel costs and is reflected in the income line but also in the expense line of travel expenses.

There was an increase in purchases of additional promotional items. This was for the purchase of merchandise for the Federal Conference and our 50th State Conference.

As we are moving to a cashless environment ICPA (WA) has invested in a square reader which we can use at events to sell promotional items. It has also at times helped with other transactions. With the reader comes transaction fees and this is reflected in the increase in bank fees.



The Department of Education WA supported us again this year with a grant of \$10,000. We would like to acknowledge and thank the department for their ongoing support.

We would also like to thank Lakes District Branch, Midwest Branch, Foulkes-Taylor family and members that have donated directly to State Council.

As our conference in 2022 had to move to an online format, the money we received from sponsors was rolled over to this year's conference. We would like to thank Telstra, nbn Co, Connellan Airways, CBH, Great Southern Grammar, Great Northern Rural Services, Shire of Meekatharra, Shire of Murchison, Shire of Northampton, Green Collar, ABSA, GOPP, AFGRI, CSBP, Melissa Price, Shane Love, Raelene Hall, Sandra Carr, Lara Dalton and Byfield's Accounting.

I would also like to thank our conveners for this year's conference for all their hard work to make it a successful occasion.

In 2022, we had 251 members, 8 corporate members and 10 school corporate members.

Currently, in 2023 we have had 58% of members renew with 148 members to date. We urge branches to please contact their past members and encourage them to re-join.

I would like to thank Nicholas from Barris Accounting for preparing the 2022 financial statements.

Finally, I will be stepping down from State Council. It has been a wonderful experience being with a team of like-minded people who are committed to such a valuable cause. Special thanks to Sally and Kym for all your support.



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INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT 2022

To: The Members of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association WA (Inc.)

Scope

We have reviewed and audited the financial statements of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association WA (Inc.) for the year ended **31st December 2022**.

The Treasurer is responsible for these reports and has determined that they meet the needs of the Members. We have conducted an independent audit of these reports in order to express an opinion on it to the members of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association WA (Inc.) only.

Our audit has been conducted in accordance with relevant accounting and auditing standards to provide reasonable assurance on whether the reports are free of material misstatement. Our procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the reports provided. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion whether, in all material respects, the financial report is presented fairly, so as to present a view which is consistent with our understanding of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association WA (Inc.)’s financial position, the results of its operations and its cash flows.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Qualification

None.

Audit Opinion

In our opinion, except for the limitations described above, the financial statements represent a True and Fair View of the financial position of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association WA (Inc.) as at the 31 December 2022.

1st February 2023

Nicholas Barris CPA
Director
Barris Accounting

B TAXATION FOR INDIVIDUALS & SMALL BUSINESS
B SELF-MANAGED SUPERANNUATION COMPLIANCE
B BUSINESS ADVISORY



**THE ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENT'S
 ASSOCIATION OF WA (INC.)
 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR YEAR ENDED
 31/12/2022**

PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT:

INCOME	2022	2021
Department of Education Grant	9,091	9,091
Donations, Registrations & Sponsorship	36,187	8,824
Fundraising Income	3,178	2,815
Interest Received	389	-
Reimbursements	9,161	-
State Conference Funds	7,751	35,041
Subscriptions	19,998	18,580
TOTAL INCOME	85,755	74,351
EXPENSES		
Audit Fees	470	470
Advertising	591	800
Bank Charges	355	42
Depreciation Expense	256	404
Donations	4,155	4,356
Federal Conference Costs	15,701	-
Insurance	3,836	4,007
Postage	-	345
Printing & Stationery	3,793	3,433
Purchases (including Promotional Items)	8,139	4,276
State Meeting Expenses (including related Travel Costs)	14,617	24,189
Subscriptions (Branch & Federal Council)	4,764	4,269
Sundry Expenses (Storage Costs & Fundraising Books & Mugs)	1,364	1,223
Teleconference Costs	229	231
Travel Expenses (Other)	22,617	3,511
Uniforms (Badges)	-	48
TOTAL EXPENSES	80,886	51,603
NET PROFIT (LOSS)	4,869	22,747

Note: Figures above exclusive of GST

**THE ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENT'S
 ASSOCIATION OF WA (INC.)
 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR YEAR ENDED
 31/12/2022**

BALANCE SHEET:

CURRENT ASSETS	2022	2021
Bank Accounts:		
Commonwealth Bank Account (018)	28,451	44,748
Commonwealth Bank Account (357)	65,393	45,004
Commonwealth Bank Account (759)	2,508	2,508
Commonwealth Bank Account (897)	3,000	3,000
Commonwealth Bank Account (553)	6,478	16,078
Paypal Account	1,940	3,028
Australian Taxation Office:		
GST Refundable (Activity Statement December Quarter 2022)	753	-
ATO Interegated Client Account Balance 31 December 2022	151	-
Debtors:		
Accounts Receivable	10,000	1,650
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	118,674	116,016
NON CURRENT ASSETS		
Fixed Assets:		
* Plant & Equipment (Pre 2012)	17,127	17,127
* Less: Accumulated Depreciation (Pre 2012)	(11,652)	(11,652)
Plant & Equipment	5,776	5,723
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(5,574)	(5,465)
TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSETS	5,677	5,733
TOTAL ASSETS	124,351	121,749
LIABILITIES		
Creditors:		
Accounts Payable	100	2,196
Australian Taxation Office:		
GST Accruals Difference	900	-
GST Payable (Activity Statement December Quarter 2021)	-	121
GST Adjustment Account	125	1,075
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,125	3,391
NET ASSETS	123,226	118,358
EQUITY		
Members Funds	118,357	95,610
Current Earnings	4,869	22,747
TOTAL EQUITY	123,226	118,357

* Note: Balance Sheet Contains Plant & Equipment (which represents old data prior to 2012). No historical asset register history recorded.

ICPA
Depreciation Register
For the Year Ended 31 December 2022

Equipment Description	Date	Amount	OWDV	Adjustments	Dep Rate	Business %	Dep Amt	WDV
Note: Pre 2012 Asset Register (No Details Provided!)	30/06/2012	17,127	5,499	-	0%	0%	-	5,499
Equipment Purchased	16/02/2016	624	0	-	100%	100%	-	-
Go To Meeting Licence	27/02/2017	624	0	-	100%	100%	-	-
Cannon MGS765 Printer	26/06/2017	63	0	-	100%	100%	-	-
Seagate Harddrive	19/07/2017	96	0	-	100%	100%	-	-
Harvey Norman Computer for Treasurer	13/04/2018	1,206	135	-	50%	100%	68	68
2TB Hard Drive	31/01/2018	84	0	-	100%	100%	-	-
Flag Pole	28/02/2019	162	0	-	100%	100%	-	-
Logo Embroidery Set Costs	01/04/2019	104	0	-	100%	100%	-	-
Flag Accessories	02/07/2019	547	0	-	100%	100%	-	-
Portable Display	02/07/2019	1,432	269	-	50%	100%	135	135
Table Clothes	02/07/2019	676	0	-	100%	100%	-	-
Display Stand	22/07/2019	105	0	-	100%	100%	-	-
Square Reader	11/08/2022	54	54	-	100%	100%	54	-
Total		22,903	5,957				256	5,701

ICPA Australia Federal Council Report

Alana Moller President ICPA (Aust)

ICPA Western Australia President, distinguished guests, Federal Life Members, State and Branch Life Members, fellow ICPA members and friends, it is with great pleasure that I present the Federal Council update. Many thanks to the Western Australia State Council and Convenors for making this event possible and thank you for the opportunity to address the conference.

Before I begin I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we meet today and I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Mahatma Ghandi once said “the future depends on what you do today”. I think this resonates with the purpose of ICPA conferences, where members come together to discuss what we can do today to improve the future education of rural and remote children.

Like all conferences I feel exhilarated to be here to listen and learn, but mostly to hear the passionate and heartfelt voices of ICPA members who are living and breathing challenges some could not fathom, just to ensure that their children have the brightest future possible.

For Federal Council, since last year’s State Conferences, there has been a time of change and adjustment, in particular with a new Federal Government elected in May and with life finally taking on a semblance of normality after several years of COVID-19 quandaries.



During the 2022 election campaign and caretaker mode though unable to advocate with Government or departments, we took the opportunity to meet as a Council team in Canberra in May 2022. This was the first time some of our councillors had met each other face to face. We also met with representatives from the National Farmers Federation and the National Rural Women's Coalition to discuss our commonalities and where we could collaborate on behalf of the rural and remote communities we advocate for.

Immediately following the election and appointment of the new cabinet, we made contact with key new Ministers including the Hon. Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, the Hon. Anthony Chisholm, Assistant Minister for Education, the Hon. Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications, the Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services and the Hon. Dr Anne Aly MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth to familiarise them with ICPA and share with them our full suite of portfolio briefing papers.

It was then on to our first face to face Federal Conference since 2019, finally an opportunity after 3 years to come together, reacquaint, collaborate and mingle. My first time presiding over a fully face to face conference, was a privilege and inspiring. I hope that for those who joined us in Perth the experience was just as rewarding. My congratulations to all involved in bringing the conference to fruition and a very special mention to the Western Australia Convening Committee who wholeheartedly welcomed us to the west. It certainly was an uncertain beast at times due to looming threats of COVID restrictions, but we got there in the end! I also thank all those who supported us to enable the opportunity to come together – without the generosity of many, we could never achieve such extraordinary events.

At Conference we farewelled Federal Councillors Lisa Slade, Jane O'Brien and Sally Sullivan as well as ICPA stalwarts Raelene Hall as Pedals Editor and Publisher and Archivist Julia Materne and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to these ladies. ICPA will always be better off for having them on its side. We were pleased to welcome new team members – Membership Officer Judy Newton, Pedals Editor Hannah Calcino and Publisher Tracey Dewell and Archivist Carmel Elliott. With big shoes to fill, all have taken no time to step up to the roles and have been gratefully welcomed to the folds of the extended Federal Council team. Late last year regrettably Suzanne Wilson stepped off Federal Council in light of her commitments to convening the 2023 Federal Conference. Suzanne's incredible efforts in her time on Federal Council both as Secretary and then as Publicity Officer made her an invaluable asset to ICPA and we should all be tremendously grateful she put her hand up back in 2017.

I am delighted that Ali Allison, has stepped into the role of Publicity Officer and is already ably navigating the role with passion and enthusiasm! We also welcomed to Federal Council recently, Miffy Waugh from Queensland and Kylie Toynton who hails from New South Wales. It is exciting for our team to have new faces on board and I look forward to working with them and the rest of Federal Council over the coming months.

Without outstanding individuals willing to come on board, we could not maintain the ongoing work of ICPA Australia. My gratitude to all, new and old, for your commitment and efforts.

Following the conference, the 2022-23 Federal Council Year set off in a Carpe Diem frame of mind, we seized the day, with all motion correspondence despatched by the end of September, meetings held, events attended and there were actions aplenty, as we keenly continued the momentum of conference and raised and advocated for the topics that matter most to members at every opportunity.

In October, we embarked on delegations at Parliament House for the first time since May 2021, where in three groups we were able to cover 33 meetings in just one day, including with Minister Jason Clare, Senator Anthony Chisholm and Minister Anne Aly, amongst other new and familiar faces. The opportunity definitely enlivened us and there was a feeling of positivity in the halls of parliament.

Federal Council continues to engage regularly with Federal Government departments including the Department of Social Services, Services Australia, the Department of Education and key stakeholders. This engagement extends to submission opportunities to Government. Most recently we lodged our 2023-24 Pre-Budget Submission in which we once again focussed on 6 longstanding topics as our key recommendations, all of which have been costed to show that a small investment can make a big difference including an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children Allowance (AIC), AIC for 3-4 year olds, a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA), Mobile Playgroup funding, an increase of the Commonwealth Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA) and a Rural Hardship Education Fund (RHEF).

These connections with the Government and other stakeholders allow us to discuss topics across all portfolios and I am pleased to give updates in some areas that may be of interest to members.

In breaking news for boarding, we were thrilled to recently receive that news of new scholarships for rural, regional and remote students on Wednesday and look forward to sharing more on this information comes to hand.

Communications has seen rapid growth and enhancements in rural and remote areas in recent years, most recently we welcomed news of a trial of faster Sky Muster satellite services and unmetering of data. ICPA (Aust) encourages members to raise with us specific connectivity challenges to be presented to the Government and other stakeholders to ensure that future developments are directed to areas with maximum advantage for educational access.

NAPLAN testing has been a hot topic in the Curriculum portfolio with changes over the past few years, specifically the move to fully online testing and a change of dates for the testing window, commencing this year. Federal Council has endeavoured to keep members abreast of changes and information. We encourage members to engage with the ACARA suite of websites where a variety of information and resources, related to all curriculum topics, including NAPLAN are housed at <https://www.acara.edu.au/>

Of interest in the Early Childhood Education and Care portfolio is that the Early Childhood Section of the Federal Department of Education is conducting a comprehensive review of all early childhood programs and systems in the process of developing an Early Years Strategy. ICPA (Aust) will be lodging a submission for this review.

In the area of Specific Education Needs it is pleasing to report that from 1 March 2023, several improvements will be made to items on the MBS including M10 (face-to-face) and M18 (telehealth equivalent), currently available for children with potential complex Neurodevelopmental Disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and other eligible disabilities. Further a new incentive for doctors and nurse practitioners who choose to live and work in rural and remote Australia to have their HELP debt wiped or reduced was recently announced.

In the area of post school education, we can report that the Department has confirmed that the Tertiary Access Payment will be a permanent program and without caps on numbers eligible for the payment. We also welcome the new programs from the Government to assist in the training sector, including the 'TAFE Technology Fund' as well as the 'Fee Free TAFE' initiative and have encouraged the Government to ensure these programs extend to rural and remote students and locations.

Further details on some of these and much more across all portfolios can be found in our 2022 Conference Motion Update which was sent out in early March. ICPA (Aust) also provides portfolio and other updates and information within our Federal Focus newsletter, formerly known as the Branch Bulletin, which is emailed out to all members regularly.



Members, ICPA IS FOR YOU and Federal Council represents all rural and remote families, across early childhood education, distance education, rural schools, boarding, tertiary and training. I cannot reiterate enough that you are very welcome to make contact with Federal Council at any time – we are everyday Mums, wives, home tutors, teachers, and jills-of-all trades living and working in rural and remote Australia and we are honoured to be able to assist you in any way we can – you’ll find our details on the website. While we cannot guarantee we can do everything, we will do what we can to continue the legacy of ICPA to achieve equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for our geographically isolated children.

Recently Federal Council has embarked on governance training to not only upskill Councillors but to also ensure that we continue to represent our members appropriately. Our forefathers left our organisation in good hands with the processes in place and it is to the current Federal Council’s advantage that we can build on what is already a solid foundation to ensure the longevity of ICPA and that the individuals who make ICPA what it is are supported and valued.

Following on from the motion carried at conference last year “that ICPA (Aust) allocates funds each year to an external professional consultancy to advise and mentor on how to best gain traction on some longstanding lobbies”, Federal Council has engaged media and communications specialist C7even to enhance our advocacy on some of our long term topics. We are excited at this opportunity and how it may help us to clock some extra wins in the future. We may however need YOUR help in so doing this – we cannot get our message out unless we have numbers and stories and we may be reaching out to members in the coming months to ask for your assistance.

Which brings us to the here and now and what is ahead for Federal Council in the coming months. We started off this year with a joint councils meeting in Melbourne, to discuss combined advocacy, governance and administrative activities. We appreciate and value every opportunity to collaborate with our State counterparts. Sally, Kim and Michelle, congratulations on surviving and thriving in your time on the Western Australia Executive. ICPA in Western Australia have been privileged to have you on board, especially through some of the most challenging and unprecedented times of the past 3 years. I wish you all the best for what is ahead. Federal Council is pleased to be able to be represented at all State Conferences over the coming months and hope to hold delegations and face to face meetings again in Canberra in May.

Then the 2023 Federal Conference will be coming up in Darwin in late July. Keep a lookout for upcoming communications on the event. Now is a great time to be thinking of topics for motions for your Branch to raise at conference. Don’t be afraid to put up your hand if you have an issue that you believe needs to be addressed. If you require any assistance with motion writing, or would like more information on Conference, feel free to contact Federal Council.

On a personal note, I thank members for the privilege of once again being your Federal President. I am like everyone else, a parent living in rural Australia who knows that equitable education for our children is key not only for them and their families but for the communities we are a part of and I hold the hope that what we do today will make a difference in the future. More so though, ICPA is a reminder that despite where we live we are not alone.

Thank you for listening and I hope that from here on in you all have an outstanding and enjoyable conference.

REVISE Conference Report

Denise Hilsz (Chairperson)

REVISE is the acronym for Retired Educator Volunteers for Isolated Students Education.

As the new Chair of REVISE WA it is a privilege to join you all for the 2023 ICPA Conference and extend our congratulations to you for your 50 years of service. Your organisation represents a group of people who are passionate and determined in their endeavours to make a difference to children and families from regional and remote areas of WA. Working in association with ICPA The REVISE WA committee, tutors and supporters share that common goal of quality education and opportunities for children in regional WA. We too work hard to make a difference.

In 2022 REVISE WA celebrated 30 years of service to children and their families in remote regional areas of WA. The celebratory morning tea held in December and included more than 50 guests from the ICPA, past committee members, parents and tutors. Certificates of Appreciation were presented to Ray and Mary Cahalin, Pat Peake and Mary Wake for their dedicated service to children and parents from across Western Australia.

Over the past 30 years, 205 tutors, who are retired teachers, have provided educational support for children learning by Distance Education. More than 615 placements of tutors in remote locations like Mitchell River, Purnululu National Park, Dirk Hartog Island and Balladonia have supported students and parents. So we have made a significant contribution in the last 30 years and we too are passionate and determined to continue our work in the area of educational support.

Our Annual General Meeting held in December 2022 saw all of our dedicated and enthusiastic office bearers reappointed which enables us to sustain and extend our work and new projects.

The past two years have been challenging for all of us due to COVID and this reduced our capacity to maintain our tutor visits at the usual levels.

Placement data for 2022 lists 8 placements: Including the following stations: Mt Jackson, Yarrabubba, Koordarrie, Balfour Downs, Paroo, Dairy Creek and Yarlalweelor. These placements involved 30 weeks of tutoring

In 2023 we have received 3 placement requests for Barn Hill, Wondinong and Yarlalweelor Stations. Historically we have significantly higher numbers of requests for Terms 3 and 4.

REVISE WA is a proactive group. We are continually seeking to improve our educational services and support to regional families.

Our plans and projects for 2023 include:

- Submitting our application for the 3 yearly Grant from the Department of Education.
- Seeking donations and support from philanthropic individuals and organisations.
- Recruiting new tutors through media and publicity.
- Promoting our services through Schools of the Air, SOTA Home Tutor Week, local P&C's and links with School of Isolated and Distance Education.
- Providing support for newly appointed governesses as required.
- Updating our feedback on placements to include input from students.

We look to all of you members of ICPA to spread the word out there in the regions to your friends, families and workers who may not know about the educational support which REVISE WA is able to provide...word of mouth and recommendation is always the best advertising.

It is a privilege to work with the dedicated team of REVISE WA Committee members, tutors and ICPA representatives. Together, we aim to sustain and extend our work to support the education of students in remote locations. Like so many similar organisations across Australia including ICPA, REVISE WA makes a difference in so many ways to the children and families in remote regional areas.

We look forward to continuing our work in the future and thank ICPA for their ongoing support and involvement in the work of REVISE WA.

PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

Allowances Report

Chandra Ridley – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

At the 2022 State Conference, allowance motions A1, A2 and A3 were raised regarding increasing the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA).

A letter was sent to the Minister for Education, Hon. Sue Ellery. The Minister responded on 30th June stating that the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) will be increased by \$30 in 2023 in line with the Consumer Price Index to \$1350 per annum.

In 2021 the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) commenced, this is a one-off, means-tested payment of up to \$5000 to assist eligible students with the cost of relocating to undertake tertiary study for school leavers from inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote areas who relocate more than 90 minutes by public transport from their family home, undertake a full-time, eligible higher level tertiary education course (Certificate IV or above) in the year following Year 12 or equivalent and the parental income is below \$250 000.

Changes to the eligibility and payment structure occurred in response to the evaluation of the program in late 2021 (which ICPA (Aust) provided feedback to) commenced in 2022 including:

- Eligibility extended to inner regional students
- Eligible students from outer regional, remote, and remote areas, will continue to receive up to \$5,000 in two payments, and students from inner regional areas will receive a single payment of \$3,000
- Application and payment process for **all** TAP applicants will be administered solely through Services Australia

Federal Council will continue to seek further adjustments to the TAP including:

- The alignment of the TAP to the Relocation Scholarship payment rates, thus an annual and ongoing payment to recognise the costs not just being borne in the first year of the student's course.
- Non-means tested and therefore does not jeopardise the eligibility of payments including Youth Allowance (YA) and ABSTUDY.
- Extended to students who do not go straight to university or onto a VET course – for gap year students, acknowledging they still have the high cost of relocation.
- Ideally, the removal of the \$250,000 parent income threshold criteria.

- Means testing - the choice of one-of-three-year provision for Independent Youth Allowance (IYA) should be applied here also to allow for fluctuating incomes brought about by drought, sales etc.
- Apprentices - Inclusion of rural and remote Australian Apprentices who fulfil the criteria.

From 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2024, apprentices training in Priority Occupations including Aged or Disabled Carer and Metal Fabricator can receive assistance of up to \$5000 (\$1250 paid every six months for their first two years), to ensure they are supported to complete their training.

From 1 July 2024, the Australian Apprentice Training Support Payment will continue to target areas of skills needed with apprentices training in Priority Occupations able to receive assistance of up to \$3000 (\$750 paid every six months for their first two years). The full Australian Apprenticeship Priority List can be found at dewr.gov.au

The Assistance for Isolated Children, Distance Education Allowance has increased from \$4,428 per child per year in 2022 to \$4,698 in 2023. The Basic Boarding Allowance has increased to \$9,396 from \$8,856 in 2022 and the Additional Allowance has increased to \$2,695 from \$2,540.

BOARDING

Table of BAHA Rates 2013 – 2023:

2013	\$2,105
2014	\$2,105
2015	\$2,105
2016	\$2,105
2017	\$2,105
2018	\$1,948
2019	\$1,791
2020	\$1,634
2021	\$1,477
2022	\$1,320
2023	\$1,350

Table of Applications 2014 – 2022:

School Year	Total Applications
2014	1247
2015	1397
2016	1503
2017	1453
2018	1244
2019	1375
2020	1338
2021	1279
2022	1167*

*Applications still being accepted and paid

Communications Report

Sally Brindal – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

There were no communication motions presented at the 2022 Annual State Conference.

REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDEPENDENT REVIEW COMMITTEE (RTIRC)

The Australian Government formally responded to the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC) report: A step change in demand, to which ICPA (WA) made a submission. The full response is available at: www.rtirc.gov.au, along with the report.

The response has five key elements:

- A new \$811.8 million initiative, Connecting Regional Australia, to further invest in digital infrastructure, services and skills, particularly mobile.

- \$450 million to toward a major expansion and upgrade of the nbn fixed wireless network with flow-on benefits to Sky Muster users.
- \$5 million in funding to expand and continue the Regional Tech Hub to provide consumer support.
- Further work on key regulatory and policy issues, and
- A new, more co-ordinated and strategic approach to regional communications investment,

As identified in the 2022-23 Budget, the Australian Government has committed \$1.3 billion in direct investment in regional telecommunications.

TELSTRA

Telstra looks forward to discussing the details of the RTIRC recommendations with their customers, stakeholders and the Federal Government to best support the aims of the review. This includes deciding how they invest the additional \$75 million of funding they have specifically set aside to further enhance connectivity in regional Australia, as well as their \$200 million co-investment fund that aims to improve regional connectivity over the four years ending FY25.

Telstra has also committed \$150 million to improve the regional mobile network customer experience. This includes addressing areas of network congestion by upgrading over 180 3G sites, augmenting capacity at selected 4G sites with high traffic, and further 4G site optimisations to better balance 3G/4G traffic and address localised customer demand.

At the beginning of 2022, Telstra announced a 10-year arrangement that would allow TPG Telecom to acquire mobile network services from Telstra that would deliver faster mobile service speeds in more regional locations around Australia. The arrangement would provide access to some of TPG Telecom's spectrum across 4G and 5G. This additional spectrum would significantly reduce the increased congestion in busy times that has been caused by more people moving to regional areas during COVID. It would also enable Telstra to continue upgrading their network to provide even better coverage for their customers, while maintaining their network advantage of around one million square kilometres. Telstra would also obtain access to, and deploy infrastructure on, up to 169 additional TPG Telecom mobile sites also improving coverage for all customers in the zone.

Telstra and TPG Telecom (TPGT) asked for ACCC authorisation to share their separately owned spectrum for the delivery of mobile services in a regional coverage zone. Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) submitted that these proposed arrangements could benefit people living in the regional coverage zone by improving the quality of existing Telstra mobile services and increasing the choice of mobile providers. However, ACCAN also questioned aspects of the arrangements and urge the ACCC to closely examine the longer-term implications for consumers.

The ACCC decided to block the \$1.8 billion regional network sharing deal, arguing it would entrench Telstra's already dominant market position and discourage innovation and investment by competitors. TPG said it would take the matter to the competition tribunal and described the decision as *"a missed opportunity to deliver greater competition and choice for the people of regional Australia"*.

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Telstra has announced a boost in the support it offers customers in rural, regional and remote Australia.

As part of the Telstra Connected Communities program, Telstra will triple its annual investment in community engagement activities and support organisations such as chambers of commerce and other local groups. They will

also collaborate closely with nbn Local to improve digital inclusion and community technology solutions, as well as partner on emergency response and preparedness.

- 100% of stores were back in Telstra ownership by September 2022. Telstra welcome feedback from customers' visits and hopes the ownership will be able to better align systems and processes to give customers a better-integrated experience in-store and online.
- 100% of all call centres were back on shore by July 2022.
- Telstra will double the number of locally based Regional Engagement Managers to work with communities to improve customer experience, provide information about coverage, performance and management of outages and build connectivity literacy and digital capability.
- Telstra will triple the number of highly experienced Regional Network Advisors to work with customers to address complex network issues and, for the first time, appoint a Remote Community Advocate. The Remote Community Advocate will monitor the performance of the network and communicate recovery times to affected communities as part of responding to the needs of these communities. The Remote Community Advocate will be part of a new Telstra Customer Advocate Council reporting directly to the Telstra CEO.
- The Telstra Customer Advocate Council will ensure regional, rural and remote customers have an even louder voice at the table. The Council members also include the Chief Customer Advocate, Chief First Nations Advocate and the Chief Regional Advocate.
- Telstra is looking to connect teams internally, e.g. retail teams with field technicians to create better communications within Telstra to help address customer concerns/issues.
- Regional Business Centres will be operational for business-based queries, although customers can approach retail shops the Business Centre will have more expertise in business-based solutions.

The Connected Communities Program also involves visiting communities to connect with customers and help resolve customer issues. In 2022 Boyd Brown, Regional General Manager, Telstra and Eva Colic, Regional Engagement Manager, along with a Telstra Team, visited a number of areas including Roebourne, Marble Bar, Nullagine, Meekatharra, Wiluna, Laverton, Leonora, Kambalda amongst others. They covered thousands of kilometres offering service and support to communities and reviewed outstanding debts to Telstra from prior operations, mostly now cleared.

Similar visits to other areas are to be co-ordinated in the future. Please contact me if you think your community would benefit from such a visit.

ONE WEB PARTNERSHIP

In early March, Telstra partnered with the low earth orbit (LEO) satellite communications company, OneWeb, to explore new solutions for improved digital connectivity across Australia and the Asia Pacific region.

The non-exclusive agreement brings together Telstra's telecommunications expertise in Australia, and OneWeb's satellite capability to deliver innovative connectivity in the future. The partnership complements Telstra's T25 ambition to grow and extend its network leadership position and boost mobile coverage across the country, in addition to being another key milestone for OneWeb's path to global coverage.

The partnership reinforces Telstra's ongoing commitment to providing world-class communications for regional Australia at a time when investment in expanding digital infrastructure remains a top priority for the country's economic recovery and development post-pandemic.

Telstra envisages many opportunities for their consumer, small business and enterprise customers using LEO satellite connectivity, including additional resiliency for emergency services and agritech.

CONNECTING RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA FROM SPACE

Telstra's new partnership with the global leader in satellite communications, ViaSat, will help connect rural, regional and remote Australia from space.

Telstra will use their InfraCo assets to enable the final part of ViaSat-3 – a three-part global satellite 'constellation' covering the Americas, Europe and Asia-Pacific

The first ViaSat-3 will be launched this year over the Americas, with the other two satellites expected to launch at later dates. When complete, the constellation will cover 4.1 billion people in 48 countries – more than half the world's population.

A satellite is basically a self-contained communications system in space that uses radio waves to send and receive signals to antennas on earth.

Satellites offer cost-effective coverage to hard-to-reach places and huge capacity, which is important as data-rich technologies like Internet of Things (IoT), edge computing and new 5G uses become more in demand.

For a satellite to deliver communications it needs to interact with infrastructure on the ground. That is where Telstra comes in.

ViaSat will build and launch the satellites and Telstra will build the on-ground infrastructure that will enable the project to deliver over 1Tbps of total network capacity and provide data and video streaming at a speed of more than 150Mbps.

The 16.5-year deal is a first-of-its-kind infrastructure build for Telstra and makes ViaSat one of Telstra Enterprise's largest customers. This project will help Telstra keep up with the increasing demand for data so more people in rural, regional and remote Australia can participate in the growing digital economy.

STAND-ALONE POWER SUPPLY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Earlier in 2022 Telstra partnered with Horizon Power to launch their first mobile base station in Western Australia that is connected by a Stand-alone Power Supply (SPS).

The move helps bolster the resilience of regional telecommunications in the Mt Ney area east of Esperance as well as reduce carbon emissions and improve community safety. The SPS initiative effectively takes the site off the mains power grid, with the power supply now via solar power, backed up with battery banks and a genset. The SPS unit is powered by eight kilowatt (kW) solar panels, a 16.8kW hour battery and a 26kW backup generator, which together can deliver 12kW of continuous power.

This will enable the tower to continue operating during natural disasters and emergencies; which may impact a traditional network of poles and wires, keeping the local community connected and informed at crucial times. The system was delivered by Horizon Power and its joint venture partner, Boundary Power, and is an example of one of the many commercial opportunities that can be leveraged by off-grid technology.

TELSTRA DAY

Telstra resurfaced Telstra Day in 2022. You could score smartphones, tablets, speakers, smartwatches and accessories for a discounted price. Telstra Day comes around sporadically, and there is also a caveat – each deal is only valid for the day.

SCAMS

Telstra announced the activation of a new SMS scam filter tool to protect consumers from scam text messages. The new SMS scam filter is part of their Cleaner Pipes initiative.

The number of scam text messages is on the rise – in 2021 there were more than 11,000 reports of malicious texts on Android devices compared to 50 reports in 2020. The new SMS scam filter feature blocks scam text messages at the network level before they reach mobile devices. Telstra undertook a 3-month internal pilot of the SMS scam blocking filter, with two and a half thousand employees taking part. Telstra is now rolling this technology out to every customer on the Telstra network. The SMS scam filter is automatically activated and there is no action required by customers.

The SMS filter works by using automatic machine scanning to pick out suspicious content such as malicious links and combines this with other patterns and characteristics like time, sender, the number of messages sent and the recipient. There are protections in place to ensure legitimate messages still get through, so commercial messages from banks and other large businesses, government departments, emergency alerts and Telstra applications like MessageBank will not be blocked. Fast-forward a few months and Telstra have blocked a staggering number of scam texts. In the past three months alone, their system has blocked just over 185 million malicious texts. That is around 1,500 malicious texts blocked every minute.

Telstra takes its privacy obligations seriously. They know there is a fine balance between protecting customers and ensuring their privacy. While the technology is learning, it might flag a potentially suspicious message asking if it is a scam. To avoid blocking something legitimate, the new message format may be reviewed by their specialists to identify if the message is a scam, but the details of the recipients will remain masked. You can find further detail on Telstra's approach to privacy, including their privacy statement at <https://www.telstra.com.au/privacy>.

Telstra has a lot of tips on how to stay safe on www.telstra.com. If you receive something you think is a scam, you should report it to Telstra. It helps them track scams in the wild and teaches their system what to look out for next. To report a scam, you can email Telstra at scams@telstra.com and they can investigate.

You can also report a scam to Telstra using their website or call them on 13 22 00. If you want to learn more, they also have more cyber safety advice on our website.

eSMART

Telstra Foundation is a supporter of eSmart libraries.

What is eSmart?

eSmart, an initiative of the Alanna & Madeline Foundation, helps schools maintain a supportive and connected community to reduce online and offline bullying and increase well-being. eSmart offers a set of educational tools.

- For Principals – a how-to guide on tackling bullying and cyberbullying.
- For teachers – lesson plans and training.
- For students – classroom activities and active learning.
- For parents – how to see the signs and help.

Over 2,200 schools are implementing the eSmart Schools framework to help their school manage online safety, more than 80% of libraries are teaching their community to be safe online and over 200,000 students have registered for the eSmart Digital Licence. An online resource teaching smart online behaviour.

FREE WI-FI

On 25 August 2022, Telstra announced free Wi-Fi would be available to all Australians on approximately 3,000 of their payphones, with plans to upgrade their entire network of almost 12,000 payphones over the coming years. What this means is that Wi-Fi from select payphones will be free for all Australians – whether they are a Telstra customer or not. Giving more Australians access to free internet will help more people stay connected - whether they are in a vulnerable situation and need access to help, or just want to connect with friends or family.

A recent survey by the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) found that 60 percent of respondents agree that free public Wi-Fi is important to them, however, only 36 percent are using free public Wi-Fi near where they live, and a further 31 percent do not even know where they can access it.

TELSTRA'S 3G NETWORK CLOSING ON 30 JUNE 2024

Why are they making this change?

- Demand for mobile data is growing at around 30 per cent per annum.
- To help customers benefit from new technology – from making a simple voice call to using HD video and remote sensors to manage livestock – the 3G network needs to upgrade to 4G and 5G.
- 4G and 5G networks are much more efficient than 3G – they can connect more devices, provide higher speeds, and have lower latency. They also use the same towers and spectrum frequencies as 3G.
- To bring customers across Australia the benefits of 4G and 5G the 3G network will be closing on 30 June 2024.

How can you prepare?

The 3G network closure is a little over a year away. Telstra are sending out letters and other communication to inform customers who may still have active 3G devices about the change. This may include mobile phones, tablets, dongles, monitoring devices and EFTPOS machines.

For devices that can receive SMS messages, Telstra has also sent a message directly to the service that is actively using the 3G network advising of the need to upgrade the device.

To be prepared, you will need to upgrade your device(s) to the 4G or 5G network prior to June 30th 2024.

Telstra's commitment:

- Telstra will continue to work with customers to help them move to 4G and 5G devices.
- The entire 3G network will remain open until 30th June 2024.
- Impacted customers include those using 3G mobile and IoT devices, such as EFTPOS machines, which operate on the 3G network only. These customers will be able to continue using their device until 30 June 2024, but after this date, if the device has not been updated to be 4G or 5G compatible, it will no longer be able to get a 3G signal.
- Telstra understands the impact this upgrade has on customers and is committed to supporting their move to a 4G or 5G capable device before the closure date through regular and proactive engagement. Telstra is also putting a strong focus on assisting vulnerable customers.
- Before Telstra closes the 3G network, they will expand their 4G network, so it provides equivalent coverage to 3G today. Simply put, if you currently only receive 3G coverage, you should receive 4G coverage following 3G closure.
- Telstra are conducting detailed checks to ensure their 4G coverage (as they upgrade sites) is equivalent to 3G coverage.

- Telstra is also using re-purposed 3G spectrum (850 MHz) to support their 5G rollout, so they can expand their 5G coverage in regional Australia earlier and more extensively than would otherwise be possible.

BLUE TICK PHONES

Connectivity is becoming more crucial than ever – and in regional and remote areas it can mean complete isolation. This is why, for the last 15 years, Telstra has been putting phones to the test to see if they deserve a Blue Tick.

The Telstra Blue Tick is the mark they give phones that their technicians and engineers have thoroughly tested to ensure they deliver superior voice coverage in regional and remote areas.

Regional coverage tips for Blue Tick

If you want to get every bit of coverage you can and the most out of your Telstra Blue Tick phone, here are a few tips to follow, straight out of the Telstra lab:

- Hold your phone as light as possible – how you hold your phone matters a lot. So next time you are trying to make a call on the edge of coverage, try not to squeeze the life out of your phone.
- Turn on Wi-Fi calling and SMS – if you get coverage outside, but not inside your home, you can turn Wi-Fi calling and SMS on to make phone calls or send texts like normal using your home internet, even without any mobile coverage.
- Use a headset or headphones for calls – do not need to worry about how you are holding your phone if you are not holding it, right?
- Take a look at repeaters or antennas – an external antenna or repeater is much larger than the antenna in your phone and can pick up coverage your phone cannot. It then repeats that signal short distances for your phone to connect to.

AUSTRALIAN DIGITAL INCLUSION INDEX (ADII)

The Index uses survey data to measure progress on digital inclusion across three dimensions including access, affordability and digital ability. It explores how these dimensions vary across both the country and different social groups.

In September this year, Telstra decided to undertake additional research to widen the data informing the Index. This means that they expect to release the next ADII report in 2023.

The additional research being undertaken includes:

- Additional First Nations data is being collected through the [Mapping the Digital Gap](#) project.
- A deep dive into Queenslanders' experiences of digital inclusion through a collaboration with the Queensland Government and the ADII research team at RMIT and Swinburne University of Technology.
- Additional ADII survey data to provide more in-depth insights into digital inclusion in the Northern Territory and Tasmania.

After the 2023 report, Telstra will publish the ADII every second year to allow more time for consideration of trends and collection of data.

GET ONLINE WEEK

Telstra was the Principal Supporting Partner of 'Get Online Week' which ran from 17-23 October. Through this partnership with the Good Things Foundation, Telstra supported Australians to build their digital skills. This is another way Telstra is helping to close the digital divide and build a connected future, so everyone can thrive.

TELSTRA SUBMISSION

Telstra recently made a submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Co-investment in Multi-carrier Regional Mobile Infrastructure.

To ensure lasting and positive outcomes for those living and working in regional communities, Telstra believes that government policy and funding programs, concerning co-investment in regional infrastructure should be designed with five key considerations in mind.

- Continued recognition of the importance of government co-funding, ensuring that this is focussed on areas where investment would be otherwise uneconomic.
- A co-ordinated and place-based approach by government at all levels.
- Program rules should not be overly restrictive or prescriptive but should generally support commercially agreed sharing.
- Funding for more than just outdoor black spots, and
- Using the best technology for the job (and ensuring people know about it).

You can read more about these five key considerations at: [Submissions – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](https://aph.gov.au)

3G CONCERNS/CONNECTIVITY ISSUES

Telstra has been in discussions with ICPA regarding members' issues particularly around 3G concerns. Telstra are developing a template that can be distributed to members for completion to give them a detailed and precise location of the problem areas. It is hoped the template will be released soon.

E-WASTE DEVICE

If you are upgrading your devices, a great way to minimise your footprint is to recycle or trade in unused devices to stop them from going into landfill. As part of [Telstra's sustainability commitment](#), they are aiming to reuse or recycle 500,000 mobile phones, modems and other devices each year to 2025.

But they need your help.

Bring your e-waste device into a Telstra store and claim bonus Telstra Plus points.

Find out what devices are eligible and where you can recycle them on their website under climate and sustainability – Bring back Bonus with Telstra.

REGIONAL TECH HUB

Established in 2020, the Regional Tech Hub (RTH) is a centralised resource providing regional, rural, and remote residents with the critical support needed to navigate the complex world of connectivity and technology options. The Regional Tech Hub provides independent and free information about digital technologies, services available, equipment solutions, setup, and installation.

In November 2022 the Regional Tech Hub, alongside the Minister for Communications, the Hon. Michelle Rowland MP and the National Farmers' Federation, launched 'Connectivity Month' - a campaign designed to jumpstart awareness of the options available to help people get connected and stay connected to mobile and internet services.

Connectivity Month aimed to address the gap in digital inclusion between regional and metropolitan communities, by simplifying the noise, confusion, and frustration around phone and internet connectivity. If you answer yes, to any of the following questions, then the Regional Tech Hub can help you.

- Do you need to get connected?
- Are you wanting to stay connected?
- Would you like to improve your connection?
- Would you like to be able to better use your connection?

People living in rural, regional and remote Australia are encouraged to reach out to the Regional Tech Hub for independent support to address these four questions.

Two-thirds of Australia's landmass currently has no mobile coverage, despite a third of Australia's population living outside metro cities. Evolving internet and mobile solutions are helping our regions overcome the digital divide; however, they can be confusing.

Since December 2020, the Regional Tech Hub (RTH) has received close to 100,000 requests for help, including more than 70,000 website enquiries and helped close to 10,000 people with their mobile and internet connectivity options.

Of the queries received, maximising coverage through the nbn Skymuster Satellite service was the most common advice sought, followed by requests for information on mobile broadband, mobile phone, nbn fixed wireless and nbn fixed line.

RTH Manager Jennifer Medway said many queries are from people living with an unreliable service that is too expensive or does not meet data needs. In most cases, there are options available, of which the RTH is looking to raise awareness during Connectivity Month and ultimately help more people to find the best solution suited to their needs.

Activities across the month shone a light on connectivity gaps in the bush and featured a suite of new resources, debunked old myths, and connected people with personalised connectivity options.

The Minister for Communications, the Hon. Michelle Rowland MP, acknowledged the difference in the connectivity experience of people living in regional Australia, where digital inclusion is considerably lower than the national average.

"Prosperous regional communities are central to the economic success of Australia, and yet there remain significant connectivity gaps in rural and remote areas of the country."

The Regional Tech Hub offers support via its website, a phone support line 1300 081 029 and social media pages [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

SCAMS

Nearly 48 million scam texts have been blocked since new rules were introduced by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) in July 2022 to combat the growing scourge of scams.

The new rules, which require telcos to identify, trace and block SMS scams were developed in December 2020 in response to evidence that SMS scams are increasing in prevalence and impact. By the end of September 2022, telcos had stopped more than 800 million scam calls reaching Australia.

Combatting SMS scams was recently announced by ACMA as one of seven priority areas for compliance in 2022-23 due to the potential financial and social harm they can cause to the Australian community.

According to Scamwatch data, SMS scams reported to Scamwatch have already cost Australians in excess of \$17 million in 2022.

Under the rules, telcos must also publish information to assist their customers to proactively manage and report SMS scams, share information about scam messages with other telcos and report identified scams to authorities.

As part of national Scams Awareness Week, (7-11 November 2022) ACMA revealed the top 5 reported phone scams to the agency.

Top 5 scam calls:

- Amazon impersonation: Scam calls about an issue with your Amazon account. They claim funds will be taken from your account if you do not act immediately by providing personal information.
- Banking/finance impersonation: Scam calls, emails and SMS claiming suspicious activity, unauthorised debits, or that your account has been suspended. They request personal details to verify your identity.
- Nbn impersonation: Scam callers posing as someone from technical support. They claim there is a fault with your internet to get access to your computer and personal information.
- Telstra impersonation: Similar to the nbn scam. Callers pose as Telstra technical support and claim you have issues with your service or internet to access your computer and personal information.
- eBay impersonation: Scammers use a recorded message to claim you have made a purchase that requires a charge to your account. This is to get you to provide personal information.

All five of the top reported scams impersonate trusted and well-known businesses, with scammers often displaying a fake number or sender information on your phone to make the contact look legitimate.

Many businesses clearly state they will not contact you out of the blue or send messages with links seeking financial information or personal details, so always treat these calls with caution.

LOST PHONE/NEW NUMBER SCAMS

Scamwatch is urging the public to be wary of text or WhatsApp messages appearing to be from a family member, relative or friend using an unknown number, claiming they need help, asking for money or that you delete/block their old number following a significant rise in “Hi Mum” scams in recent months. More than 1,150 Australians fell victim to the so-called “Hi Mum” scam in the first seven months of this year, with total reported losses of \$2.6 million. The vast majority of these scams were reported in June and July 2022.

The ACMA (Australian Communications and Media Authority) is aware of reports of scammers impersonating family members claiming to have changed their number and asking you to save a new number on your phone. These messages often begin with ‘Hi Mum’ and could provide several varied reasons for why they are using a different phone number, including switching providers or having a lost or broken phone.

TOLL ROAD OPERATOR SCAMS

Scammers are sending messages pretending to be toll road operators, including Linkt. If you’ve been sent a text claiming you have an overdue toll road account or insufficient funds, it could be a scam.

Linkt, operated by Transurban, provides accounts for toll road payments across Australia. Scam messages may come from an unknown number or have the word ‘Linkt’ in the sender display details to make them appear genuine.

These phishing scams are trying to trick you into clicking on a link that leads to a convincing, but fake website designed to steal your personal or financial details.

If you are in any doubt about whether a message you have received about your toll road account is genuine, do not click on any links or rely on the information in the message. Instead, go to the Linkt website or app to log in to your account and check your recent activity.

This also applies to toll road messages from other companies – if in doubt, log in to your account or use a verified app from the company.

Linkt has more information about how to identify a legitimate message on its website, including examples of scam messages.

myGOV

Be wary of emails and SMS claiming to be from myGov suggesting you are owed a refund. It may be a scam!

The ACMA is aware of increasing reports of myGov impersonation email and SMS scams. These scams try to get you to click on a malicious link or visit a fake website in order to receive a repayment or refund, such as a tax refund. Other examples may ask you to update your personal details via a link or attachment.

These messages often reference other government agencies or services, such as the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) or programs like Medicare. They may also use government logos to make the message look legitimate.

Do not click on any links or open any attachments in these messages. They are phishing scams designed to steal your personal or financial details.

myGov will never send you an email or SMS with a link. If in doubt, type my.gov.au into your browser and sign into your myGov account or contact Services Australia directly. Do not rely on the contact information in the email or SMS if you think it's a scam.

You can find more information about how to identify and avoid these scams via the myGov website. Services Australia also provides advice to consumers on these and other similar scams on its website.

If you are concerned that you may have given your myGov and other personal information to a scammer, contact the Services Australia Scams and Identity Helpdesk on 1800 941 126.

If you are a victim of a scam, contact your financial institution and phone provider to let them know what has happened as quickly as possible. Scammers target everyone. Learn more about how to protect yourself from phone scams on the ACMA website and make a report.

BIRRR

[Discussion on BIRRR Facebook page regarding Starlink – 17 Nov 2022 - Credit to Better Internet for Regional Rural and Remote Australia \(BIRRR\).](#)

SPACEX SATELLITE INTERNET SERVICE

Starlink is a satellite internet constellation operated by SpaceX, providing satellite internet access coverage to 36 countries.

Starlink is a low orbit satellite 350 miles above Earth, 60 times closer than traditional satellites. Starlink claims the latency should be between 25ms and 35ms. Download speeds should range between 100Mbps and 200Mbps. Upload speeds have averaged 138.12Mbps.

As of May 2022, SpaceX has over 2300 functioning Starlink satellites in orbit. Currently, Starlink is only available to fixed internet services to a home or business. The map below shows current coverage for Australia (light blue) and those areas waiting in dark blue.

Starlink plans cost \$139 per month, unlimited data, plus \$924 in hardware fees and \$115 in shipping. Availability is limited, and orders are filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.



Starlink internet orders include a Starlink dish, mounting tripod for ground level use, and Wi-Fi router.

STARLINK OPPORTUNITIES & OBSTACLES

As [#Starlink](#) moves from the geeks to the masses, BIRRR is seeing a big uptick in requests for support (issues with ordering, setup and technology comparisons). The following information has been developed to help Australian consumers be aware and informed of regional technology offerings.

When signing up for any connection please ensure you are aware of the terms and conditions of the service. Also, ensure you have checked out all of your connectivity options. The Regional Tech Hub can produce a free connectivity report that outlines all your connectivity options, so you can match technology to your needs and budget.

BIRRR
 BETTER
 INTERNET FOR
 RURAL,
 REGIONAL &
 REMOTE AUSTRALIA

STARLINK SATELLITE
 BIRRR CONNECTIVITY LITERACY 101

OPPORTUNITIES

SPEED
Fast download speeds

PLANS
Easy to order, one plan, one provider. There are currently no Australian resellers of residential connections.

DATA
Unlimited data (currently)

LATENCY
Lower latency than other satellite technologies as it is a Low Earth Orbit Satellite (LEO)

PORTABILITY
Can be made portable if not installed at a fixed address, at an additional cost. Can be relocated if you move addresses (as long as the cell isn't full).

INSTALL
Self-install[#], professional installation using a registered cabler is recommended by BIRRR for permanent installations - at your own expense.

AVAILABILITY
currently available across Australia & Lord Howe Island. equipment is currently on sale in Australia until 31/12/22

BIRRR is a technology agnostic, independent volunteer support, advisory, information & advocacy group. We are in no way affiliated with Starlink or SpaceX. This information has been developed to help Australian consumers be aware and informed of regional technology offerings.

STARLINK SATELLITE
BIRRR CONNECTIVITY LITERACY 101
OBSTACLES

ACCESS
Connection numbers are limited, some cells in Australia are already full. Roaming SL is affected in these areas. If you cease a SL account, reconnection is not guaranteed, if the cell is full.

SUPPORT
SpaceX are an international company with support based in the United States of America. Support can be raised by the smartphone app or by accessing your account at www.support.starlink.com

EQUIPMENT
THE SL equipment is not rated above 50°C. It is recommended to bring dishy inside in extreme weather.

WARRANTY
Equipment has a 12 mth warranty. Things such as storm, lawnmower or animal damage are not covered, with all replacement equipment being at your own cost.

RESSELLERS
There are currently no Australian resellers of Starlink residential services.

DISCONNECT
Dishy cannot be disconnected from the network for long periods, even if monthly payments are maintained, as the software can become out of date, rendering re-connection impossible. Transferring to a new owner can be a tricky process.

PERFORMANCE
Speeds are fast but variable over time. Occasional short drop-outs may be noticeable on video conferencing & voice calls.

PLANS
Plan offerings may change without notice, costs may increase, data limits may be introduced, or speeds may be limited. T & C's may change.

IP ADDRESS
No static IP address on non-business plans

COST

- Equipment & professional installation costs are high.
- Credit card charges can attract additional international fees with some banks, for equipment & monthly plan costs.
- If you wish to use your existing home wi-fi network & router an ethernet cable kit must be ordered, this needs to be ordered AFTER the Starlink kit is ordered.
- BIRRR recommend a professional installation by a registered cabler for permanent installs, this is at your expense.
- Starlink equipment is currently on sale in Australia until 31/12/22

BIRRR
BETTER
INTERNET FOR
REGIONAL &
REMOTE AUSTRALIA

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Keep updated on their website <https://birrraus.com/starlink-in-australia/>

There are Radio Telescopes and restricted Radio Frequency zones in WA, so Starlink will not be available in those areas.

NBN CO

Nbn welcomed a \$2.4 billion investment from the Federal Government to roll out more fibre to communities across Australia. This investment will contribute to the fibre upgrade program already underway, helping them stay on track to enable around 10 million premises across Australia to access nbn's higher wholesale speed plans by the end of 2025.

There will be further announcements, but the government has already [revealed a small selection of towns and suburbs](#) where premises will become eligible to upgrade, if they order a suitable plan from their preferred Retail Service Provider, including parts of Yass (NSW), Albany (WA), Bowen (QLD), Bendigo (VIC), Mount Gambia (SA), Burnie (TAS) and Monash (ACT).

Meanwhile, upgrades in their fixed wireless network and deploying 5G wireless technology is helping to better serve remote, regional and peri-urban areas.

MAJOR INVESTMENT TO DELIVER FASTER SPEEDS TO NBN® FIXED WIRELESS AND NBN® SKY MUSTER CUSTOMERS

Thousands of homes and businesses across regional Australia are set to benefit from faster internet connectivity thanks to a \$750 million investment in the nbn® Fixed Wireless network, which includes \$480 million from the Australian Government and \$270 million from nbn.

Over the past few months, nbn has been focused on doing the initial work needed to deliver the Regional Upgrade program, including consulting with their Retail Service Providers and securing the innovative technology required to enable the upgrades, from long-time partners such as Nokia and Ericsson.

It is a great step to boost connectivity in the bush and will help to meet the growing needs of thousands of homes and businesses across regional Australia that are set to benefit from the program.

This investment aims to deliver four major benefits, including:

- Extended Fixed Wireless - Enhanced coverage and extended maximum range limit for some nbn fixed wireless towers resulting in expansion of the fixed wireless footprint coverage by up to 50 percent, enabling approximately 120,000 formerly satellite-only eligible premises to access fixed wireless services.
- Faster Fixed Wireless wholesale speeds - Following consultation and launch, nbn proposes that homes and businesses in the expanded nbn Fixed Wireless footprint will be able to order retail services via their service provider over nbn's wholesale tiers proposed to offer potential maximum wholesale download speeds of up to 100 Mbps. nbn is aiming to an anticipated 85 percent of the expanded footprint will also be able to order services with potential maximum wholesale download speeds of up to 250 Mbps, which is up to three times faster than the highest wholesale speeds available today.
- Improve Fixed Wireless typical wholesale busy hour speeds - Fixed Wireless network improvements are expected to allow nbn to implement a new measure to indicate the network's capability to achieve 'typical wholesale busy period speeds' of at least 50 Mbps (download).
- Enhanced data limits and network performance on nbn™ Sky Muster - For the homes and businesses that remain on nbn Satellite, nbn is proposing to unmeter nbn® Sky Muster Plus data for the majority of the day with the off-peak period for unmetered data increasing to 16 hours (12am - 4pm) per day, from the current six-hour window (1am - 7am). This is to be applied from 1st July 2022. In addition, for regular Sky Muster, nbn is aiming to increase average monthly data allowances to 55 Gigabytes (GB), increasing to 90 GB once the fixed wireless upgrade is complete in around two and a half years' time.

One of the advantages with SM+ is that YouTube is now all unmetered during school hours.

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM ROUND 2

The Federal Government's Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) is a competitive grant offering up to \$112 million of funding for the delivery of telecommunications infrastructure projects to improve digital connectivity across regional, rural and remote Australia.

The nbn team submitted 30 applications for 41 locations totalling \$224 million worth of build activity, with nbn to co-contribute up to \$62 million of its own funds for these projects.

If successful, nbn will work with more than 40 external partners to deliver these projects for local communities and help ensure they can continue to participate in the digital economy.

OSCAR

Want to improve your online skills?

With more of our lives and daily activities happening online, knowing how to navigate the digital world is more important than ever.

That is where OSCAR comes in. nbn created the Online Skills Check and Resources (OSCAR) to help measure our skills and find resources to help us on our digital journey.

OSCAR takes us through four essential competencies:

- Online knowledge
- Device usage

- Sharing data and e-safety
- Online communication

Want to learn more? You can check your online skills and find relevant resources.

Since the launch of nbn[®] OSCAR, more than 8,500 Australians have completed the survey, of which over 6,000 respondents are from regional areas.

New resources are reviewed and added all the time, so you are encouraged to take the test and see how you fare!

INNOVATE WITH NBN[®]

Nbn developed the Innovate with nbn[®] Grants Program in partnership with the Regional Australia Institute (RAI) and is now in its third year. The program aims to encourage businesses from regional or remote areas to build on technology-led ideas to drive productivity using innovation, connectivity and networking. The third round of the Innovate with nbn program is about to open, and anyone with a good idea is encouraged to apply.

The grant program awards one grant of \$15000 to an organisation or business project aligned with the following categories:

- Health
- Arts
- Education
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Women in Regional Business
- Indigenous Business

Additionally, one regional/remote business will be recognised and awarded with the Innovate with nbn[®] Champion award worth an additional \$20,000.

2021 Health category winner: Kylie Toynton, Speech Pathologist at Language for Life

Kylie Toynton from Gunnedah, NSW, has been a speech pathologist for more than 20 years. Due to limited availability in the bush, Kylie has seen some parents wait months for an assessment or travel up to 300 kilometres for a session. Not only does this place stress on the family, but it also means the child is not receiving the help they need when they need it.

Kylie is building a platform that provides evidence-based information on child development and strategies that parents can use. The packages come in video, audio and written format so all parents can feel capable and competent to help their child.

Kylie will use the Innovate with nbn[™] grant to progress the next stage of Language for Life's project. This will include adding other allied health and medical professionals from across regional Australia and offering synchronous online therapy and training packages for parents, teachers and schools.

2021 Education and overall Innovate with nbn[™] Champion: Bitlink

Taking out the Education category and also declared the overall Innovate with nbn[™] Champion, Bitlink is an education technology company based in Launceston, Tasmania, passionate about digital literacy. The business, run by co-directors James Riggall and Troy Merritt, has spent two years co-designing an Internet of Things (IoT)

education kit with teachers in its local area, which enables them to teach young people about IoT, including coding, electronics, design thinking and how to use sensors.

Bitlink will use the grants to get its kits into regional and remote areas, with an initial focus on Flinders, King and Cape Barren Islands, as well as donate classroom sets to schools on these islands to make sure Bitlink's visits have a lasting impact.

BEING PREPARED FOR EMERGENCY SEASON

Recent steps taken by nbn to help keep communities and emergency services connected during emergencies include:

- Road-testing a Point of Interconnect on Wheels, an Australian-first innovative addition to their suite of mobile Temporary Network Infrastructure, designed to keep up to 500,000 customer services for as long as required during an emergency.
- Continuing the installation of nbn Disaster Satellite Services at local nominated emergency management sites and evacuation centres across Australia, funded through the Australian Government's Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters (STAND) program.

Nbn are urging communities to do what they can to prepare and understand how the nbn network may be impacted during an emergency event, and to test residential evacuation and business continuity plans. This link to their website has [some simple but effective tips to keep in mind](#).

LINKEDIN NEWSLETTER

The following information was sourced from a newsletter on LinkedIn – makes for interesting reading if nothing else!

OPTIONS FOR FARMERS TO STAY CONNECTED

If you understand the difference between 5G low and high band, fixed wireless, repeaters and extenders then you don't have to read this.

While the tech-savvy knows their way around digital connectivity, the vast majority of us are staggering around in the dark when it comes to getting information on how to get a couple of extra signal bars on our mobile phones or stop the download lag on our broadband.

Most of the available information put out by the likes of Telstra, Optus, nbn, DPIRD or the myriad of resellers is more marketing spin and glossy pictures than listing the simple step by step options of how to speed things up or get a better signal.

Even the recently released federally funded 'On Farm Connectivity Guide' is largely useless unless you want to read four pages of definitions.

So, I thought I might have a crack at summarising what is available.

Cel-Fi GO

First things first, if you are still operating in the dark ages without a booster jammed under the seat of your car, ute, or header then, as Molly on Countdown used to say, *'do yourself a favour'*.

You cannot complain about Telstra, Optus or Vodafone and their networks if you don't use a booster.

At \$900 they are cheaper than half the latest iPhones and when connected to the right antenna do add a bar or two to your signal strength (not that the bars are a good reflection of signal strength).

3G, 4G, 5G

3G is being progressively shut down and will be all gone within two years, 4G is being expanded to fill some of the gaps which is good as it is 3 – 6 times faster, but the new 5G low band is also being rolled out to take over the 3G 800 MHz frequency.

5G low band is not the superfast 5G high band that they are rolling out in the CBD (and only goes 500m), rather it is a thing called inter-band, non-contiguous, sub-6GHz carrier aggregation, which reuses the 850Mhz to get greater coverage and bandwidth but in reality, it is not much different to 4G maybe 20% on speed but with potentially 3G range of 80km in ideal conditions.

The good old 3G worked a treat because it is primarily a voice network that travels easily through walls and travelled up to 80km from the tower, but it is slow to carry data, and today connectivity is all about data.

By repurposing the 3G to 5G low band and expanding 4G most of us will be better off, just be aware if you have any special farm monitors that tap the mobile network make sure they can pick up 5G.

What the shutdown of 3G means for coverage on your farm is the luck of the draw, but then we have all complained about the shutdown of CDMA and we survived.

One thing to bear in mind is utilising both the Optus and Telstra networks. Optus is continuing to build more towers in the bush, if part of your farm gets better Optus reception, then buy a dual sim card phone and put in two Cel-Fi Gos and work off both networks.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MOBILE BLACK SPOTS

Telstra is not Telecom and there is no universal obligation to provide coverage across your whole farm, but they do have to provide you with a fixed phone which may be a satellite phone for your station if you really are out in the sticks.

If you have a booster and you still can't get a signal, then send all your complaints to the State and Federal governments, it is their responsibility to find the money to build more towers to fill black spots not Telstra's, Optus's or Vodafone.

To date rounds 1 to 5A have delivered 1270 towers for \$875 million of federal funding with another \$400 million committed by the Albanese government for improved coverage along regional highways.

That is under \$1 billion from the \$4000 billion the Feds have spent in the last decade on all government outlays. I will leave you to work out if you agree with me that it is probably one of the best value for money infrastructure programs this country has ever rolled out, and maybe we need to keep it going with the aim of doubling the number of regional towers by 2030 to 3000. Note to Federal Liberals and Nationals, here is a policy election idea for you.

The next \$400 million is good news for those who live near a major regional highway as they might luck in with a new tower in the next four years, but be aware, there are a lot of highways around Australia in hilly areas which need a lot of towers to make a difference. Not so good for those who live on the empty flat lands far from a major highway.

Also, as fast as they build new towers, farm data usage plus the kids on TikTok and Netflix hooovers up new capacity as fast as it is built. So we probably need to be doubling the number of towers just to maintain current speeds.

STATE GOVERNMENT REGIONAL DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

There is no great news on the mobile front as far as the State Government kicking in, as the recently retired WA Minister for Regional Development did not like the big corporate carriers, preferring to back small start-ups that promise the world but lack the capital and technology to make a big difference.

This has seen a disastrous misallocation of State Government funds, with limited connectivity for the dollars spent over the past three rounds of grants.

The latest grant is \$43 million, of which around \$30 million is yet to be allocated; \$30 million would build another 60 towers across the bush or run fibre underground through country towns or build a fixed wireless tower which would also benefit the surrounding farms.

The new Minister needs to review this project and start again.

MOBILE BROADBAND

If you are lucky to have a couple of bars on your phone when wandering around the farmhouse and don't mind paying extra for a big data contract, then stick up a 5-10 metre pole and antenna and plug in the various boxes that will allow you to live stream Netflix.

Start with a new tuned to site Yagi antenna \$200, new cables \$50, a stationary repeater \$800, a dongle data box \$100 month, an indoor-outdoor signal booster/extender for the house \$100, a repeater antenna \$200 and a second indoor outdoor booster for the sheds \$100. Or package Telstra GO G41 Yagi and Panel Antenna bundle \$2232.

Then you will be maximising what you can get out of mobile broadband be it to surf the net, watch Netflix or make calls via a Wi-Fi link.

HIGH ON THE HILL FARM ANTENNA

You do not have mobile coverage at the house, but you pick up 2-4 bars up on the high point of the farm, then head up there and put up a 1-10 metre tower, with an antenna (max 10m the cables won't carry signal much further) and then plug in a stationary receiver plus a second antenna to repeat the signal down to the house (maximum 3km away) and pick up the signal that way.

To the set-up you will need to add a battery and solar system to power the repeater. Talk to this clever mob call Zetifi in Wagga Wagga who can build mini Wi-Fi cells with smart beam antennas ZetiRover and ZetiCell for the last mile links to and from the back paddock.

NBN FIXED WIRELESS

If you are lucky and live within 14km of town and have line of site (or close enough to it) to a nbn fixed mobile tower then you may be one of the growing number of regional Shires that can get onto the fixed wireless network.

Fixed wireless is basically a direct digital signal feed sending data from a nbn tower (or other provider) usually located in town across the airwaves, rather than via optic fibre to your house, all at broadband data pricing.

From the house or an antenna on a high point on the property, you can rebroadcast the signal via a microwave, kilometres to a second location then via a third antenna, radiate the signal across a smaller 500m radius.

Farmers use this to give broadband coverage to the sheds or around the field bin when working in the paddock, house, shed etc.

It can even be used to make and receive calls on your mobile, but you have to tap into the Wi-Fi calling setting on your phone, but again you have to be in that 500m radius. It offers fast broadband but is limited in distance to that 14km from the main tower, but that will hopefully double to 28km in 2025, but remember it still must be line of site to the towns tower.

Earlier this year nbn™ and the Federal Government announced a \$750 million program of work to upgrade the fixed wireless network adding nearly every Australian town. The upgrade will extend the range, deliver high speed tiers and increase the busy hour speed from 6mb to 50mb.

It, along with Starlink, is the next big thing in connectivity.

NBN SATELLITE SKYMUSTER

SkyMuster Plus is the latest upgrade to the old satellite system. It now has uncapped data 16 hours per day for video streaming which fixes a major complaint.

Cost is around \$100 per month with a dish included, but speeds are limited to 512MB which is vastly slower than what is on offer using land based mobile, fibre or fixed wireless or Starlink.

Once again, you can use satellite to push a signal around your farm just like you can with fixed wireless.

STARLINK

You can help Elon Musk pay off Twitter by signing up to join his Starlink satellite network. The service has been being taken up by over half a million people across 44 countries, with hundreds of Australian farmers signing on this year.

The satellites, which are 60 times closer to earth than the big two nbn™ ones sitting stationary 44,000 miles up, which means no latency.

They don't work with your mobile unless it is through a Wi-Fi application, even though it should be possible to send emergency data calls directly via the satellite. But they are a non-starter for replacing earth-based towers.

Again, voice over internet fed through your modem via Wi-Fi to your mobile phone is a simple workaround option out to 500m from the dish.

You could put one in the header and run around the paddock, and it will work. Have a read of Tucks Truck, a blog by a couple of British travellers (great read for those who want to go exploring the world in their bongo van) who installed a dish on top of their 4WD.

Musk has worked out there is demand for portability in motion, so there are new flat dishes coming that can sit on the roof of a truck/ute/header/tractor for on-the-go connectivity, but seems it already works with the current small round dish as proven by Tucks Truck.

No doubt Musk is talking to John Deere, CNH etc. and it is likely to be an option on your next tractor/header.

Cost for the kit \$924 (was discounted to \$450 until Xmas), \$139 per month plus the repeater extender \$500 to radiate the signal out 500m. My guess is most farmers will end up with one that they will bolt to the header or tractor or set up on the high point of the farm, as they are a good back up when mobile coverage fails.

BUILD YOUR OWN MOBILE TOWER

If you are really frustrated with Optus or Telstra, there is no reason that you can't write a cheque for \$500k - \$1m and get them to build you a tower on your farm. The miners do this all the time, your neighbours will love you.

There is also a good business opportunity for someone to put together a deal, sub leasing mobile base stations to groups of farmers. Only problem is I don't know how you lock out the free riders who are all for you paying while they get the advantage of extra bars on their phones.

The development commissions working with the councils are the obvious coordinators. Councils can rate the cost onto all their rate payers, but those sitting near existing towers won't be too impressed with the new tower levy on their rates.

The added problem is Optus and Telstra will be selective on where they can be set up so as not to end up messing with existing towers. Optus should be more interested as they have big gaps in their network.

No doubt growers with large farms in the eastern wheatbelt who are unlikely to even see a new tower in their area will eventually decide to sort the problem themselves, 20 growers, 20 years, \$1 million and the cost benefit will soon stack up. Even more so for the neighbours who don't contribute.

For those who are thinking about doing this then use the State Governments Agricultural Produce Commission (APC) fundraising mechanism, it is a simple, cheap way to administer the funding of industry good projects involving a group of growers.

ADVICE

Now, this took me a day to put together, so no doubt I have missed parts of the equation or got it wrong.

But at the very least it should help point you in the right direction. For independent advice on farm and regional connectivity talk to the Regional Tech Hub 1300 081 029, Boyd Brown, Regional General Manager WA, Telstra boyd.m.brown@team.telstra.com, Naomi Evans Head of Regional Community Affairs (WA), nbn naomievs@nbnco.com.au and Dan Winson from Zetifi hello@zetifi.com for last mile solutions around the house, sheds and field bin.

If it is simply to complain about black spots then pick up the phone and call the State and Federal Labor Ministers for Regional Development, it is they who are standing on the blackspot hose.

Last word and first bit of advice for the new Minister, instruct DPIRD to commission an independent \$20,000 review of their Regional Connectivity Program and call for submissions from nbn, Optus and Telstra and Zetiti to find out what they can do with \$30 million to boost on farm connectivity.

Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum Report

Louise Ford – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

At the 2022 State Conference, allowance motion A4 was presented by the Meekatharra Air Branch.

A letter was sent to both the Hon. Sue Ellery, MLC (former Minister for Education) and the Hon. Mark McGowan, MLA, State Premier. A response received on 8th August 2022 outlined the many services offered to regional students but stated *“that a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) was not going to be considered”*. With the point

of the initial letter being lost, another email was sent dated 23rd September 2022 outlining once again the purpose of the DETA.

The second response received 25th October 2022 from Minister Ellery stated that the Australian Government administers Assistance for Isolated Children and has no plans on implementing the DETA allowance. She did however encourage me to raise the idea with the Federal Minister, the Hon. Bill Shorten MP.

CURRICULUM

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) was completed for the first time fully online in May 2022 by more than 1.3 million students. 2022 was the final year that testing was completed in May and from March 2023 NAPLAN will move to Term 1. By bringing the testing time forward, results can be accessed earlier in the year, allowing for more targeted teaching and learning programs throughout the school year and also give teachers more time to better assess what support students need for the remainder of the year.

The way NAPLAN is reported to parents and carers is also changing. New proficiency standards with 4 levels of achievement for each year level will replace the previous 10-band structure that covered all 4 levels tested and the old national minimum standard set in 2008. The numerical NAPLAN bands and the national minimum standard will be replaced by the following 4 levels of achievement:

- Exceeding
- Strong
- Developing
- Needs additional support.

NAPLAN 2023 will run from 15th to 27th March.

In October 2022, ACARA released the 2022 NAPLAN national report. According to ACARA CEO, David De Carvalho, the national results continue to defy earlier predictions that COVID-19 would negatively impact NAPLAN performance. The results were stable on a national level, except for year nine spelling and year five numeracy, which saw a drop in performance.

In 2008, all governments agreed a national curriculum was needed to deliver an equitable, quality education for all young Australians and the national curriculum was then developed over a number of years. The national curriculum is reviewed every 6 years and the 2020-21 review resulted in the Australian Curriculum, Version 9.0. The new curriculum provides schools, teachers, parents and students with a clear understanding of what students should learn. This curriculum applies no matter where a student lives or what school system they are in. It is now available online and is designed to be clearer for teachers when assessing students.

Recently endorsed languages approved for the Australian Curriculum included German, Indonesian, Modern Greek, Korean and Spanish for Foundation – Year 10. These were approved after public consultation last year.

SCHOOLS OF THE AIR (SOTA)

Schools of the Air had to unfortunately cancel plans for Canberra camp or replacement camps due to COVID-19 restrictions earlier in 2022. School camps and home visits were permitted to resume from the commencement of Term 2.

Schools of the Air also unfortunately had to cancel plans for their annual Muster Camp stating “*the revised COVID-19 regulations brought out in early August as being too hard to adhere to*”. Many parents were very upset about this and as a result a letter was sent to the Director General, Lisa Rodgers, asking for consideration of SOTA families

when guidelines are being made. A letter of response was received stating that camps should all be taking place and parents should consult with their relevant schools.

A meeting was held on 1st December 2022 for parents from all SOTA's across the State to be able to connect and discuss the positive and the challenges of schooling your children through SOTA. Approximately eight parents attended, and a great dialogue about what works and what they struggle with were tabled. Some of the main areas of concern were that Principals were losing flexibility to make standard SOTA practices happen, e.g. camps, delivery of curriculum to a standard way above expectations and fundamentals getting lost. This results in children struggling and families leaving SOTA because the programs are unengaging for the students and difficult to deliver.

All in all, this was a great discussion and the passion for our SOTA's remains strong. It is proposed that these meetings continue each term with hopefully more parents in attendance.

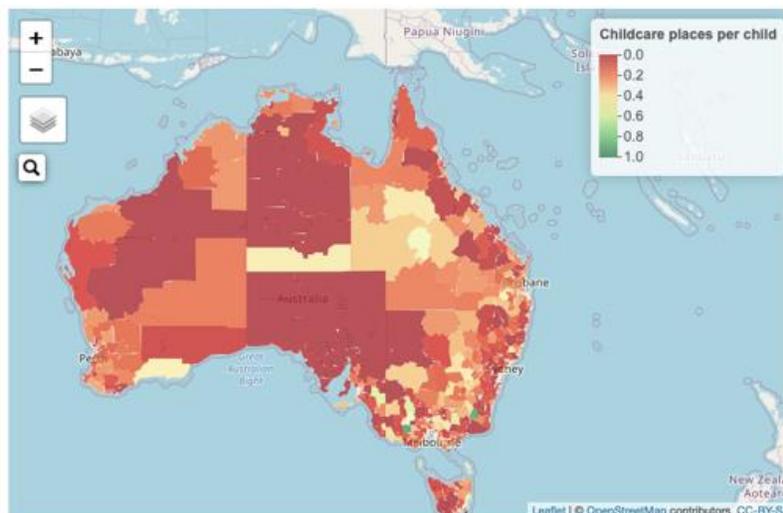
Early Childhood Report

Jane Hughes – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

There were no Early Childhood motions at the 2022 State Conference.

On 22nd March, the Mitchell Institute released a report highlighting the many challenges faced by families trying to access childcare, particularly in rural remote Australia. With about 1.1 million Australians living in regional and remote areas where they have no access to childcare at all. Below is where you can find the report.

<https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/early-learning/childcare-deserts-oases-how-accessible-is-childcare-in-australia>



On 27th April, the West Australian Government announced that \$27.7 million will be allocated to Early Childhood Education (ECE) and out of home care in the 2022-23 State Budget.

On 9th May, I attended an Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) joint portfolio meeting. Points of interest included:

- Minister for Home Affairs Karen Andrews responded to a letter from Federal Council detailing their progress with WWCC saying there was a National Cabinet commitment to eliminating red tape and streamlining the WWCC process.
- Letters were sent to then Minister for Education Alan Tudge and Acting Education Minister Stuart Robert regarding employment incentives for Early Childhood (EC) educators and EC programs in rural and remote areas and funding for mobile programs.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) report was released in May 2022 with results showing an increase in children who are developmentally vulnerable.

Below is an extract from the report, which can be found at <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data>

The fifth AEDC data collection was undertaken between May and July 2021. Nationally, data was collected from over 305,000 children in their first year of full-time school and from approximately 7,500 primary schools.

At a national level, the AEDC data shows the percentage of children who were on track on 5 domains decreased for the first time since 2009 (from 55.4% in 2018 to 54.8% in 2021).

Results also show a slight increase in the proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable:

- Children assessed as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains increased from 21.7% in 2018 to 22% in 2021.

Children assessed as developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains also increased from 11% in 2018 to 11.4% in 2021.

At the 2022 ICPA Federal Conference, 16 motions were put forward with issues surrounding:

- Assistance for Isolated Children allowance,
- In Home Care (IHC),
- To review pay rates and incentives to get Early childhood workers out into rural and remote areas,
- To prioritise re-establishing educational programs in regional and remote areas,
- A national WWCC and
- Better childcare funding for rural remote areas

On 7th September, childcare workers across Australia met in cities and some regional towns to protest for sector reform:

- Better wages,
- To be valued as an early education centre the same way that schools are valued and;
- For children to be put before profit.

One thousand childcare centres were shut down and approximately 70,000 families were affected.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-09-07/childcare-worker-protests-across-australia-amid-sector-shutdown/101413958>

BHP and Child Australia have teamed up to expand the Thriving Futures program with the launch of the Thriving Futures Educator Recognition Program, which is focused on attracting and retaining quality childcare workers and ensuring sustainability within the sector for future generations. BHP has made a commitment of \$2.5 million over the next three years. Due to the success of the program it is now being extended to the Nickel West Goldfields communities.

<https://thesector.com.au/2022/09/13/bhp-and-child-australia-team-up-to-expand-thriving-futures-program/>

Seventy initiatives have been launched by major ECEC stakeholders to fight workforce challenges. The Federal Government has launched 16 initiatives, all States and Territories have included their own initiatives also, except for Western Australia who did not feature at all.

FEDERAL/PEAK BODY INITIATIVES

- Following extensive consultation with the outside school hours care (OSHC) sector, National Outside School Hours Services Alliance ([NOSHSA](#)) co-ordinated the development of a new nationally accredited Certificate III course for new OSHC educators.
- The Australian Government will establish a new agency, [Jobs and Skills Australia](#), which will be responsible for researching workforce trends and providing advice about current and future skills needs. The Government has committed to a tripartite approach to the new agency, which will work with governments, employers and unions, and use data and insights from industry to inform the government labour market and skills policy.
- A range of early childhood teaching courses are being presented by Edith Cowan University through literacy units in early childhood education with updated Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) guidelines that reflect contemporary terminologies and research.
- The Australian Government will expand the 'High Achieving Teachers Program' to support up to 1,500 high achieving professionals to retrain as teachers.
- The Australian Government will offer up to 5,000 new students a \$10,000 a year bursary throughout their teaching degree. Bursaries will be available to high school-leavers who achieve an ATAR of 80 or above, First Nations students, and students from regional areas, with a top up payment of \$2,000 for placements in regional areas.
- The Australian Government will provide [465,000 Fee Free TAFE places](#) including 45,000 new TAFE places. In addition, the Australian Government has announced up to 20,000 additional university places to provide more opportunities for Australians to find a spot at a university.
- From 1 July 2022, the [Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System](#) will help increase completions, providing financial and non-financial support at the time the apprentice needs it. Government support is focussed on priority occupations, including ECEC workers.
- The Australian Government has committed to strengthen the ability and capacity of the [Fair Work Commission](#) (FWC) to order pay increases for workers in low paid, female dominated sectors and industries, such as the ECEC sector.
- Australian Government [Child Care Discount for Early Childhood Workforce](#) introduced in 2022 allows childcare providers to discount the gap fee their employee pays when the employee's child is enrolled at a service where they work or that their employer owns.
- The [Skills Assessment Pilots](#) seek to maximise the contribution of Australia's onshore migrant workforce and address skills shortages and includes free, fast-tracked skills assessments for the Child Care Worker (Group Leader) occupation for eligible migrants who are residing in Australia.
- The Australian Government is investing \$9.1 million in the [National Intermediary THRYVE Pilot](#) led by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care ([SNAICC](#)), to support community-controlled early childhood providers to improve quality and increase access to training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators.
- [Early Childhood Australia](#) has developed '[How to talk about early childhood education and care](#)' to promote the use of consistent, affirmative, inclusive and sector-accepted language that supports professionalism.

- [Be You Early Learning](#) supports early childhood services to build a positive, inclusive and resilient learning community where every child, young person, educator and family can achieve their best possible mental health.
- In conjunction with Be You, peak body Early Learning and Care Council of Australia ([ELACCA](#)) launched a bespoke training program in mental health and wellbeing for its members, aimed at area managers. The online training program will aim to strengthen area managers' ability to embed mental health and wellbeing initiatives across multiple early learning and care services.
- [JobTrainer](#) provides funding for anyone to have access to low-fee short courses and a range of approved qualifications including certificate III, IV and diploma level qualifications to work in the early childhood and school age education and care sectors.
- ELACCA launched [the 'Big Roles in Little Lives'](#) in 2021, a campaign that promotes the value and benefits of a career in early learning and care to secondary school students and career-changers.

Copied from this website <https://thesector.com.au/2022/09/13/over-70-initiatives-launched-by-major-eccec-stakeholders-to-fight-workforce-challenges/>

The West Australian Government has recently appointed the Hon. Sabine Winton, MLA as Minister for the newly created Early Childhood Education portfolio.

From July 1st 2023 the Albanese Government's landmark reform will make early childhood education and care more affordable for around 86,000 families in Western Australia.

The McGowan Government has also launched a new Early Childhood Education and Care job-ready program which will deliver short, sharp training for jobseekers and young people.

The Federal Government are making an additional 1,469 university places available this year for early childhood teachers across Australia.

The Federal Government will also be providing funding for First Nations children which will involve 68 activities in Western Australia including an early childhood program at Halls Creek.

The University of Notre Dame in Western Australia has just launched a new fast tracked teacher training program with a Bachelor of Early Learning. This will allow students to complete training in just three years teaching children aged 0-4 years.

A Kimberley Development Commission report released on 20th December 2022 showed Western Australia's Northwest Region is one of the hardest places to secure childcare services. Childcare services in the Kimberley are currently running at 69 percent capacity, staff shortages have caused several childcare centres to close due to low wages and a lack of affordable housing.

Rural And Remote Schools Report

Jane Cunningham – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

At the 2022 State Conference one motion was present by the Goldfields Eyre Branch in regard to the state of disrepair and lack of services offered at the Fairbridge WA run camp schools, in particular Goldfields Camp School in Kalgoorlie.

Fairbridge took over the running of the Dampier, Geraldton, Point Perron, Pinjarra, Pemberton and Kalgoorlie Camp Schools in 2018 with a press release from the Hon. Sue Ellery stating that, *“Staff are committed to providing students from all schools in Western Australia with an affordable and high-quality camp experience.”*

Disappointingly, our members have been reporting a degradation of facilities and poor-quality camp experiences at Fairbridge run camp schools, specifically the Geraldton and Kalgoorlie sites. This is of particular concern to the Goldfields Eyre Branch, as the termly School of the Air camps have been impacted significantly.

In May 2022, letters were sent to the CEO of Fairbridge and Hon. Sue Ellery, Minister for Education.

At the June face-to-face meeting, ICPA (WA) met with Ms Mirina Muir, the CEO of Fairbridge. Ms Muir was not aware of what School of the Air was and the significance of camps each term for children and their families.

Ms Muir met with us again at the October face- to-face. During this meeting, she acknowledged that after our first meeting she had a much greater appreciation of the need for Kalgoorlie School of the Air to access appropriate facilities at the Kalgoorlie Camp School. We were told that she would be visiting the sites late last year and there were changes being put into place.

On 9th February 2023 I received an email stating, *“There isn’t much more I can add. I have been discussing your situation with the Department of Education and how next we can assist you. These are ongoing discussions.”*

Some changes have been made, but as it stands, the camp school is still not a suitable venue for our students and their families to stay. Currently, families are staying in a local caravan park.

Ms Ellery was disappointed to hear about the declining conditions and facilities at Kalgoorlie and Geraldton Camp Schools and arranged to send representatives to inspect the sites. We were due to meet with Ms Ellery online to discuss these inspections and how we can move forward on 14th December 2022. Unfortunately, approximately an hour before our scheduled meeting, there was a Labor Government Cabinet reshuffle and Dr Toni Buti was appointed as the Minister for Education, so our meeting was cancelled. Dr Buti has been contacted and we are waiting patiently for his team to contact us to arrange a meeting.

STAFFING OF RURAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS

2022 saw a continued difficulty to staff some regional and remote schools.

There has been a notable increase in the number of teaching vacancies filled by an unqualified teacher with a limited registration. These appointments are usually pre-service teachers, or untrained teachers with specialisations in specific subject areas which have been difficult to source. These are usually students in their fourth year, though there are reports of many second and third year trained teachers in our regional schools.

INCENTIVES TO BOOST TEACHER SUPPLIES

On November 13th, Minister Ellery announced \$12.4 million to boost regional and remote teacher supply. The aim, to attract more teachers to 48 Western Australian schools that are harder to staff. It includes one-off payment incentives payments for 2023, varying from \$5000 to \$17 000 depending on location.

While these new immediate measures target WA's hardest-to-staff schools, the State Government continues to work with the Commonwealth to address the national teacher shortage. This includes development of a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan with Education Ministers from around the country and an extra \$328 million in funding announced by the Federal Government for associated actions aimed at attracting, training and retaining educators.

On December 7th additional initiatives were announced to boost teacher supply for WA public schools.

The package of new measures includes:

- Provision of an Attraction and Retention Initiative payment of \$5,000 to new and existing teachers working in education support schools and centres in 2023
- Establishment of a pre-service Teacher Recruitment Pool to support pre-service teachers with limited registration in their final year of study while they are employed
- Broader eligibility requirements to employ registered teachers with a three-year qualification, with targeted training to support those who are new to WA's public school system
- Trialling Highly Accomplished, Lead Teacher (HALT) positions to support quality teaching in regional secondary schools experiencing staffing challenges
- Additional stipends of up to \$700 per week for final year secondary pre-service teachers undertaking a placement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) learning areas.

Specific Education Report

Jane Cunningham – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

2022 continued to bring COVID-19 related issues for those requiring specific needs education. Many services and programs had been cancelled or were only accessible online. One major area which has been impacted is the continued restrictions from WA Health on therapists visiting schools and conducting programs. For much of the year outside therapists were not allowed to attend school sites to work with students, rather they were stuck in hospital settings swabbing for COVID-19.

EXPANSION OF AUTISM SPECIALIST LEARNING PROGRAM

In 2022 an additional 6 Autism Specialist Learning Programs (SLP) have been set up in schools. There are currently 24 schools. None of these schools would be classed as regional or remote. At a regional, hard-to-staff school of 42 pupils that I am familiar with, there are 4 students with autism that require significant support.

Expanding the use of the SLP is mentioned specifically in point 5 of the 'Focus 2023'. I wonder how this will extend to be implemented in regional and remote WA in 2023?

SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS STATE COUNCIL CATCH UP

In October, a Specific Education Needs ICPA Joint State and Federal catch-up was held via Zoom. There was much discussion about different States and their Patient Assisted Travel Scheme's (PATS) and what appointments they do and do not cover for specialist services for children with special needs. I would be interested to hear of any cases where appointments are not covered, and you believe they should.

Student Accommodation Report

Jane Hughes – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

On 15th March Nuveen Real Estate’s first purpose-built accommodation ‘The Switch’ opened in Perth Central providing accommodation for international students and young professionals. The portfolio of four properties totals 1721 beds for students.

On 12th May, the Western Australian Government announced a \$41.2 million package for international students.

A \$10 million incentive package will aim to increase awareness of the State’s international education sector through overseas education agents who enrol international students in WA institutions.

A \$1 million familiarisation program will also allow key offshore stakeholders to visit and experience Western Australia. (Copied from online)

On 14th September, the Western Australian Government released an announcement stating they will invest a further \$16.8 million into encouraging international students to study in WA.

\$10 million is committed to the Agent Incentive Scheme in 2022-23, which will provide payments of:

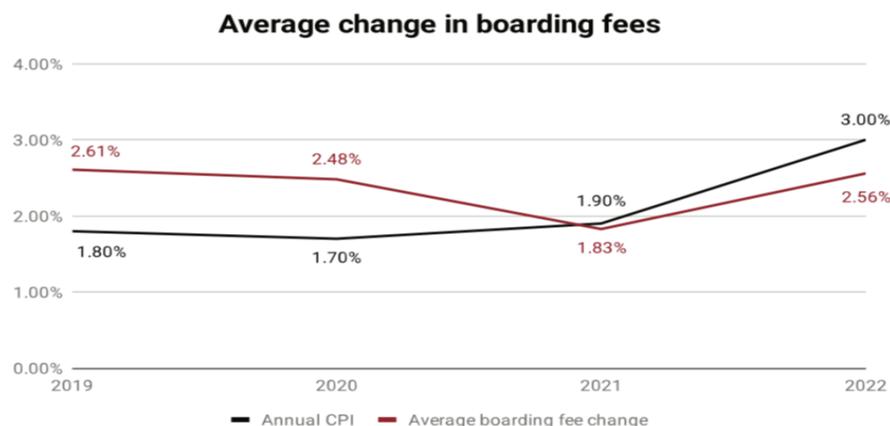
- \$500 per student to agents enrolling a confirmed international student in an English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) or VET provider.
- \$1000 per student for a confirmed enrolment at one of the five WA universities.

\$6.8 million was committed to continuing the International Student Accommodation Subsidy (ISAS) and the International Student ELICOS Bursary (ISEB) to support and attract international students to WA. This will provide a one-off payment.

- ISAS - \$1,500 for up to 2,500 eligible students to offset accommodation expenses while studying full time in WA in semester 2 2022.
- ISEB - \$1,500 for up to 2,000 eligible international students to offset fees when undertaking an approved ELICOS course in WA.

Over four years, \$4 million has been allocated for the Premier’s WA Certificate of Education Bursary and \$2 million for the Premier’s University Scholarships, both are new scholarship programs.

An annual report by Edstart school analysed fees at 100 boarding schools from around Australia finding an average increase in fees by 2.56% up from 1.83% last year.



The Eastern States experienced a higher rate of fee increases than Western Australia and South Australia.

Average boarding fee increase by state

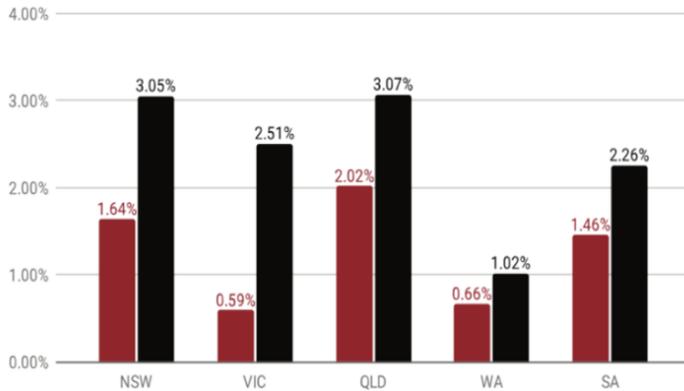


FIGURE 3: Average boarding fee increase by state

Average school fee increase	
National	2.90%
NSW	3.04%
VIC	2.90%
QLD	3.56%
WA	2.79%
SA	0.91%

FIGURE 4: Average school fee increase per state

The University of Western Australia (UWA) has partnered with MyStay International also known as Australian Homestay Network, to offer new and returning students struggling with the tight housing availability the opportunity to live with a local family. This comes as good news as the West Australian reported that WA has the lowest amount of student accommodation in Australia.

Austudy and Youth Allowance will be increasing from 1st January 2023.

Welfare payments increasing on January 1

- YOUTH ALLOWANCE (living at home):** Up \$19.10 a fortnight to \$332.90 from \$313.80
- YOUTH ALLOWANCE (living away from home):** Up \$32.40 a fortnight to \$562.80 from \$530.40
- YOUTH ALLOWANCE (single with children):** Up \$41.40 a fortnight to \$720.40 from \$679
- AUSTUDY (single with no children):** Up \$32.40 a fortnight to \$562.80 from \$530.40
- AUSTUDY (single with children):** Up \$41.40 a fortnight to \$720.40 from \$679
- ABSTUDY:** Up \$22.40 a fortnight to \$389.40 from \$367 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and apprentices aged 18 to 21
- CARERS ALLOWANCE:** Up \$8.30 a fortnight to \$144.80 from \$136.50

Teacher Training Report

Jasmine Carmody – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

Four motions were presented at the 2022 Online State Conference. Two from the Lakes District Branch were requesting the Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA) recognise the work carried out by qualified teachers who work as home tutors and for previously qualified teachers who volunteer with Retired Educator Volunteers for Isolated Students Education (REVISE) to have their hours count towards meeting registration requirements.

Correspondence was sent to the TRBWA asking for their consideration and action on the motion points. Rozana Kemp (Assistant Director, Policy and QA) responded with the below email.

"Please consider my response as preliminary advice which will be shortly followed up more formally with a letter from the Director of Teacher Registration.

Whilst the advice is sound, the response was inadvertently sent to you in a less formal format than was intended for the ICPA (WA) State Council.

As you are aware, for a registered teacher to be able to renew Full Registration, there are requirements that need to be met by the end of the registration period. To maintain proficiency, it is generally expected that a teacher is currently teaching in an educational venue or has been actively teaching in an educational venue for a reasonable period of time.

As you are aware, the professional engagement requirement in Western Australia is a minimum of 100 days teaching in an educational venue since the registration was last granted or renewed.

In accordance with the Teacher Registration Act 2012 (TR Act), only those days taught in an 'educational venue' as defined by the TR Act count for the purposes of renewal. Other experiences, such as supporting a child at home in their attendance at the School of Isolated and Distant Education (SIDE) or a regional School of the Air, will not count for the purposes of renewal of teacher registration.

Any teaching undertaken as a staff member or employee of an educational venue counts towards the professional engagement requirement.

Please note that the tutoring hours provided by these parents may be able to be linked to the professional learning registration requirement, however this will be considered by the Board on a case-by-case basis."

A letter was sent to TRBWA thanking them for their reply and asking them to attend the ICPA (WA) State Council October face-to-face meeting to discuss options for registration for our home tutors and how we can collaborate with the TRBWA to move forward in this area.

Following this email response Rebecca McNeillage Acting Assistant Director, Policy and Quality Assurance and Graham Grossman Manager of Registrations attended, to engage in conversations with State Council to better understand the situations of our home tutors and for councillors to gather advice to pass onto home tutors who wish to retain the TRBWA registration. The messages and advice we received from them is as follows:

- Teaching is referred to as teaching curriculum, assessing curriculum at an educational venue as defined under the Education Act.
- Home-schooling at your home is, therefore, not defined as an educational venue under the Teacher Registration Act or the Education Act.
- We discussed the Professional Standards requirement for teachers in WA:
 - For full registration, you must meet the professional standards at the proficient level.
 - To have taught for a minimum of 100 days at an educational venue in the 5 years prior to application.
 - For full registration renewal, complete 100 hours of professional learning.
- Those teaching at TAFE colleges and Universities do not meet the requirements of teaching at an educational venue for the purpose of maintaining full registration.
- It has been ten (10) years since the last review of the Act.
- Levels/categories of registration were discussed:

- Provisional registration
- Non-practicing registration (Non-practicing registration can be extended and maintained indefinitely.)
- Limited registration
- Full registration
- A discussion was had on the point that home tutors do not need to hold a teaching degree and therefore to ask for those that hold a such qualification to be recognised is problematic.

Overall, the takeaway recommendation is for qualified teachers who are working as home tutors that wish to retain their registration to ensure you have applied for a Non-practicing registration.

Two motions were presented by the Meekatharra Air Branch and Goldfields Eyre Branch requesting universities investigate time spent teaching set work on station count towards their practical placements as part of their Bachelor of Education degree.

Correspondence was sent to the Deans of Education at Notre Dame, Edith Cowan University (ECU), Curtin, Murdoch and University of WA (UWA) thanking them for discussing this point with the Director General, Lisa Rodgers and for their support of this issue.

Jeff Brooks from Curtin University and Peter Whipp from Murdoch University thanked me for the letter and offered their continued support. Paula Mildenhall from ECU also thanked us and asked for information as to the next steps to take as she was not at previous meetings. No further replies were received.

NORTHERN TERRITORY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS (PST)

At the last Tertiary and Training Federal Joint Council catch up in October 2022 the Northern Territory (NT) State Council shared their success of having Charles Darwin University (CDU) implement a trial of creating a career pathway for home tutors and governesses.

We contacted Kyia Broard from the NT State Council, who completed a significant amount of work on making this happen. She provided us with some information on whom they spoke to and the steps they took to make this happen.

It is planned to continue these discussions with the NT State Council, and facilitating a meeting between the WA State Council and CDU after the 2023 Federal Conference.

A flyer for this program is attached below.



QUALIFICATION

Certificate III in School Based Education Support.
 15 units - 10 core and 5 elective units.

Cert IV in School Based Education Support.
 17 units - 13 core and 4 elective units.
 Once completed equates to 40 credit points towards an education degree.

Diploma of Educational Studies
 Once completed equates to the first year off an education degree.

LEARNING

- Learning is online and self-paced.
- Weekly 1-hour online training sessions via TEAMS with CDU lecturer.
- Online lessons to commence Mon 17 October 2022.
- Face to face training sessions in Alice Springs and Katherine during In-School.

FOR MORE INFO & TO ENROL
 steve.kiya@gmail.com



CAREER IN EDUCATION

Make your 'gap year' in the bush count towards your future.



RECOGNITION

Due to the nature of the role home tutors play in our classrooms, you may be eligible for recognition of prior learning for some of the course units as well as reduced classroom time.



FEE EXEMPTION

- Current enrollments free, to be reviewed in Dec 2023.
- RPL admin fee waived for 2022.
- Must be an Australian Citizen and NT Resident

AN INITIATIVE OF ICPA NT STATE COUNCIL WWW.ICPA.COM.AU/NT



MINISTER FOR EDUCATION ANNOUNCEMENT

In early December, the Minister for Education announced further initiatives to attract, retain and support teachers. This follows the recent one-off Attraction and Retention Initiative (ARI) payment for teachers working in identified remote and secondary regional schools.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION INITIATIVES FOR EDUCATION SUPPORT SCHOOLS AND CENTRES

ARI payments of \$5,000 will now be made available to both new and existing teachers, and administrators with a teaching load, from all 59 education support schools and centres for 2023.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER RECRUITMENT POOL

A pre-service teacher recruitment pool has been established to fill fixed-term vacancies arising in 2023. Appointments from this pool can only be made where other recruitment options have been unsuccessful. Schools will have access to teachers in their final year of their qualification from Australian universities for part-time (up to 0.8 FTE) positions. If selected, these teachers will have access to induction and professional learning. Teachers will have access to paid study leave if undertaking their professional experience placement during their appointment. Teachers appointed from this pool will need to meet all the usual pre-employment requirements including teacher registration. This pool is open for applications. Schools making appointments from this pool will be provided additional funding, equivalent to 0.1 FTE, to assist them to support the pre-service teacher.

Pre-service teachers must continue to complete their degree.

CHANGES TO TEACHER QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENT

Schools can now employ a teacher provided they are registered with the TRBWA and have a recognised 3-year teacher qualification. This change supports the opportunity for high quality local and international teachers to work in WA public schools, removing an obstacle which disqualifies a quality teacher from working in a public school because of the number of years they spent at university. All teachers appointed must be registered and meet the registration standards through the TRB.

To support this initiative, schools will be provided with further supports for those who employ 3-year trained teachers who are new to our system including:

- A Targeted Initiative (TI) to provide 2 days teacher relief for each new staff member
- This TI is to provide access to targeted training relevant to 3-year trained teachers entering our system from the non-government sector or from overseas.

HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED AND LEAD TEACHER (HALT) STRATEGY

Twenty regional schools have been identified and will be invited to express interest in a trial to create HALT positions. This will be an incentive for high quality, aspirational teachers to teach in schools that have been identified as requiring support to attract staff.

ADDITIONAL STIPENDS FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS (PST)

A stipend is currently paid to all teachers undertaking a professional experience placement in a regional area.

New stipends are:

- Final year PSTs undertaking a STEM placement in metro areas: \$250/week
- Final year PSTs undertaking a STEM placement in regional areas: Double their original allocation.

A final year secondary pre-service teacher undertaking a placement in STEM will receive a new or increased stipend of up to:

- \$250/week in metropolitan schools (new)
- \$500/week in Southwest schools
- \$700/week in Goldfields, Kimberley, Midwest, Pilbara and Wheatbelt schools.

Many of these initiatives are designed to attend to the staffing challenges in 2023 and beyond. The initiatives announced today complement the ARIs and are designed to strengthen the relationship between pre-service teachers and their schools. 82 percent of pre-service teachers who undertake professional experience accept ongoing employment in WA public schools.

Tertiary, Trade And Training Report

Chandra Ridley – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

There were 10 Regional Skills Summits held across Western Australia between August and December 2021. Feedback from these summits has led to the development of Regional Action Plans. These plans will be implemented by Regional Coordinating Committees (RCC's) to deliver practical actions that respond to a region's unique workforce needs.

RCC's are currently comprised of the relevant regional TAFE college, Regional Development Commission and Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and supported by the Department of Training and Workforce Development. The aim is to get more people onto jobs in regional areas and ensure the unique workforce needs of each region are met.

The State Government's Skills Summits in 2021 identified access to a driver's licence as a common barrier to employment as an apprentice. The Construction Training Fund (CTF) includes a \$1.3 million initiative to assist young people with gaining the experience and skills needed to obtain a driver's licence for entry into a construction trade apprenticeship.

The State Budget for 2022-23 was handed down in May. The McGowan Government is continuing to invest in TAFE and training to provide new opportunities for Western Australians to reskill and find work in local jobs throughout the State. There were record TAFE course enrolments in 2021 as a result of the "Lower Fees, Local Skills" initiative.

The 2022-23 State Budget funds initiatives to meet skill shortages, informed by ideas generated from the Perth and Regional Skills Summits. The \$76.5 million in training initiatives in the 2022-23 State Budget includes:

- \$38.4 million additional funding for Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative;
- \$11 million boost for defence industry's workforce;
- \$4.9 million in support for Collie workforce transition; and
- \$2.4 million to attract international students to the regions to help address skills shortages.

The McGowan Government also continues to roll out the TAFE capital works program, with \$216 million committed to deliver state-of-the-art facilities providing high-quality, industry-relevant training across the State.

The budget also included a \$14.3 million Construction Training Fund (CTF) which included \$4.5 million for a new tool rebate to support apprentices and trainees to purchase trade-related tools and safety equipment. Eligible apprentices will be able to claim up to \$500 each from the CTF for purchases made between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

Upon election in May, Labor made numerous promises regarding post compulsory education, including a \$1.2 billion '*Future made in Australia Skills Plan*' to focus on closing the gap on key areas of skills shortages with new places at university and TAFE. They also promised to deliver up to 20,000 new university places.

Places will be prioritized for universities offering more opportunities for under-represented groups, including people in remote, regional and outer-suburban areas.

The \$4 million Geraldton creative industries' hub was officially opened on 3rd June 2022 by Education and Training Minister Sue Ellery. The upgrade is part of the McGowan Government's investment in TAFE infrastructure. The new facility will be used to deliver training for fashion and textiles, multimedia, photography, graphic design, jewellery making, pottery and glassmaking, ensuring students are learning in industry-standard facilities and graduating job ready.

Apprentice and traineeship numbers reached a record high of 47,700 in June 2022 surpassing 45,000 for the first time in a decade. Completions have also risen, with more than 10,300 people completing an apprenticeship or traineeship in 2021-22.

Apprenticeships with the most significant completion increases were mechanical fitters (up 71 percent), automotive electricians (up 70 percent), heavy mobile mechanics (up 46 percent) and heavy welding/fabricators (up 42 percent).

In September, the \$2 million upgrade of Central Regional TAFE's Northam Campus was officially opened. The upgraded facilities will help to meet the needs of industries in the Wheatbelt region – including metal fabrication and construction – by training students in industry-standard facilities to leave TAFE job ready.

Fee free TAFE courses have been introduced in 2023. All job ready skills sets will be fully fee-free in 2023. These skill sets contain units from nationally recognized vocational training and offer a great pathway to more skills' knowledge.

The eligibility criteria has been expanded so more people are able to access the free courses.

Travel Report

Samantha Greay – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

The Student Travel Subsidy Scheme (STSS) provides travel assistance to school and tertiary students who are geographically isolated. The two main types of travel support are:

- Subsidised fares for air, bus and train travel for eligible students who live within the defined remote area (DRA) of Western Australia.
- A road travel subsidy for eligible students who live anywhere within Western Australia, but who must be driven in a private vehicle more than 56 km from home to the nearest:
 - Appropriate government school with boarding facilities offering classes in the grade or level in which the student is enrolled, or
 - Regular passenger transport (bus stop, airport or train station - please visit the TransWA – Plan Your Journey website for regular passenger transport hubs and routes), or
 - A school bus service operating between the student's home and the school they are attending.

At present, when applying for a refund or travel voucher through STSS, a student is only eligible to submit a request for flights via the most direct route by air/bus/train between the principal family home or usual place of residence and where they are being educated. ICPA (WA) wrote to Minister Saffioti outlining a need for flexibility as there are times when students may need to travel to an alternative town to meet their families if, for example, the family has been at a School of the Air camp.

At the 2022 ICPA (WA) State Conference, three travel motions were presented related to the eligibility criteria of the STSS Road Travel Subsidy, which is now precluding members from receiving the Road Travel Subsidy. Responses to correspondence advised members to email 'richard.roberts@transport.wa.gov.au' as cases will be assessed on an individual basis. To date, no response has been received by those members who sent emails.

ICPA (WA) has written to the Minister of Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti, MLA several times and have informed her that we meet 3 times a year in Perth requesting a delegation meeting to discuss the eligibility criteria, again, with no response received. ICPA (WA) would greatly welcome the opportunity to clearly outline how the application of the Road Travel Subsidy eligibility criteria is not appropriate to rural locations. When the proximity to a transport hub, aka a bus stop, makes you ineligible to receive the Road Travel Subsidy even if that bus services only travel to Widgiemooltha, as acknowledged by On-demand Transport, questions need to be answered how the eligibility criteria is assisting rural and remote families with equitable access to education.

ICPA (WA) wrote to John Bailly of School Bus Services (SBS) and also had a successful meeting with him at the July face-to-face meeting to discuss members school bus issues and how to lodge a concern or complaint. Mr Bailly

explained the process on the website to follow to lodge a concern and speak with the Contact Officer responsible for the area. This information has been forwarded to members.

Feedback from ICPA (WA) members who use the Orange School Buses suggests that there is a lot of confusion with the terms 'eligible' and 'complimentary' and this was also the feedback from Mr. Bailly. Members often feel that the rules that SBS are governed by do not fit with the complexities of distance, schools, education needs and families in regional Western Australia.

In mid-2021 there had been an ABC News article outlining the major impact that removing a bus route can have on our families and towns, citing Munglinup where there was the possibility that a route may close. Unfortunately, the issue with the Hyden bus routes remains unresolved after a number of meetings.

In August 2021, ICPA (WA) welcomed the news that the Minister for Transport had referred the School Bus Services policy to a parliamentary committee for review. In October ICPA (WA) submitted an extensive submission to the committee and attended as witnesses at a public hearing to discuss matters raised in the submission including the operation of the Policy.

SCHOOL BUS SERVICES REVIEW 2022

The first School Bus Services review in 25 years was conducted in 2022. The 'Bus Fair' report was released in December 2022 some of the key recommendations included:

- Enhancing collaboration between the Department of Education and the Public Transport Authority
- Providing greater notice to the community when Transport services expand to replace school bus services
- Enabling families to keep their child on a wait list seat while also receiving a conveyance allowance
- Creating a formal process for parents and careers to appeal decisions made by school bus services
- Establishing a dedicated complaints management process
- Improving school bus service advertising and application processes for families
- Making information for applicants more accessible, including providing information in languages other than English; and
- Updating guidelines to include information on conduct of school bus contractors and drivers

In total, there were 40 recommendations from the Bus Fair report. The Government's response accepted 28 in principle, supported 1 in principle and noted 11 recommendations. One of those 11 was the recommendation to review the conveyance allowance. ICPA (WA) have been advocating for an increase to this allowance for a number of years, so here's hoping!

Travel in a State the size of Western Australia is going to be costly for any purpose. From 1947 a State scheme had been in place to assist isolated children to access education but was limited to two free return flights annually. Lobbying by ICPA (WA) resulted in the scheme being extended to three return fares from 1976. The current entitlement is four return trips for students under a subsidised fare. In 1977 the State Government agreed to subsidise part of the cost of travel from a child's home to the nearest approved regular passenger transport service, known as Road Travel Subsidy. It was a significant benefit given the vast distances travelled by many remote families every year just to reach the nearest airport, bus or train service.

In a submission to the Minister for Transport regarding Road Travel Subsidy in October 1988 ICPA (WA) recommended the Road Travel Subsidy rate be increased from 9c/km to 20c/km. Interestingly, some 34 years later the current rate of Road Travel Subsidy is 22.04c/km.

Rural & Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC) Report

Naomi Obst – March 2023

Throughout 2022 no face-to-face RREAC meetings were held. A meeting via Teams was held on 6th May 2022 to introduce new members and address possible areas of concern that RREAC could visit. This was the first meeting held since November 2020.

The first meeting for 2023 was held via Teams on 20th February though unfortunately I was unable to attend. The agenda outlined a welcome to members and website discussions. At the time of this report, no minutes from this meeting have been received.

A new chairperson, Dr Chris Chuck has been appointed. Dr Chuck is a Principal Consultant, School Planning with the Department of Education. Additionally, there are quite a few new members who all seem very invested in making RREAC work positively for rural and remote education.

On 7th February 2023 I received a letter from The Hon. Dr Tony Buti MLA advising that cabinet had approved my re-appointment to the RREAC board as a representative for ICPA (WA). The term of appointment is for two years, effective from this date. Appointments may be renewed by Cabinet, subject to a maximum tenure of 10 years.

It is hoped that the injection of a new chairperson and some new representatives together with more long-standing representatives will form a stronger and united voice to support ICPA's calls for a more equitable education outside of Perth.

Further, it is hoped that with the changes in Education Ministers this important body will be re-energised.

BRANCH REPORTS

Central Wheatbelt North Report

Lisa Brennan - President

There has been a lot of gratitude from our branch members for the 'continuation of services' to our small rural schools, especially the on-site dental van service. Thanks to ICPA (WA) State Council for your continued advocacy on this important issue. At the 2021 State Conference, Commissioner for Children and Young People Mr Colin Pettit mentioned the important impact of dental care delivery on student education.

Thank you to State Council for their ongoing advocacy around issues that face access to education, especially in the portfolios of Rural Schools, Allowances (AIC, BAHA and post-compulsory allowances), Accommodation and Curriculum.

Amanda and Lisa attended the Federal Conference in Perth in August 2022. It was professionally convened by WA State Council, with interesting speakers, motions and debates. Keynote speaker Craig Challen evoked empathetic floor discussion about resilience, hope and overcoming seemingly impossible challenges and expectations!

Our Branch has had a change of office bearer positions for 2023. Thank you to outgoing office bearers Lisa Brennan and Amanda Nixon, and welcome to Kate McCreery and Jane Lang. Thank you for taking the positions on.

We appreciate the efforts of the State Council in hosting the annual State Conference. It provides a crucial space to bring rural, regional and remote families together to discuss and discover the realities of access to education.

Eastern Districts Branch Report

Samantha Greay, President

It is with great sadness to report little has been done in the branch over the past 12 months. I stood down as President in 2022 hoping to find a new person to fill this role, without any luck.

The annual Melbourne Cup luncheon branch fundraiser was cancelled due to a lack of members committing. This is only the second time in our 40 years that this has happened.

Eastern Districts Branch without a President faces either amalgamation with another branch or going into recess after the AGM scheduled for 23rd February 2023.

We wish all State Council and all branches a wonderful 2023.

Esperance Branch Report

Jane Wandel, President

The Esperance Branch is due to hold its AGM on 7th March 2023.

During 2022 we attended the local Esperance Residential College end-of-year function to present an award and were given the opportunity to speak about the incredible work the ICPA does over all levels of Education.

Gascoyne Branch Report

Alys McKeough, President

Nil report

Goldfields Eyre Branch Report

Tallaya Wood, President

The Goldfields Eyre Branch held our AGM in October 2022 in conjunction with the Goldfields Nullarbor Rangelands Biosecurity Association (GNRBA) AGM, an event many of our members come to Kalgoorlie to attend. Those who could not be there in person attended via zoom, and it was nice to see various interested parties such as representatives from our local Elders branches and National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) stay to see what we were about.

Currently, our office bearers are:

President: Tallaya Wood

Vice President: Elyce Donaghy



Secretary: Katherine Hall
Treasurer: Madeline Wildy

We were all very proud when Jasmine Carmody put her hand up for State Council and have been impressed by her hard work and dedication to her role this past year. It is invaluable for branches to have members on the State Council, and we would like to thank Jasmine for stepping up to represent our kids and our families on a state level. Whilst rewarding, it can also be very daunting to take on a role such as a state councillor, especially for a mum of three very little girls with a station to run as well. Thank you for being a voice for our kids, Jasmine.

Jasmine Carmody as a State Councillor, Katie Hall, Karen Forrester, Elyce Donaghy and I attended the Federal Conference in Perth this year. A very successful conference with much debate, discussion and plenty of networking. All motions presented by the branch were carried, and we came home feeling invigorated and ready to take on the world for our kids.

Aside from conferences and debates over pending motions, we managed to fit in some fun with our inaugural Kids Fun Day and Glitz and Glamour Bushman's Ball. We had hoped to use the event to increase membership and whilst we had one family renew their membership after many years, we were a little disappointed not to get more isolated families on board. Despite our low membership numbers, we were able to raise our profile and our bank balance, raising \$7727 from the ball and live auction which means we can comfortably send delegates to both State and Federal Conferences again this year. We were also thrilled to see so many local kids participate in the Kids Fun Day that took place before the Ball. We are currently in the midst of organising another ball for August this year.

With membership in mind, we produced a pamphlet to disseminate to isolated families and small schools in our catchment area and have a meet and greet organised in Coolgardie for early Term 2. We are hoping to organise similar events in other Goldfield towns in the hopes of raising our profile and reach, thus helping families understand the importance of what we can do to support their families and their children's needs.

We have had some movement around members' concerns with the Fairbridge run Goldfields Camp School. With many thanks to the hard work and constant pressure of State Councillors; Fairbridge and Kalgoorlie School of the Air (KaSOTA) have been able to come to an arrangement in terms of the rooms and facilities the school would have access to on a camp, and as such our Home Tutors seminar will once again be held at the camp school. Our branch is cautiously optimistic that the camp school will once again be fit for purpose, making school camps for isolated children the safe haven it once was. Again, we thank WA State Council for all its hard work in this area.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all Goldfields Eyre members for their tireless work and ongoing support and contribution to the branch, without you our children would not have access to the educational opportunities they currently do.

Kimberley Air Branch Report

Kirsty Forshaw, President

Nil Report

Lakes District Branch Report

Fiona Hobley, President

Last year I attended the ICPA Lakes District meeting in Pingrup wearing a homemade mask that the kids and I had busily made before school commenced in February 2022. Our WA state borders were opening and COVID-19 was on the rise. What a year for 2022 and navigating COVID with school children and especially our boarding school kids.

At the Pingrup AGM last year, I listened to Claire Walter's President speech and her intention to step down as President, a mum with 3 boys who had finished their education years, the same as me a mum with 3 boys. She spoke about how much ICPA and the networking had given her that by the end of the meeting, I found myself accepting the President role.

One year on as President, I have not been able to give as I would have liked. Our State Conference held in March was held via Zoom which prompted me to install Starlink. It was amazing to finally have speed and data and attend a remote log-in meeting without dropping out and delays. I was very unsure about the conference expectations and how to read out motions and as luck would have it, I was the first cab off the ranks to read out a motion. Many thanks, Jane Cunningham and Kym Ross for helping me, I was a deer in headlights. The stories shared about the 50 years celebration were so heartfelt and really reminded everyone just how important it is to represent regional and isolated children and the challenges faced. The perfect opportunity was then on offer to attend the Federal Conference in August; however, I was robbed of my mid-year 'holiday' and networking chance as I caught COVID three days before the conference.

What I have done is actively listen to educational concerns, TAFE travel issues, teaching frustrations, and educational inequality in our regions, chatted to home-school mothers, boarding school students and parents, and have been progressively learning the ICPA ways.

I did see the strong relationship that ICPA developed with the Minister for Education during the height of COVID and between Director General Lisa Rodgers and Sally Brindal ICPA (WA) State President. To be at weekly meetings affecting boarding schools during the COVID peak was great to see. Plenty of parents needed support with protocols and navigating the pandemic implications.

A remarkable effort goes into the State team and we are lucky to have Jane Cunningham and Kym Ross at this level. We at the Lakes District Branch met twice last year and were once again able to hold our major fundraising effort at Newdegate Donut stand. This fundraising event enables us to send delegates to both State and Federal Conferences. I wish to acknowledge the incredible job that Claire Ness undertook in running the 2-day fundraiser, which is a hectic stand to work in and needs more support in 2023 from branch members from surrounding districts to assist over the 2 days.

While I felt lost at my first meeting, I am still not found, or comfortable in my role, yet I am keen to do more for our regional children. We need to find opportunities despite our distance to ensure our small schools are supported, as all children deserve a quality education no matter their residential address.

I was impressed with one article in Pedals magazine that spoke about mental health and the TidBits edition with a focus on homesickness written by a boarding student. While we look for the positives in children starting high school, for many this means a loved one leaving the family home to board away. It really is some of the hardest times in people's lives (for both parents and kids). The more we can do to support families and children in this transition phase and in the first few boarding years should be a high priority.

Nyabing has been a direct beneficiary of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association when lobbying for teacher housing over 5 years ago (finally the houses were tenanted in February this year) and is thankful to ICPA for their support with school bus services to enlist a third school bus in the area.

A big thank you to the current committee for being patient with me this year, especially Claire Walter and Kym Ross for their guidance. Let's keep our voice heard for the children learning in isolated and distanced regional locations.

Meekatharra Air Branch Report

Claire Mahony, President

Meekatharra Air Branch membership numbers have remained steady with nearly 20 members.

Our AGM and general meeting was held via Zoom quite late this year on 28th February 2023. We have had one other general meeting which was held via Zoom in October 2022 and all branch correspondence between members is sent via email.

Our branch held a 2-day camp in July last year which the Ford family kindly hosted at Paroo Station. This brought together eight families with 10 adults and 21 children. Each family brought an evening meal and smoko's to share. All the kids enjoyed creating keepsake decoupage art projects, tie-dying shirts, an evening disco and playing quite a few games of capture the flag which was a great team event for all the kids.

August saw a record number of our branch members attend the Federal Conference in Perth and we thank State Council for their efforts in obtaining travel funding for us.

The only fundraising this past year was kindly undertaken by Natalie Broad at the Landor Races held in October where she raised a whopping \$2540. Natalie donated \$500 of this to REVISE and \$2040 to our branch. Thank you Nat for the huge effort.

Lauren Lewis has set up a Containers for Change account for the branch which should be well received after having a stinking hot summer which in turn quenches the thirst!

In December, Meekatharra Air Branch awarded a bursary prize to a year six student from Meekatharra School of the Air (MSOTA), the leaving students were asked to write about their favourite memory with MSOTA and our branch members would vote on whom they thought deserved to win the award. Last year the award went to Christabella Pumpa from Murgoo station, Murchison.

On behalf of our branch, we would like to thank State Council for their ongoing hard work.

Midwest Branch Report

Jen Critch, President

A very busy year for our Midwest community.

Our first meeting took place at the Geraldton Library on 7th February 2022, where we were all masked up or zooming in. Naomi Obst stepped down and Jackie Simkin stepped into the role of secretary. Thank you, Naomi, for all you do for our organisation. She is still heavily involved and is now a Federal Councillor with ICPA (Aust).

At the meeting, we were still planning for the State Conference, but waiting to see if we could proceed due to rising COVID-19 numbers. The conference was moved to an online format the next week. The online conference was well attended with 12 attendees from Midwest - thank you to all that logged on.

Midwest had one supplementary motion about boarding houses' 'disproportionate restrictions on boarding students to their day student peers' and the motion was passed.

We held another meeting on 8th June at the Geraldton Library. The Federal Conference was the main discussion topic.

Federal Conference was on 3rd and 4th August at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, which 9 Midwest Branch members attended. What a great event, well done to the WA State Council for their organisation. The Federal Conference is in Darwin in 2023.

We did not have a stall at the Mingenew Expo in 2022 due to the change of format for the Expo. This stall has in the past increased awareness of what we do and how we can help rural families and increased our membership base. We hope to have a stall in 2023.

Thank you so very much to our State Council for all their hard work and lobbying. To all our members, thank you for all your support and contribution to the Midwest Branch.

Pilbara Branch Report

Robin Pensini, Treasurer

The Pilbara Branch membership was down from the previous year from 20 to 15 in 2022 (including three life members). It is concerning to note that only two of the Port Hedland School of the Air (PHSOTA) families are members of ICPA. It has been challenging to maintain Branch momentum and attract new members with so few PHSOTA based face-to-face opportunities over the past two years due to COVID.

The Branch did not hold an AGM in 2022 and is currently operating with the previous year's Vice President, Julie Percy and Treasurer, Robin Pensini. The President and Secretary resigned during 2021. There has been no interest in any members stepping up to take on executive roles.

The Branch held two meetings in 2022. One meeting was held over Zoom in August and the second was conducted as an e-mail meeting whereby an agenda and notes were e-mailed to members, and they were given seven days to comment on items and motions. Through that meeting, a motion was passed for the Branch to refund new members \$25 from the 2023 membership fee in an effort to attract new families to ICPA. The total current Pilbara Branch membership fee is \$100.

To aid in recruiting members and raise awareness of ICPA, Sally Brindal, ICPA (WA) State President, travelled to Port Hedland in December to attend a PHSOTA end of school gathering to offer information to prospective members. Thank you to State Council for organising this. It was greatly appreciated.

There were no major fundraisers held during the year but fortunately, one member listed the Branch as the beneficiary for Containers for Change which brought in limited funds. We are hopeful the Marble Bar Races Sausage Sizzle fundraiser in July will restart this year provided members living around the area are available to organise it as that has been the major fundraiser in previous years.

The next meeting will be held face-to-face at the PHSOTA Home Tutor's Seminar in Port Hedland during the second week of March.

Special thanks also to Kym Ross for your encouragement.

WA Lones Branch Report

Michelle Abbott, Lones Officer

The WA Lones Branch has maintained a steady membership over past years and continues to do so.

In 2022 WA Lones Branch had 19 members and in 2023 at the time of writing this membership stands at 8, but I am positive that with the reminders that have been sent out that this number will increase up to 2022 levels.

With members spread all over the State, the WA Lones Branch is a unique and diverse group. Many members are grateful to be able to support ICPA (WA) through this Branch. We encourage Boarding Schools and Residential Colleges 'to get on board' and support this amazing organisation which does so much for many WA children and their families.

The 2022 Federal Conference was held in Perth, and Jennifer Pitman attended as a WA Lones Branch member. Federal Conference will be in Darwin this year and there will be an opportunity for a Lones member to attend with funding offered.

This is my first and only year as Lones Officer. I have been on State Council for 3 years as Treasurer, and it is now time for me to step down. Best Wishes to all.

Yalgoo Branch Report

Ruth Rowe, President

The Yalgoo Branch has been a small branch for a considerable period of time; however, we are now in a position where we are struggling with membership numbers to remain a viable branch.

On a much more positive note, we are proud to have had Roxanne Morrissey and Erica Kellock become honorary Yalgoo Branch Life Members in early 2022. This is in recognition of the considerable time and effort contributed to the branch over several decades by both Roxanne and Erica representing the branch as Branch Presidents, various office bearer positions, fundraising, branch promotion, memberships and the list goes on.

A huge thank you on behalf of our Branch to you both for your contribution to the ICPA. Thanks also to ICPA (WA) for all of your brilliant work over the last year supporting WA families and for once again bringing another State Conference together.

State Conference Guest List

Merome Beard, MLA	Shadow Minister for Local Government; Tourism; Commerce; Women's Interests; Opposition Whip; Member for North West Central;
Jim Bell	Deputy Director General, Department of Education
Jody Beven	Senior Branch Manager, Bendigo Bank
Sue Broad	3 rd ICPA WA State President
Julia Broad	Federal Vice President, ICPA Australia
Eva Colic	Regional Engagement Manager, Telstra
Jared Daunt	General Manager, Australian Boarding Schools Association
Naomi Evans	Head of Regional Community Affairs (WA), nbn
Hon. Donna Faragher, MLC	Shadow Minister for Community Services; Early Childhood Education; Youth; Seniors and Ageing, Liberal Party
Anne Gething	State President, The Country Women's Association of WA Inc
Meredith Hammat, MLA	Parliamentary Secretary to Hon Dr Tony Buti, Minister for Education, Aboriginal Affairs; Citizenship and Multicultural Interests
Michael Heydon	Regional Engagement Manager, Telstra
Denise Hilsz	Chairperson, REVISE WA
Ashley Keatch	Head of Boarding, Great Southern Grammar - Albany
Esther Kerr	Principal, Kimberley School of the Air
Jill Miller	Head of Boarding, Perth College
Alana Moller	Federal President, ICPA Australia
Jasmine Peart	Farm Weekly
Jenny Percy	5 th ICPA WA State President
Elise Petty	Executive Manager - Education & Regional Stakeholder Relations, nbn
Alan Potter	Coordinator, REVISE WA
Sue Potter	Coordinator, REVISE WA
Benita Ridley	
Lisa Rodgers	Director General, Department of Education
Justine Rowe	Chief Sustainability Manager, Telstra
Peter Rundle, MLA	Deputy Leader of The Nationals WA; Shadow Minister for Education; Training; International Education; Sport & Recreation; Racing & Gaming Deputy Leader of the Opposition; Manager of Opposition Business
Rodney Steer	Head of Boarding, Wesley College
Rachel Stenslund	Dean of Boarding, St Hilda's Anglican School For Girls
Richard Stokes	CEO, Australian Boarding Schools Association
Jenny Thomas	Community Engagement Manager, nbn
Teliah Turrill	Head of Breaksea Boarding House, Great Southern Grammar – Albany
Simon Ward	Chief of Staff, to Hon Dr Tony Buti, Minister for Education, Aboriginal Affairs; Citizenship and Multicultural Interests

State Council Delegates

President	Sally Brindal
Vice President	Jane Cunningham
Secretary/Webmaster	Kym Ross
Treasurer/Lones Officer	Michelle Abbott
Councillor	Jasmine Carmody
Councillor	Chandra Ridley
Councillor	Louise Ford

Branch Delegates

BRANCH	DELEGATE	DELEGATE	OBSERVERS
Central Wheatbelt North	Amanda Nixon		
Eastern Districts	Carla Hyde	Bianca James	Carolyn Burns Marlene Mayfield Shahron Prosser
Esperance	Susanne Stead		
Gascoyne	Mary Wake	Kelly Hopkinson	
Goldfields Eyre	Jo-Anne Tonkin		
Kimberley Air			
Lakes Branch	Fiona Hobley	Arlene Sutherland	Jeanette De Landgraftt
Meekatharra Air	Natalie Beven	Tracie Blair	Raelene Hall Jim Quadrio Mary Walsh Olivia Ford
Midwest 2023 STATE CONFERENCE CONVENING BRANCH	Fiona Mann	Jasmyn Allen	Jen Critch Sam Messina Emma Foulkes-Taylor Rosco Foulkes-Taylor Naomi Obst Susanne Warr Teneale Bagley Liz Sudlow
Pilbara			
WA Lones	Anna Mahony		Jennifer Pitman
Yalgoo	Roxanne Morrissey		

State Conference Conveners

Midwest Branch

Sam Messina
Jen Critch
Fiona Mann
Jackie Simkin
Jasmyn Allen
Naomi Obst
Nicole Batten
Mim Barnetson

State Conference Apologies

Tara De Landgraft	ABC Goldfields-Esperance
Mark Sampson	Principal, University Hall
Colin de Grussa MLC	Deputy Leader and Whip of the Opposition in the Legislative Council. The Nationals WA
David Michael MLA	Member for Balcatta, WA Labor
Karen Ho	Department of Training and Workforce Development
Chris Massey	Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
Hon. Sue Ellery MLC	Minister for Finance, Commerce, Women’s Interest, WA Labor
Hon. Mia Davies MLA	Member for Central Wheatbelt, The Nationals WA
Shane Love MLA	Leader of the Opposition, Leader of The Nationals WA
Hon. Paul Papalia CSC MLA	Minister for Police, Road Safety, Defence Industry, Veterans Issues, WA Labor
Hon. Stephen Dawson MLC	Minister for Emergency Services; Innovation and the Digital Economy; Medical Research; Volunteering, Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, WA Labor
Libby McPhee	Secretary, ICPA NSW
Hon. Reece Whitby MLA	Minister for Environment, Climate Action, Racing and Gaming, WA Labor
Faith O’Brien	Secretary, Zonta Club of Perth
Elyce Donaghy	Vice President, ICPA - Goldfields Eyre Branch
John Bailly	Manager, School Bus Services, Public Transport Authority
Nikki Mahony	ICPA (Aust), Federal Treasurer
Hon. Melissa Price MP	Federal Member for Durack
Hon. Don Punch MLA	Minister for Regional Development; Disability Services; Fisheries;
Hon. John Carey MLA	Minister for Housing; Lands; Homelessness; Local Government
Samantha Greay	Councillor, ICPA WA
Jane Hughes	Councillor, ICPA WA
Karen Morrissey	15 th ICPA WA State President



2023: 51ST ICPA (WA) STATE CONFERENCE.
AGENDA MOTIONS, AGM, FINANCIAL REPORT, PORTFOLIO and BRANCH REPORTS,
ATTENDANCES and APOLOGIES. icpa.com.au/wa



Hon. Dr Tony Buti	Minister for Education Aboriginal Affairs; Citizenship and Multicultural Interests
Liz Langdon	Head of Boarding, Penrhos College
Kate Thompson	Assistant Secretary, ICPA Australia