

**The Isolated Children's
Parents' Association of
Australia ICPA(Aust)**



2026 Federal Conference

Agenda Motions

29th & 30th July

2026 Gold Coast,

Queensland



Contents

BOARDING SCHOOLS/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME	2
<i>Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC)</i>	2
<i>Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program (CRSP)</i>	8
<i>Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT)</i>	9
<i>Other</i>	10
COMMUNICATIONS	11
<i>Mobile</i>	11
<i>Other</i>	14
<i>Regional Tech Hub (RTH)</i>	14
<i>Internet</i>	16
CURRICULUM	16
DISTANCE EDUCATION	20
<i>Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC)</i>	20
<i>Remuneration for Isolated Classroom Supervisors (RICS)</i>	21
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION and CARE	27
<i>Funding</i>	27
<i>Childcare Subsidy (CCS)</i>	34
<i>In Home Care (IHC)</i>	37
<i>Other</i>	40
RURAL SCHOOLS	42
SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS	43
STUDENT TRAVEL	48
TERTIARY EDUCATION	55
<i>Permission To Teach (PTT)</i>	55
<i>Higher Education Loan Program (HELP)</i>	56
<i>Youth Allowance (YA)</i>	57
<i>Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP)</i>	58
<i>Other</i>	59
TRAINING	62
MISCELLANEOUS	64
SUPPLEMENTARY MOTIONS	67
COMMUNICATIONS	68





DISTANCE EDUCATION.....	70
<i>Remuneration for Isolated Classroom Supervisors (RICS)</i>	70
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION and CARE	72
<i>In Home Care (IHC)</i>	73
MISCELLANEOUS.....	77
RULES OF DEBATE	81
ACRONYMS.....	82



BOARDING SCHOOLS/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME

Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC)

A1. New South Wales State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate for a significant increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance to reflect the escalating costs incurred by families, and for the implementation of an appropriate indexation mechanism to ensure the allowance keeps pace with rising education expenses.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance is intended to support families in rural, remote and isolated areas with the additional costs of educating their children when reasonable access to a local school is not available. ICPA Australia is acknowledged and commended for its ongoing advocacy in this area.

However, the costs associated with distance education and boarding have increased significantly in recent years, placing growing financial pressure on isolated families.

Current AIC payment rates no longer adequately reflect the actual out-of-pocket expenses incurred by families, reducing equitable access to educational opportunities for rural and remote students. Without a meaningful increase and the introduction of a reliable indexation mechanism, the gap between the support provided and the real cost of education will continue to widen.

This motion recognises that isolated families should not be disadvantaged because of where they live. Increasing the AIC Allowance and ensuring it is indexed to reflect rising education costs, is essential to ensure rural and remote students can access educational opportunities comparable to those available to their metropolitan peers.

A2. Boulia-Bedourie-Birdsville Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Australian Government for a comprehensive review and reform of all allowances under the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme, ensuring that each component is indexed and maintained at a level that reflects the original intent and level of financial support established when the scheme was introduced.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme was introduced in 1973 to assist geographically isolated families in accessing education, with support originally intended to cover approximately 55% of the average boarding school fee. Over time, boarding, travel and education-related costs have increased significantly, while AIC allowances have not kept pace. As a result, the level of assistance provided today no longer reflects the scheme's original purpose or the financial support intended when it was established.

It is essential that the Australian Department of Education formally recognises students from rural, remote and geographically isolated areas as a distinct priority cohort within Australia's National Education Strategy. The Department currently identifies and supports specific groups through dedicated focus areas, including Indigenous education, students with disability, international education and mainstream schooling initiatives. However, students who rely on the AIC Scheme due to geographical isolation do not receive the same level of recognition despite facing unique and ongoing barriers to educational access. A

comprehensive review of the AIC Scheme is needed to ensure all allowances accurately reflect contemporary costs and continue to provide equitable access to education for children living in rural, remote and isolated areas of Australia.

A3. Broken Hill Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Social Services to review and update the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme policy to create an additional “Significantly Geographically Isolated” category under the AIC eligibility criteria, recognising the inequity experienced by families living in significantly geographically isolated areas.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme was established in 1973 with the core intent of supporting the education of isolated children who did not have reasonable access to education. Over time, the eligibility criteria have broadened to ensure more families experiencing educational disadvantage are able to access support.

Under the current AIC isolation criteria, eligibility applies where:

- the family home is 56km or more from the nearest appropriate state school; and
- the student lives at least 4.5km from the nearest transport to school; or
- there is no transport available to access school; or
- circumstances beyond the family’s control prevent the child from attending the nearest appropriate state school for at least 20 days per school year.

While this assistance provides valuable support to rural and remote families, it does not adequately recognise the additional inequities faced by families living in significantly geographically isolated areas. A “one size fits all” approach to support does not recognise the compounding disadvantage created by extreme geographical isolation. Equity is not achieved by providing identical support to all students regardless of circumstance; true equity requires support that reflects the actual level of disadvantage and cost burden experienced by families.

Families in these locations experience substantially greater distances, limited or non-existent transport options, reduced access to essential services, increased travel requirements and significantly higher costs associated with educating their children.

A separate “Significantly Geographically Isolated” category within the AIC Scheme would acknowledge these inequities and provide fairer recognition of the challenges faced by families in the most remote parts of Australia.

Suggested eligibility criteria for a Significantly Geographically Isolated category could include:

- the family home being more than 80km from the nearest appropriate state school; and
- the student living at least 20km from the nearest appropriate school transport to school; or
- there being no transport available to access school.

This additional category would better reflect the realities faced by significantly geographically isolated families and support equitable access to education for all Australian children, regardless of where they live.

Without a more equitable tiered approach to assistance, families in the most isolated parts of Australia continue to shoulder disproportionately high costs simply to access the same basic educational opportunities available to less isolated students. This undermines the intent of the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme, which was originally established to ensure that geographic isolation would not prevent Australian children from accessing a fair and reasonable education.

A4. Northern Territory State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Australian Government to review the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme and introduce a tiered payment structure or additional GI loading based on geographic isolation and distance from educational services, recognising the significantly higher costs incurred by families in remote and very remote Australia.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

ICPA NT acknowledges and thanks the Federal Council for its extensive advocacy regarding the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme. However, the current AIC payment does not adequately recognise the substantially higher costs incurred by families living in remote and very remote Australia.

The current fuel crisis has exacerbated this situation and now more than ever, each additional km travelled makes such a costly difference.

While all geographically isolated families face additional costs in accessing education compared to their urban counterparts, the level of financial burden varies significantly depending on a family's location. Families living hundreds of kilometers from schools, airports and essential services incur considerably greater expenses than those living closer to educational centres.

These additional costs include, but are not limited to:

- travel to and from boarding schools, airports and distance education events;
- accommodation during educational visits, school events and travel periods;
- increased fuel costs;
- vehicle maintenance and wear and tear;
- lost income associated with extended travel times;
- access to educational resources and services.

A tiered payment structure (or GI loading) based on geographic isolation or distance from educational services would provide a fairer and more equitable distribution of support, ensuring assistance better reflects the actual costs faced by families.

ICPA NT notes that the Northern Territory's Student Assistance Scheme (NT SAS) already incorporates distance-based assistance (grouped into multiple zones), recognising that the costs associated with education increase with geographical isolation. A similar approach within the AIC Scheme would ensure support is better aligned with the realities faced by remote and very remote families across Australia.

CASE STUDY 1: A family property on the Barkly Tablelands in the NT travels 740km (one way) to attend contact events at Katherine School of the Air. A whole day's drive, a whole day's pay for a home tutor, a whole day of lost work for the parent, an extra night's accommodation on Friday night as it's too far to head home after In-school has finished. Extra fuel costs, wear and tear on vehicles. 4 x In schools per year, plus school camps, sports camps and more.

CASE STUDY 2: A family living north of Mataranka on the main Stuart Highway travels 64km to Katherine School of the Air (one way). They receive the same AIC as Case Study 1, but incur a far less cost and time burden to attend in-school events etc.

CASE STUDY 3: A family on the NT/WA border travels 926km to Darwin to get kids on a plane to go back to boarding school. At least one night's accommodation, usually two as you need a day to get supplies for school, haircuts and medical appointments.



A5. South Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Minister for Social Services work with Treasury, Department of Social Services and Services Australia to approve and implement a policy change to apply the Additional Boarding Allowance (ABA) to Geographically Isolated applicants whose verified boarding fees exceed the combined value of the Basic Boarding Allowance and Additional Boarding Allowance without being subject to parental income testing.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

In 2025, the average cost of boarding fees in Australia was \$27,266, yet under the current eligibility criteria, the Additional Boarding Allowance (ABA) is received by less than 12% of families receiving the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance.

Eligibility is determined through parental income means testing rather than the actual financial burden faced by families, despite the ABA being intended to assist with boarding costs exceeding the Basic Boarding Allowance of \$10,555. The ABA is currently capped at \$3,027 per student annually; however, this represents the maximum payment available, with many eligible families receiving only a portion of this amount due to the parental income means test.

We request that, upon review of the ABA eligibility criteria, families whose verified boarding fees exceed the combined value of the Basic Boarding Allowance and Additional Boarding Allowance (\$13,582) automatically qualify for the ABA component without being subject to parental income testing. Whilst we understand the Additional Boarding Allowance is intended to provide additional support for lower income families, it is evident that it is not providing adequate additional support given less 12% of boarding families receive it.

For geographically isolated families, boarding school is essential to accessing secondary education, and costs routinely exceed the Basic Boarding Allowance, placing considerable financial pressure on families, particularly those with multiple children.

Basing ABA eligibility on verified boarding costs, rather than parental income, would provide fairer and more equitable support while maintaining the integrity and purpose of the scheme. In addressing concerns surrounding ABA eligibility criteria, it is important this does not detract from the ongoing need to increase the Basic Boarding Allowance, which supports educational access for all eligible families.

Boarding Example Costs

Family 1 Lives 150 km from their closest town, Coober Pedy and sits within the Federal electorate of Grey in the far north of South Australia

Son (Yr9) at boarding school in Adelaide.

Home to Adelaide is 998 km one-way (1996 km return). Boarding Fees of School \$32,160

Basic Boarding Allowance Received

\$10,553 Additional Boarding Allowance

Received \$650

Boarding costs my family \$18,055 after his scholarship is applied. \$11,204 Federal Government support.

Gap \$6,851

*Boarding scholarship Yes. Without his scholarship, and relying solely on the AIC, our family would not have been able to afford to send him away to provide a secondary education - without his scholarship, our family would be out of pocket for a \$20,956 gap each year after the application of the AIC at the current rate we receive. That's just the boarding side, with tuition also extremely high.



*With a second child nearing the end of her primary education and needing to go to boarding school for her secondary education, it is a genuine concern for our family whether we will be able to afford it. If she does not secure a scholarship, we will be unable to afford to educate her, which is going to lead to some extremely hard times for our family.

** these figures do not include school fees or incidentals

Family 2 Lives 205km from their closest town (Coober Pedy) and sits within the Federal electorate of Grey in the far north of South Australia.

Son (Yr12) & Daughter (Yr8) are at boarding school in Adelaide. Home to Adelaide is 990km one way, 1980km return.

Boarding Fees of Schools is \$50,948.00

Basic Boarding Allowance (BBA) Received \$21,110.00 Additional Boarding Allowance

(ABA) Received \$1782.91 Boarding costs my family \$50948.00

I receive \$22,892.91 federal government support.

Gap \$28,055.09

*does not receive the benefit of any scholarships

** these figures do not include school fees or incidentals

Family 3 Lives 105km from their closest town Oodnadatta and 220km from the slightly larger centre of Coober Pedy and sits within the Federal electorate of Grey in the far north of South Australia.

Son (Yr7) & Daughter (Yr9) at boarding school in Adelaide. Home to Adelaide is 990km one-way (1980km return).

Boarding Fees of School \$56,000

Basic Boarding Allowance Received \$10,780/child

Additional Boarding Allowance Received Child 1 \$224 / Child 2 \$225 Boarding cost my family \$56,000, I receive \$22,010 Federal Government support.

*one child on boarding scholarship

** these figures do not include school fees or incidentals

Gap \$33,989

Family 4 Lives 150km from their closest town Peterborough and sits within the Federal electorate of Grey in South Australia.

Daughter (Yr8) at boarding school in Adelaide.

Home to Adelaide is 387 km one-way (774 km return).

Boarding Fees of School \$29,748

Basic Boarding Allowance Received \$10,555

Additional Boarding Allowance Received \$ under process so NIL

Boarding cost my family \$29,748 and I receive \$10,555 Federal Government support.

Gap \$19,193

*does not receive the benefit of any scholarships

** these figures do not include school fees or incidentals

Family 5 Lives 50km from their closest town Orreroo, which sits within the Federal electorate of Grey.

Son (Yr11) at boarding school in Adelaide. Home to Adelaide is 325km one-way (650km return). Boarding Fees of School \$31,860

Basic Boarding Allowance Received

\$10,555 Additional Boarding Allowance

Received \$0

Boarding cost my family \$ 31,860. I receive \$10,555 of Federal Government support.



Gap \$21,305

*Boarding scholarship

** these figures do not include school fees or incidentals

Family 6 Lives 83km to the nearest town, 175km to the nearest public high school and sits within the Federal electorate of Grey in the far North East of South Australia.

Son (Yr 9) and daughter (Yr 7) are at boarding school in Adelaide. Home to Adelaide is 800km one way (1600 km return).

Boarding Fees of School \$58,896

Basic Boarding Allowance Received \$21,110

Additional Boarding Allowance Received (still waiting to hear if approved and the amount)

Scholarship received \$4,958

Discounts \$1,348

Gap \$31,478.58

*small scholarship received

** these figures do not include school fees or incidentals

Family 7 Lives 150km from their closest town Coober Pedy and sits within the Federal electorate of Grey in the north-west of SA.

2 sons (Yr 10 and Yr 7) at boarding school in Adelaide. Home to Adelaide is 800km one-way (1600km return).

Boarding Fees of School \$32505 + \$31860 = \$64365 Boarding Scholarship

\$16300 + \$15930 = \$32230 Basic Boarding Allowance \$21580

Additional Boarding Allowance Received \$0

Boarding cost my family \$64365. I receive in scholarships \$32,230 and I receive \$21,580 of federal government support.

Gap \$10,555

*Boarding scholarships

** these figures do not include school fees or incidentals

Family 8 Lives 45km from their closest town Woomera and 210km from the slightly larger centre of Port Augusta, sitting within the Federal electorate of Grey.

Son (Yr8) & Daughter (Yr10) at boarding school in Adelaide. Home to Adelaide is 521km one-way (1042km return).

Boarding fees of School \$65,010

Basic Boarding Allowance Received \$20,816 (for 2 children)

Additional Boarding Allowance Received \$0

Boarding cost my family \$65,010. I receive \$20,816 of Federal Government support.

Gap \$44,194

*does not receive the benefit of any scholarships

** these figures do not include school fees or incidentals

Family 9 Lives in a remote area, approximately 297 km from the nearest town of Coober Pedy, within the Federal electorate of Division of Grey.

Their daughter (year 9) attends boarding school in Adelaide. Home to Adelaide is 700km one-way (1400km return)

Boarding Fees of schools minus scholarships: \$37,124

Basic Boarding Allowance Received: \$21,110

Additional Boarding Allowance Received \$0

Gap: \$16,014

*Boarding scholarships

** these figures do not include school fees or incidentals



A6. South Australia State Council

“SA ICPA thanks ICPA (Aust) for its ongoing advocacy and commitment to securing an immediate increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance to cover 55% of the average cost of boarding for geographically isolated students.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

SA ICPA sincerely thanks the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia for its continued advocacy on behalf of rural and remote families regarding the inadequacy of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance.

For many geographically isolated families, boarding school is essential for children to access secondary education. However, boarding costs have continued to rise significantly, while the AIC allowance has not kept pace, placing increasing financial pressure on families.

SA ICPA acknowledges and appreciates the important work of ICPA (Aust) in advocating for a meaningful increase to the allowance, appropriate indexation and equitable access to education for rural and remote students regardless of postcode. SA ICPA is committed to supporting this advocacy and is willing to assist in any way possible to help progress this important work.

Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program (CRSP)

A7. South Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) encourages the Federal Government and relevant departments to commit to the continuation and long-term funding of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program (CRSP) beyond the current pilot program ending in 2029.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program (CRSP), introduced in 2024 as a pilot initiative, was warmly welcomed by the Isolated Children's Parents' Association Australia (ICPA) members and provided successful applicants with the opportunity to attend boarding school at a subsidised financial cost.

For many families living in regional and remote Australia, boarding school is the only viable option for children to access compulsory secondary education. The CRSP provided significant financial relief and is an important acknowledgement by the Federal Government of the financial pressures faced by geographically isolated families seeking equitable educational opportunities for their children. With the current pilot program due to conclude in 2029, ongoing funding and long-term commitment to the CRSP would provide certainty for families and continue supporting students who, through no fault of their own, are unable to access quality secondary schooling locally.

A8. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

“That ICPA (Aust) are thanked and supported in their ongoing efforts working with the Minister for Education, Treasury and Prime Minister Cabinet to:

1) Continue and expand the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program beyond its

pilot.

2) Consistently provide feedback for the review of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Since the initial 2024 pilot, the scholarship program has been dormant, with no commencement date set for further scholarships (there is a review process and members have been notified that this will happen towards the end of the pilot).

Continuing the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program beyond the pilot stage would provide certainty for families, improve educational access and equity for regional and remote students, and ensure long term support for those who have no viable alternative to boarding schooling.

Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT)

A9. Cojoined Motion Louth Branch (NSW) along with Westmar – Inglestone Branch (QLD)

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

Carried/Lost

Explanation Louth Branch (NSW):

In many rural and remote locations there is limited or no access to suitable compulsory education facilities and therefore boarding school is the only option. This can often become unaffordable to families, especially when there is more than one child, so families are forced to relocate to employment with closer access to school facilities, resulting in further loss to the already diminished workforce of remote regions. In recognition of conditions, the Australian Tax Office already offers FBT concessions for employer provision of housing where there is a lack of sufficient residential accommodation in remote locations.

Similar concessions should also apply when employers financially assist with the schooling costs of employees' children where there is a lack of appropriate schooling facilities available in those same remote locations. Currently when employers offer financial assistance towards the cost of schooling, the payment is deemed a Fringe Benefit and taxed at the applicable rate of 47% so any contribution made by the employer is compounded with almost half the amount again in tax.

The cost of accessing compulsory education for geographically isolated children should not be taxed, irrespective of who is bearing the cost. Affordable access to boarding schools for employees who work in remote areas provides their children with equitable access to school facilities as those in non-remote regions. It also serves to keep valuable families in remote Australia, supporting an already challenged workforce.

Explanation Westmar – Inglestone (QLD):

Many employers/employees in rural and regional areas find secondary schooling of employees' children a hard time for all. Many families leave their place of employment to educate their children for secondary school, causing upheaval for both the employer and the employee. Many employers would like to assist with some of the costs associated with secondary schooling in order to retain their valuable employees, however they are hit with the double whammy of the cost of the assistance as well as the burden of the FBT. If the FBT component on boarding school fees of rural and remote employees' children was removed, it would provide a greater incentive for employers to assist with some of the schooling costs.

Rural and remote living is not for everyone. It is for the vital minority working to provide



food, fibre and resources for the benefit of the whole country. The families that do so should be supported not penalised. The removal of FBT would help sustain our small rural communities.

Example: Employer Pays \$30,000 Boarding School Fees - FBT Calculation

Item	Amount
School fees paid	\$30,000
Type 2 gross-up factor	1.8868
Grossed-up taxable value	\$56,604
FBT rate	47%
FBT payable	\$26,604
Total Employer Cost	\$56,604

Other

A10. Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal government for tax deductibility of boarding school fees for children in remote and geographically isolated communities.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Children in remote and geographically isolated communities are denied the educational choice that families in metropolitan and regional centres can take for granted. For many families, secondary schooling options are limited to a single local school or distance education, regardless of whether either option is the right fit for the child. Where the only local option is unable to meet a family's needs, geography becomes a direct barrier to equitable access to education.

This is not only an education issue; it is a workforce and community sustainability issue. Remote towns rely on essential professionals, skilled workers and business owners to remain viable. When families are forced to leave a community so their children can access appropriate secondary schooling, those towns lose the very people they need to sustain local services, economic activity and long-term growth.

The reality is that families are already making these decisions. It is common to hear committed residents say they cannot stay in a remote community once their children reach high school age. That reality should concern governments. If policy settings make it financially impossible for families to remain in remote areas while securing an appropriate education for their children, those settings are actively undermining regional and remote workforce retention.

Families do not ask for special treatment; they ask for fair treatment. Children who must live away from home to access compulsory schooling should not be disadvantaged simply because of where they live. Parents in isolated areas should have genuine choice about the schooling that best meets their child's educational, social and wellbeing needs.

Tax deductibility for boarding fees, distinct from school tuition fees, would provide targeted and practical support to families who have no realistic alternative if they wish to access appropriate secondary education. It would also help employers attract and retain key workers in remote and isolated communities by reducing one of the major financial barriers to staying.

This reform would deliver benefits beyond individual families. It would support the retention of GPs, teachers, police officers, small business owners and other professionals whose presence is critical to the strength of remote communities. A tax deduction for boarding fees would recognise a simple principle: when geography removes educational choice, public policy should help restore it. This is a practical measure to improve educational equity, strengthen remote communities and support the families who choose

to live and work in the bush.

A11. Western Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to Standards Australia and relevant education authorities to ensure rural, regional and remote stakeholders are meaningfully consulted during any review, amendment or implementation process relating to Australian boarding standards.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

For many geographically isolated families, boarding is not a choice but a necessity to access secondary education.

National boarding standards directly impact:

- student wellbeing and safety,
- operational requirements,
- accessibility and affordability of boarding,
- and the sustainability of boarding providers servicing regional Australia.

ICPA WA believes rural and remote families, boarding students, boarding providers and regional communities must have meaningful input into the development and implementation of boarding standards to ensure they remain practical, equitable and workable across diverse regional settings. Meaningful consultation should include:

- rural and remote families,
- boarding students and parents,
- government and non-government boarding providers,
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,
- disability stakeholders,
- agricultural and pastoral communities,
- and relevant education and wellbeing professionals.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mobile

A12. Aramac Muttaborra Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to Telstra, The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, and all other relevant bodies to ensure that telecommunications in rural and remote towns are improved to at least the standard that was available through the 3G network, prior to the rollout of the 4G and 5G network.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Since the rollout of the 3G network in 2006, mobile phones have become a part of our everyday lives in regional Australia, with the amount of coverage increasing and filling in the black spots over the years to include most rural and regional towns. Many rural and remote customers installed equipment (e.g. Celfi repeaters) to enable them better access to this network, to the benefit of their businesses and their communities. The 3G network had become a relied upon method for telecommunications, a way of staying in touch and staying safe. However, since the shut-off of the Telstra and Optus 3G network in October 2024, and the switch over to 4G and 5G networks, most rural and regional customers have seen a decrease in the level of access to reliable mobile connectivity.

On one member's property (which is only 20km west of Aramac) they could get Telstra 3G mobile phone service in one spot on the veranda, and it was very patchy in the paddock. So, they purchased boosters for their house and cars, as the mobile phones became an essential part of their business and for on farm safety. These worked well until the roll out of 4G and then disconnected 3G - they now have NO mobile service despite the equipment being suitable. They, like so many others in rural and remote Australia now pay \$85+/month for Starlink so that they can have reliable telecommunications, and STILL must pay the \$60+/ month per phone plan through their Telco for a mobile phone that they can only use in town.

For those families with children on distance education this is just another added expense to access reliable communications.

It means an increase in risk or vulnerable communities, travellers, workers and farmers through the inability to phone for help in an emergency. Additionally, many medical applications (eg diabetic management, cochlear hearing aids) require reliable connectivity to be functional and perform as required. Banking also requires access to a mobile phone for 2 factor authentication.

The lack of reliable networks is stifling productivity, development education and employment opportunities. It is taking us back to the days before 3G, practically back to the dark ages of telecommunications! It is unacceptable that in 2026 we are seeing such significant disparity in mobile phone coverage and reliability of telecommunication services in regional, rural and remote areas. Telecommunication services are **essential services**, we rely on phone and internet services for work, safety, banking and education.

A13. Hay Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Commonwealth Government reimburse families in rural and remote areas that have had to purchase satellite equipment needed to regain connectivity that was previously available through the 3G network."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Since the 3G turn-off, many rural areas have found that they no longer have the mobile phone service that they had previously.

Many people have become accustomed to using their mobile phones to run businesses, communicate with their schools and teachers, make medical appointments, for emergency preparedness and to stay connected to family. Since the 3G switch off, service in many regional and rural areas has become patchy or non-existent where previously service was adequate. The common advice given to these people by Telstra is that they will not regain similar service until a satellite connection such as StarLink is installed.

Many School of the Air families have also used mobile service as a backup avenue of connectivity for their children's lessons, something which is no longer viable. These same families also have the safety of home supervisors and their children in mind. With no mobile service where it used to exist, there is now no easy avenue for emergency communications, especially in schoolrooms using Department provided SkyMuster internet which does not offer Wi-Fi connectivity for devices.

Furthermore, with the recent announcement that Telstra is in the process of retiring CAN Radio phones, by 16/11/27 families will be left even more vulnerable. There is a feeling of uncertainty around the reliability and cost of replacement services. This form of landline has been a safety net for those in remote areas when mobile and satellite connections are down and in times of power outage, especially during emergencies.

When ICPA NSW took issues raised from communication motions at State conference directly to Telstra, their advice was for members to contact the Regional Tech Hub. Unfortunately, this service has recently been defunded so once again people are feeling let

down.

Case Study:

Many of our members that run agricultural businesses, educate their children from home, travel long and remote distances to get children to school or have family members completing their education in distant locations have had no choice but to install satellite equipment at their own expense.

Case Study:

A family in our area whose children are enrolled in School of the Air used to have reasonable mobile phone service around the house locality. Since the turn off of 3G this service has diminished and can now only be reliably used with the aid of a Cel-fi booster, located in the house. The signal from the Cel-fi does not reach the free standing schoolroom and as a result, in the case of an emergency, the home supervisor would need to leave the schoolroom, potentially leaving an injured child, to access phone service.

Case Study:

A family running a farming business and with children at various locations completing schooling, further education and trades followed the recommendations from Telstra to help restore the mobile service they had whilst 3G was still operating. However, the improvement was minimal and not as good as they had previously. They have now been advised that to enhance their connectivity they will need to install StarLink at their own expense, on top of the cost they have already encountered.

A14. Western Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Australian Government, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), and telecommunications providers to ensure consumers are clearly advised of any limitations or exclusions relating to satellite messaging capability across mobile service plans.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Satellite messaging capability is increasingly promoted as an important communication and safety feature for Australians living, working and travelling in rural, regional and remote areas where traditional mobile coverage is limited or unavailable.

For many geographically isolated families, satellite messaging is not simply a convenience, but an essential emergency communication tool relied upon during:

- travel in remote areas,
- vehicle breakdowns,
- emergencies,
- natural disasters,
- and daily farm and station operations.

Concerns have been raised where consumers changing between mobile plans, including prepaid services, were not clearly informed that satellite messaging functionality would no longer be available under their new service arrangement. In some cases, consumers may only become aware the feature is unavailable once outside mobile reception areas and attempting to access emergency communication services.

ICPA WA believes telecommunications providers should clearly and transparently communicate any limitations relating to satellite messaging capability prior to purchase, recharge, or plan changes.

This should include:

- clear advertising and disclosure requirements regarding satellite messaging eligibility;
- direct notification during plan changes or service transfers;



- consistent terminology across providers;
- and improved consumer awareness regarding differences between service types and inclusions.

Geographically isolated families should be able to make informed decisions regarding communication services critical to their safety and wellbeing.

Other

A15. Louth Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Minister for Communications incorporate into the Universal Service Obligation (USO), as part of the Modernising Universal Telecommunications Services initiative, a requirement for a battery-powered backup device to be provided as standard equipment with all standard telephone services (STS).”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

In many remote and isolated regions, standard telephone services (STS) previously delivered under the Universal Service Obligation (USO) relied on landline infrastructure powered by High-Capacity Radio Concentrator (HCRC) or Digital Radio Concentrator System (DRCS) technologies. These systems typically included solar and battery power supply, ensuring continued operation during grid power outages and fluctuations.

In contrast, newer technologies such as Starlink, now increasingly used to provide STS, are designed to operate solely on 240V mains power. This makes them vulnerable to voltage fluctuations and complete service loss during blackouts. In many of these areas, mobile coverage is unavailable, leaving the STS as the sole means of communication for everyday use and emergency situations.

Accordingly, we strongly urge the Minister, as part of the Modernising Universal Telecommunications Services initiative, to mandate the inclusion of an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) unit capable of powering both the router and satellite dish for a minimum of 24 hours. This measure would ensure continuity of service during short-term power disruptions, ensuring the safety and resilience of residents living in remote and isolated areas.

Regional Tech Hub (RTH)

A16. Richmond Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Government and relevant stakeholders for the urgent reinstatement of funding for the Regional Tech Hub (RTH).”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The federal government’s failure to allocate funding in the recent 2026–27 Federal Budget for the continued operation of the Regional Tech Hub demonstrates a deep disregard for the telecommunications needs of those living, working and accessing education in rural and remote Australia.

Since its establishment six years ago, the Regional Tech Hub has provided assistance, resources, support and workshops to thousands of rural and remote customers. This support has made a substantial difference to education access for many students and schools.

Alarmingly, this funding cut comes at a time when the need for the Regional Tech Hub services has never been greater as the High-Capacity Radio Concentrator (HCRC) systems are phased out. Rural and remote families will continue to require support to navigate increasingly complex telecommunications services, connectivity options and technology

solutions.

Abolishing a well-established service that is clearly delivering meaningful outcomes and addressing a genuine need is deeply disappointing. Rural and remote communities should not continue to bear the brunt of funding cuts, particularly in areas as critical as telecommunications access and educational connectivity. The loss of this service represents a significant step backwards for the families, students and communities who rely on it.

A17. South Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) calls on the Federal Government to continue funding and support for the Regional Tech Hub to ensure rural, regional and remote families have ongoing access to independent telecommunications information and support.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Reliable telecommunications are essential for rural, regional, and remote families to access education, health services, business opportunities, emergency information and everyday communication. However, many isolated families continue to experience challenges with connectivity, service reliability, provider information and navigating rapidly changing technology.

Regional Tech Hub provides an independent and trusted source of advice and support tailored specifically to the needs of rural and remote Australians. The National Farmers Federation (NFF), who run the Regional Tech Hub, reported that the service helped 28,000 people just in the past year alone. Continued Federal Government funding and support for the Regional Tech Hub is essential to ensure geographically isolated families can access up-to-date information, practical assistance and advocacy support to remain connected and participate fully in education, work and community life regardless of location.

A18. Charters Towers Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Australian Government for the immediate reinstatement and continuation of funding for the Regional Tech Hub.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Regional Tech Hub has provided an essential service for rural, regional and remote Australians by assisting families, students, businesses and communities to improve access to reliable telecommunications and digital connectivity.

For geographically isolated families, access to dependable internet and telecommunications is critical for children’s education.

The Regional Tech Hub has played a significant role in education specific needs by:

- assisting families to understand and improve connectivity options that best support their children’s learning needs;
- supporting troubleshooting and digital literacy to allow uninterrupted online learning;
- providing practical, independent and accessible support tailored to rural and remote communities with fit for purpose understanding.

Without ongoing Government funding, rural and remote Australians risk losing access to an important support service at a time when digital access is increasingly essential for equitable participation in education, employment, healthcare and community life.

Equitable access to digital connectivity is fundamental to educational opportunity and community sustainability in rural and remote Australia. The continuation of the Regional Tech Hub is essential to ensuring isolated families are not disadvantaged by location.

A19. Tambo Branch (QLD)



“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Communications to reinstate the funding for the Regional Tech Hub.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

28,000 Families in Rural and Remote Australia accessed the services of the Regional Tech Hub last year seeking advice on the best communication solutions for them.

It is critical that this service remains in place so that families, particularly those attempting to access distance education, external university lectures, and telehealth sessions to name a few, have access to the best possible services that they can.

The amount of time wasted and levels of stress trying to navigate communications without support can be insurmountable and is unacceptable in today's society.

Internet

A20. Western Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Australian Government and relevant telecommunications providers to ensure geographically isolated students enrolled in distance education programs have access to adequate, reliable and fit-for-purpose internet services, including timely access for newly enrolled families.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Distance education and School of the Air delivery is entirely dependent on reliable internet connectivity. However, many geographically isolated families continue to experience inadequate internet speeds, unreliable service and significant delays in establishing appropriate connections.

Current one-size-fits-all telecommunications solutions do not adequately meet the needs of remote education delivery, particularly where multiple students are learning simultaneously through platforms requiring stable video conferencing capability.

In many cases, families are forced to independently source and fund alternative internet solutions to ensure students can meaningfully participate in lessons.

Reliable internet access is now an essential educational service and should be recognised as critical infrastructure for geographically isolated students.

ICPA WA believes the Australian Government should:

- ensure remote education families have access to reliable high-speed internet;
- consider alternative technologies where NBN services are inadequate;
- ensure timely establishment of internet services for newly enrolled distance education families;
- recognise internet connectivity as essential to equitable educational access.

CURRICULUM

A21. Hay Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government to direct ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) to review and elevate food literacy beyond its current status as a "Curriculum Connection" to a mandated, standalone

learning priority in rural and remote schools.”**Carried/Lost****Explanation:**

Food and nutrition are currently addressed across Health & Physical Education, Design and Technologies, HASS, Science and Mathematics, with a Food and Wellbeing Curriculum Connection. This is often covered in the context of what to eat as per the Australian Dietary Guidelines, food preparation and food choices. Given the weight of evidence linking diet to mental health, behaviour, and learning, it should be elevated to a clearly defined, standalone priority in the curriculum, with specific, measurable student outcomes tied to understanding food as a biological input to brain function, mental health, behaviour and learning - and that delivery of this priority be incorporated into school performance reporting frameworks.

The latest release of food and nutrients data presented by ABS shows Australia's dietary pattern is skewed towards discretionary foods - which are the foods and drinks not necessary to provide the nutrients the body needs. The statistics indicate this ranging from 27% to 37.3% of % of average daily energy intake, whilst only 4.3% of children between 2 and 17 ate the recommended amounts of fruit and vegetables. According to research, the higher consumption of discretionary foods and lower consumption of whole foods in the average Australian diet has led to higher rates of mental health issues, behavioural and learning difficulties.

In Australia, there is minimal regulation on how the manufacturing industry can market its products. This can mislead consumers and ultimately cause a change in their overall diet and well-being. Empowering young people from an early age about science and link between nutrition, mood, behaviour and performance will help them navigate this system through increased knowledge.

To build stronger and more resilient rural communities, we need to stand for children's health and support them to become food literate. This must include an understanding of the connection between food, their body, brain and the planet, as well as knowing what to eat, how to grow and cook it. This would be particularly beneficial in remote areas where there can be limited availability and high-cost produce.

Education in Food Literacy can help support food security challenges and the teacher retention issues faced in rural and remote areas. Nutritional literacy and support will also help our children facing independent living for the first time at boarding school.

CASE STUDY – Four Dimensions of Food Security Challenges in Rural and Remote Areas.

There are four dimensions of food security – availability, access, utilisation and stability.

- Availability: Limited availability of fresh produce in rural and remote areas is a constant challenge due to complex logistics (high freight costs, limited competition in supermarkets)
- Access: Limited access to affordable fresh produce with people living in rural and remote areas translates into a higher portion of the community members' income spent on groceries.
- Utilisation: With lower levels of educated population in rural and remote areas, there is a gap in the skills of understanding how to select, store and prepare meals with fresh produce.
- Stability: With the challenges faced in providing fresh produce to rural and remote communities, these communities are more susceptible to economic volatility or disruptions, e.g., increased fuel prices.

Food insecurity is connected with poorer nutrition and dietary patterns, which can contribute to chronic conditions. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023), Food insecurity, (ABS Website) some populations are more vulnerable to food insecurity,



including people living in remote areas.

Stated in the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Remote Community Healthy Food Chain Supply Study (v1.6 November 2022) – “High cost and poor-quality fresh food can result in lower levels of consumption and can negatively impact the nutritional status of community members.”

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare “On average, Australians living in rural and remote areas have shorter lives, higher levels of disease and injury and poorer access to and use of health services, compared with people living in metropolitan areas. Poorer health outcomes in rural and remote areas may be due to multiple factors including lifestyle differences and a level of disadvantage related to education and employment opportunities, as well as access to health services.” (Rural and Remote Web Article – last update 20 November 2025)

If food literacy were part of the curriculum in rural and remote areas, it would enable our children to know what to eat, how to store, grow and cook it. Education will help break down the barrier for the utilisation pillar of food security and reduce the high costs of food wastage.

CASE STUDY – What Australian Primary School children are eating and why it matters to the classroom

Australian classrooms are already experiencing the consequences of what children eat, yet the connection between food and classroom behaviour remains largely absent from curriculum and teacher training.

Research shows that the quality of the food consumed impacts the body and brain. Ultra-processed foods contribute to increased inflammation, which is linked to our mental health. Our gut communicates directly to the brain via the vagus nerve and produces neurotransmitters that regulate our mood. When a higher number of processed foods and a lower number of wholefoods are consumed, it leads to nutritional deficiencies in the diet that directly affect energy and mental health. It also causes rapid glucose spikes and crashes, therefore directly impacting concentration and engagement in classrooms. Understanding what is happening inside Australian primary school lunchboxes is an essential context for this motion. Since 2019, longitudinal food and waste survey data has been collected from Australian primary schools. The dataset now represents **26,534 lunchboxes across 1,373 classes and 122 schools**.

(Food and Waste Surveys of Australian Primary School Lunchboxes, 2019–2025. Collected by Belinda Smith, The Root Cause. Independently analysed.)

The data reveals that the average Australian primary school lunchbox contains:

- **2.1 ultra-processed packet foods** per day
- **approximately 10.3 food additives** per lunchbox
- **4.2 teaspoons of sugar** per lunchbox
- **just 0.4 serves of vegetables**

Why this matters for classrooms is now well-established in the research.

[A meta-analysis by Khazdouz et al. \(2024\)](#), published in *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, examined nine studies involving more than **58,000 children and adolescents**. The finding was clear: children consuming more ultra-processed foods were approximately **25% more likely to exhibit ADHD symptoms** – an association that held across the highest-quality studies in the analysis.

The additives within those ultra-processed foods are also independently implicated. [The landmark Southampton Study – McCann et al. \(2007\)](#), published in *The Lancet* – was a double-blind, placebo-controlled trial of 297 children. The research found that artificial food colours combined with sodium benzoate preservative resulted in increased

hyperactivity in the general population of children, not just those with a diagnosis of ADHD. These results directly lead to action in the European Union. The six colours tested require warning labels in Europe stating they 'may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children'. Sadly, that is not the case in Australia.

The lunchbox data makes this research directly relevant to Australian classrooms. With an average of 10.3 additives per lunchbox arriving at school each day, children are routinely consuming the very substances that peer-reviewed research links to hyperactivity and attention difficulties — in a setting where teachers are expected to manage behaviour, sustain concentration and deliver learning across a full school day. **This is not a discipline problem. It is a nutrition and education problem – and the curriculum is currently not equipped to address it.**

Classroom management, support staff costs and teacher retention are major issues in rural and remote areas. If food literacy were part of the curriculum, it would not only support our educators, families and children but also directly reduce the stress on our limited health providers and support services.

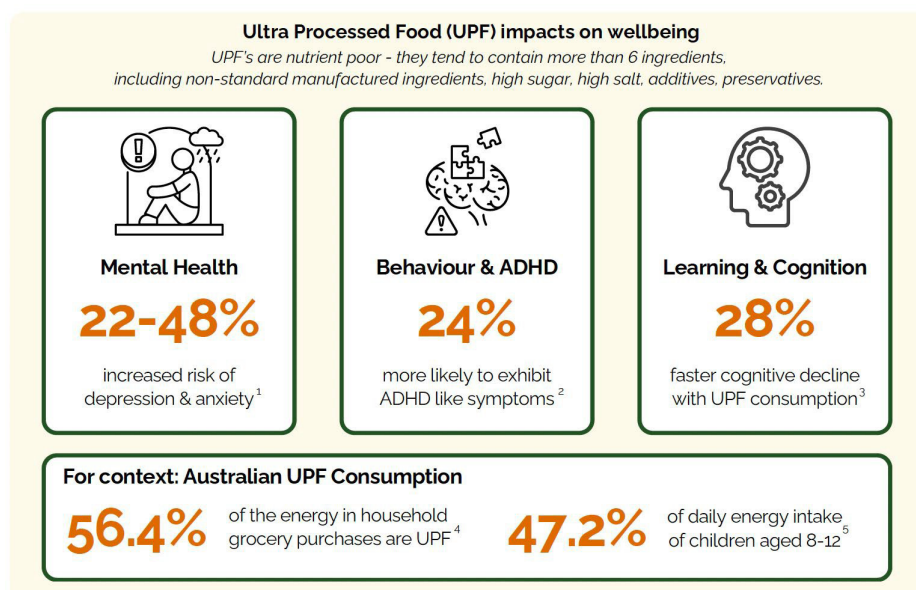
CASE STUDY – Boarding Schools and Food as Information

Many of our members need to send their children to boarding school due to access and proximity to a secondary school. They move into an institutional food environment, away from family, at the most developmentally significant period of their lives.

This transition is already emotionally and socially demanding. What is rarely considered is that it is also a critical nutritional transition - and that the food environment children enter at boarding school will directly shape their capacity to cope, concentrate, regulate their emotions and perform academically.

What the research tells us about food and mental health is unambiguous.

Peer-reviewed studies from leading journals including *The Lancet*, *JAMA* and *BMJ* consistently show that diet quality directly shapes mental health outcomes in young people. The following graphic has been extracted from the Position Paper, *Thriving Students: The Missing Foundation in Mental Health, Behaviour and Learning*, written by Bel Smith, Children's Health Advocate and Food Literacy Strategist. [Read complete position paper here.](#)



Poor nutrition does not simply affect physical energy - it directly undermines the biological capacity to manage stress, regulate emotions, sustain attention and form positive relationships. A child navigating homesickness, peer pressure, academic stress and independence for the first time needs nutritional support.



If children had a greater understanding of food and how it is information for your brain and overall well-being, this would enable them to make informed choices. Combine this with boarding schools being uniquely positioned to ensure students are provided nourishing food and the education around food as information, then we have the most powerful lever to address many challenges faced in the classroom and in rural and remote communities.

A22. Nyngan Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the relevant ministers to regulate the use of NAPLAN results for its purpose of monitoring literacy and numeracy achievement and restrict its current further use by some schools, for selective entry and enrolment screening.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Families are experiencing stress and hardship because NAPLAN test results are requested by schools as part of the school entry and enrolment process. ACARA CEO Stephen Gniel called it a horrendous misuse of NAPLAN for its results to be used for school entrance and encouraged parents not to provide it to schools that might ask for it as an entry requirement. (SMH 10/3/2026) Our remote and rural families can't compete in the competitive tutoring culture and unlike many students, a number of our students undertake this test when away from home, incurring cost and disruption.

We rely on entry to boarding schools to educate our children and some of those request NAPLAN results, when they could use other more appropriate and effective selection processes. Children understand there is a financial burden on families paying for boarding school and that doing well in NAPLAN can lighten that burden for their family, making the NAPLAN testing experience inappropriately high stakes for children. We ask that the relevant ministers support ACARA in its stance on the use of NAPLAN results and restrict their use for selective entry and enrolment screening.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC)

A23. Cojoined Motion Western Australia State Council along with Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Australian Government for all pre-compulsory students enrolled in an approved distance education program to be eligible for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation Western Australia State Council:

Families geographically isolated from educational services are increasingly enrolling children in approved distance education kindergarten and early childhood programs to support foundational literacy, numeracy, social and emotional development prior to compulsory schooling.

While these students participate in recognised educational programs, families currently receive no access to the AIC Distance Education Allowance during this critical early learning period. This creates inequity for isolated families who are required to establish and maintain a home learning environment, often including technology, classroom resources, educational materials and internet connectivity, entirely at their own expense.



Early childhood education is widely recognised as critical to long-term educational outcomes. Geographically isolated students should not be disadvantaged simply because they access this education through distance delivery.

Providing access to the AIC Distance Education Allowance for pre-compulsory students would:

- support equitable access to early childhood education;
- assist families with the substantial costs associated with establishing a home classroom;
- improve preparedness for compulsory schooling;
- support improved educational outcomes for geographically isolated students.

Explanation Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA):

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. This first year is often extremely costly for families. The AIC DE allowance is designed to assist families to set up and maintain the schoolroom. The schoolroom must be set up and maintained the day the child begins their education. Full-time or part time, the child needs a schoolroom.

(We would still also like this motion included as it is very relevant to our branch. It is likely that in WA this will change as the 4 year old programme is proposed to become fulltime in 2027)

Remuneration for Isolated Classroom Supervisors (RICS)

A24. Winton Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Department of Education for funding of the Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor (RICS) scheme for financial remuneration for individuals supervising students in geographically isolated distance education classrooms.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

In providing equitable access to education for students in geographically isolated distance education classrooms the compulsory role of a supervisor needs to be acknowledged and remunerated accordingly. In many circumstances, the mother of the student/s is responsible for this position and is therefore unable to contribute financially to the family’s income through self or external employment.

Alternatively, a supervisor is required to be employed by the family at their own expense. Geographically isolated families should not be penalised with this financial burden as they are adhering to Legislation through the provision of a classroom supervisor.

A25. Western Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Australian Government to investigate and implement equitable remuneration for isolated classroom supervisors (RICS) essential to the delivery of distance education programs.”

Carried/Lost



Explanation:

Distance education students rely heavily on the presence of a classroom supervisor or home tutor to support daily learning, lesson delivery, supervision, assessment tasks and communication with teaching staff.

Unlike mainstream schooling, where supervision is provided within the education system, geographically isolated families are solely responsible for providing this essential educational support. This creates substantial financial and workforce pressures on isolated families, particularly where:

- a parent must reduce or cease employment,
- a supervisor must be employed privately,
- or educational supervision occurs alongside farm, station or business operations.

The role of the isolated classroom supervisor is fundamental to the successful delivery of distance education and should be formally recognised within educational support frameworks.

ICPA WA believes geographically isolated families should not be financially disadvantaged for accessing education through distance delivery.

A26. Cojoined Motion New South Wales State Council along with Port Augusta Branch (SA) and Louth Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) continue its advocacy for the Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor (RICS), recognising the significant impact this issue has on many members.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation New South Wales State Council:

Currently, children in a distance education home classroom are supervised by a governess (supervisor), parent, or grandparent and there is no financial assistance for the cost of this supervision. This has many social, emotional and financial impacts on rural and remote families. Some of these include;

- Partners working solo in roles that for safety require two people;
- takes a second income from a family home which is much needed, as remote families face higher cost of living due to location;
- Mothers who have no other option but to teach their own children are feeling emotional and family strain. Teaching your children requires fulltime supervision from 8am-4pm, 5 days a week, often they are required to work for the farm before and after school hours creating 12-14hr days;
- Without financial help, retaining and enticing workforce in remote areas is hard as often families will move jobs and areas once the children are school aged as it is cheaper for their children to attend school in a town.

When children are attending online lessons with a teacher, it is unsatisfactory to think that the teacher on the other end of the computer hundreds of kilometres away is expected to supervise children safely and effectively, they still require on-site supervision. How is a teacher on the other end of a satellite connection able to deal with:

- medical emergencies
- behavioural issues
- poor concentration?

In Australia all children are said to be able to access a free public education, but for remote students/families studying via public distance education, this is not true. Having a governess(supervisor) is an expense and to take a family member out of the work force is not free of financial impacts. We implore the Federal and State governments to work towards an outcome suitable for each state.

Explanation Port Augusta (SA):



Australia covers vast remote regions where traditional schooling options are limited. Families in these areas often rely on distance education to provide their children with quality education.

In these circumstances, a full-time home tutor or supervisor undertakes the role of primary educator. This includes delivering daily lessons, managing administrative requirements, and supporting their child's learning, all while balancing household and station responsibilities.

This level of commitment often requires families to reduce or forgo off-farm employment, resulting in lost income and difficult workforce trade-offs. In addition, the financial burden associated with distance education, including educational resources, technology, and internet access—can be considerable. An allowance would help ease these pressures, particularly during challenging seasonal conditions and ongoing workforce constraints.

Explanation Louth Branch (NSW):

The ICPA has been advocating for many years for an allowance or subsidy to support geographically isolated families with the ongoing costs of distance education. This has been occurring at State and Federal levels of ICPA. Unfortunately, with little traction and being bounced between state and federal governments.

The introduction of a Distance Education Teaching Subsidy would provide critical financial recognition of the essential work performed by home tutors or supervisors who deliver education to students enrolled in Schools of Distance Education across Australia. For geographically isolated families, distance education is often the only available option for primary and secondary schooling. Under current federal requirements, students enrolled in distance education must receive appropriate supervision during their learning. In practice, this responsibility commonly falls to a parent—usually the mother—or a paid home tutor.

As the Australian Government's own Distance Education policies note, this supervision may be provided by "an employee or parent," highlighting that direct teaching support is a mandatory component of distance learning. In many cases, this requirement results in a parent needing to forgo paid employment on the property, in the community, or at an outstation, in order to educate their children. This significantly impacts household income, placing further financial strain on already isolated families. When families do employ a home tutor, the costs are substantial. Home tutors are commonly paid between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per year, depending on experience and location. In addition to wages, families are typically responsible for providing accommodation, meals, internet, and other living expenses, which significantly increases the total outlay.

A27. Northern Territory State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) continues their advocacy for remuneration for isolated classroom supervisors within GI families, whose only schooling option is distance education."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The ICPA has been advocating for many years at both state and federal level for an allowance or subsidy to support geographically isolated families with the ongoing costs of distance education. The concept has subsequently bounced between state and federal government, whilst unfortunately gaining little traction to date.

This motion is to both thank Federal ICPA for their diligent work and advocacy thus far and to offer our ongoing support in seeking remuneration for classroom supervisors.

To assist with further advocacy, we add to this motion the following case studies:

Family 1 - Flying Fox Station -228km to Katherine School of the Air

Family Outlay	Amount	Assistance Received	Amount
---------------	--------	---------------------	--------



Classroom setup Kids table and 2 chairs, art and craft supplies for lessons, uniforms, headphones, folders and filing storage.	\$700	Back to School Voucher (Received laptop from school through sponsored laptops)	\$200
Home Tutor Salary Loss of annual income (5 hrs per day x 5 days per week for mum) Cost of Nanny to watch the younger two children while schooling and eldest after school is \$840 per week x 40wks (after CCS through ALCHA-IHC)	\$49,000 income loss for mum \$33,600 cost for Nanny.	AIC - Distance Ed \$5,278 (Preschool not eligible)	\$5,278
In-school accommodation, fuel and food per term	\$2,700	Applied for Student Assistance Schemes for Geographically Isolated Students 2026 (includes internet subsidy).	Not received for 2026
Internet (per annum)	\$1800		
Internet hardware (Starlink)	\$300		
Total outlay transition 2026	\$88,100	Total subsidies in 2026	\$5,478
Total cost to family for our first year of distance education for 1 child <u>\$ 82,622</u>			

Note: Stationery such as pencils, whiteboard markers, paper for printing, ink have not been included in this study, nor have the board, keep and annual leave for the Nanny, or the costs of renovating an existing old space to become a suitable learning environment.

Family 2 - Central NT region - 190km to Alice Springs School of the Air

Two children commenced distance education semester 2, 2025: preschool and transition.

Family Outlay	Amount	Assistance received	Amount
Classroom setup Purchase of classroom storage unit (\$189), storage trolleys (\$110), containers/tubs (\$50), whiteboard (\$65), hooks (\$30), printer ink (\$75), bin (\$20), uniforms inc. hat (\$80), laminator (\$100), laminator sheets (\$30), storage baskets (\$45), extras such as stapler, blue tack, cork boards etc (\$100).	\$894	ICPA Alice Springs Classroom Grant (lucky recipient) Back to School Voucher (ineligible as started term 3).	\$550 \$0
In-school accommodation (two terms)	\$2,172	NT - Distance Ed (started term 3, too late to apply 2025). Connellan Airways	\$0 \$0
		Grant (too late to apply 2025). AIC for Transition student - preschool ineligible.	\$2,660

Loss of income – part time wage (20 weeks part time, \$600 per week)	\$12,000	Additional Family Tax Benefit (FTB) received (6 months, two children) due to not working	\$3,414
Total outlay/loss Second semester start 2025	\$15,066	Total subsidies – second semester 2025	\$6,624
Total cost to family for initial six months of distance education \$8,442 Combined net family income first semester of distance education (including FTB) \$37,640			
Station/employer outlay			Amount
Fuel to and from in-schools x 2 – at .78c per km (445km travelled each in-school)			\$890
Internet (six months)			\$600
Internet hardware (Starlink) (\$549), booster to reach school room (\$215)			\$764
Setup of school room for family – paint (\$300), flooring (\$700), desks (\$250 each), book shelf (\$150).			\$1650
Total company outlay second semester 2025			\$3,490

Note: these costs were absorbed by the employer, however it is factored into the negotiated wage.

Family 3 - Rural Contracting Family

Two children enrolled in Alice Springs School of the Air: Year 2 and Preschool.

Our family differs from the traditional station-based model as my partner and I are self-employed and operate a contract mustering business, travelling throughout the NT and WA. rather than residing permanently on a single property. We originally enrolled with Alice Springs School of the Air when most of our work was based in Central Australia. Although our work has since moved further north, we have maintained enrollment with ASSOA as we own a home in Alice Springs and continue to use Alice Springs as our family base over the Wet Season and during in-schools. As a result of our mobile work arrangements, our children's schooling must remain portable and adaptable to remote camp conditions throughout the year.

While I can recognise our circumstances are not representative of every geographically isolated family, our experience highlights the additional challenges faced by mobile remote-working families attempting to provide consistent access to education through distance education.

Family Outlay	Amount	Assistance Received	Amount
Classroom setup: storage, chairs, printer + ink, headphones, mat and resources	\$1500	Back to School Voucher	\$200
Income As a self-employed family, employing a full-time governess/home tutor would cost us approx. \$60,000 per annum. To avoid this expense, I undertake the Home Tutor role myself, reducing my capacity to contribute to income-generating activities with the business.	\$60,000	AIC - Distance Ed \$5,278 (Preschool not eligible)	\$5,278
Travel for in-school, fuel and o/n accom. We have a house in Alice Springs, so we spend a lot more on fuel/travel but don't have the expense of accommodation for in-schools.	\$3000	Student Assistance Schemes for Geographically Isolated Students 2026 (includes internet subsidy).	Not yet received for 2026



Internet (per annum) \$170/month	\$2040		
Internet hardware (Starlink mini)	\$420		
Total outlay 2026	\$66,960	Total subsidies in 2026	\$5,478
Total cost to family for a year of distance education for 2 children <u>\$ 61,482</u>			

Note: With a second child commencing school, this year saw us need to upgrade our existing schoolroom as our previous set up only had space for one child. Due to the mobile nature of our work, we have purchased a purpose-built trailer that we hope to see us through both our children's primary school education. This setup will cost us approximately \$45,000. I recognise our circumstances are not representative of all geographically isolated families but also wish to demonstrate the lengths remote families go to in creating a functional learning environment where no permanent infrastructure exists.

A28. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

"That ICPA (Aust) lead an initiative to conduct a national census of all home tutors currently employed in Australia."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The ICPA has been advocating for formal recognition of home tutors and the important role they play in supporting geographically isolated students.

As part of this advocacy, a submission has been made by ICPA (Aust) seeking the establishment of an Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) code for home tutors. However, many home tutors are currently employed under alternative classifications, such as "station hand," often for insurance and administrative purposes. As a result, accurately determining the true number of employed home tutors is difficult.

To address this issue, we are requesting that ICPA (Aust) assist branches nationwide in gathering a head count of all currently employed home tutors within member-associated schools.

By collecting confirmed data from across Australia, the ICPA will be better equipped to advocate for appropriate recognition of home tutors and to demonstrate the scale and significance of the role.

A29. Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Federal Government to create a RICS (Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor) to acknowledge the role the Home Tutor performs when educating students through distance education."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The service provided by Home Tutors in the delivering 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 be acknowledged. Home Tutors provide what the government simply cannot cost effectively supply and as such should be recognised and remunerated fairly.

This motion was left out last year and conjoined with others. We had great discussion on this and our branch considers that this is one of the biggest issues for ICPA and one of the reasons for its inception. We would still like to see momentum from ICPA in support of the RICS.

**A30. Julia Creek Branch (QLD)**

“That ICPA (Aust) works with ICPA State Councils to advocate to Australian universities to expand Home Tutor (HT) development programs, ensuring that Home Tutors across Australia have equitable access to accredited training and professional development opportunities.”

Carried/Lost**Explanation:**

The Julia Creek Branch would like to acknowledge and applaud the ICPA Northern Territory and Charles Darwin University for their recent initiative to create a Vocational Training program for Home Tutors. This program represents a significant and long overdue recognition of the vital role home tutors play in the education of geographically isolated students. Home tutors are fundamental to the success of distance education, often delivering daily lessons, supporting student engagement, and bridging the gap between families and schools in remote settings. Despite this, their role has historically lacked formal recognition and structured training pathways.

This program is specifically designed to prepare home tutors and governesses for the unique demands of geographically isolated classrooms, equipping them with practical skills, educational knowledge, and confidence to effectively support student learning outcomes. The Julia Creek Branch would also like to see this initiative developed and implemented in other states to ensure all rural and remote families have access to the same opportunities.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION and CARE

Funding**A31. Bourke Branch (NSW)**

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

Carried/Lost**Explanation:**

Pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers is a significant issue. An Early Childhood Teacher completes a 4-year degree course. In a remote early childhood service, an experienced Early Childhood Teacher can expect a salary of around \$106,500. If they maintain NSEA proficient accreditation and elect to work in the Public School System, at a Connected Beginnings School, such as Bourke, in a rural and remote location, the additional benefits they would get compared to working as an Early Childhood Teacher would tally to **\$148,671 p/a** and includes:

	Childcare	School
Base Salary	94,478.80	157,842
Directors Allowance	7,745.92	
Educational Leader Allowance	4,253.32	
Recruitment bonus		20,000
Rural & remote relocation support		8,000
Rural Teacher Incentive (Includes value of rental subsidy)		25,000
Stamp Duty relief (not paid if rental subsidy paid)		



Retention benefit		5000
Experienced Teacher Benefit		10,000
Climatic Allowance		3000 (approx.)
Additional Personal leave days		
Additional Annual leave value in \$ terms		26,307
TOTAL	106,477.24	255,149

- significantly shorter contact hours per week
- professional mentoring by other Teachers
- structured Professional development programs (\$10,000 p/a)
- in addition to the above, there is also the impact on superannuation to be considered.

Early Childhood services are significantly limited in their budgets. It is important to find long term solutions to address pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers in rural and remote locations.

A32. Louth Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant State and Federal Ministers to amend the lack of salary parity between four year trained early childhood teachers and four year trained primary and high school teachers.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Currently, the pay gap is so significant it is impossible to recruit and retain teachers in early childhood centres and new recruits often use early childhood jobs as a stepping stone into the primary school sector.

A33. Bourke Branch (NSW)

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

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Services providing Childcare Subsidy Model childcare are currently capped at the maximum amount of CCCF Sustainability funding they are able to apply for (\$200,000 p/a) despite the operational gap they are able to demonstrate, which is often significantly larger. The same cap applies to services in regional areas as in remote and very remote locations, and the only longer-term funding is in the CCCF-Restricted pool, which services may not be eligible for. Remote & very remote services have to meet significantly higher staffing & operational costs – such as providing housing for teachers and meeting the pay parity gap for teachers to attract and retain adequately qualified teachers. Early Childhood Services in remote and very remote locations should be able to provide a service with teachers and staff at the same level as their city cousins - our children are worth no less and often have significantly more vulnerabilities according to the AECD (Australian Early Childhood Development) Census Data.

A34. North West Branch (SA)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Minister for Early Childhood Education and the Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories , for a special circumstances extension of the Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) funding to enable the ongoing delivery of the Remote and Isolated Children’s Exercise (RICE) Playday program beyond June 2027, to ensure outreach and playgroup-style early childhood programs remain as part of the services offered to geographically isolated families.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The RICE Playday program is currently funded through the Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) grant, supporting the delivery of early childhood education and social connection opportunities for families living in remote South Australia who cannot access traditional early childhood services due to distance and geographic isolation.

The CCCFR program primarily supports services operating under the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) model.

As Playdays are not a childcare service but rather a playgroup-style early learning and family support program, RICE has been advised to consider alternative funding models or transition to a childcare-based service model.

Due to the small and dispersed populations in remote areas, and the distances families would need to travel, a CCS childcare model is not viable for these communities. The current funding agreement will continue until June 2027, when it will be reassessed.

Funding models must recognise the unique circumstances of geographically isolated families. RICE Playdays provide essential early childhood learning opportunities, social connection and family support for children living in remote areas where no early childhood services are accessible. Educators travel to stations and small communities to deliver planned learning experiences aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework, supporting children’s development in identity, wellbeing, learning and communication while also providing important support networks for isolated parents.

Supporting outreach early childhood programs such as RICE Playdays aligns with broader government priorities around school readiness, early childhood development and improving equitable access to services for children living in regional and remote communities.

Without programs such as RICE Playdays, many children living in remote South Australia would have no opportunity to participate in early childhood learning or peer interaction prior to starting school. Outreach programs are often the only practical way to deliver early childhood support in these regions. If funding cannot be secured beyond 2027, many geographically isolated children may lose their only opportunity to access early childhood learning and peer interaction before beginning formal schooling.

A35. Bourke Branch (NSW)

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

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

There are currently limited opportunities for Community Based Early Childhood Services to gain the required capital funding for significant infrastructure needs to meet demand in



remote communities. This affects rural, remote and geographically isolated children, because they end up in “childcare deserts” where early childhood services are not provided.

The cost of infrastructure in remote locations is significantly higher than regional and metro settings yet there is no appropriate funding mechanism.

A36. Midwest Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Australian Federal Government and the Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education for the development and implementation of a new fit-for purpose childcare model, specifically designed to meet the unique needs of families living in regional, rural and remote Australia.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Families living in regional, rural and remote Australia face significant barriers in accessing equitable childcare services. The current In Home Care (IHC) program does not meet the needs of many geographically isolated families due to workforce shortages, inflexible eligibility requirements, administrative complexity, and the inability to provide reliable service delivery in remote areas. The only WA based In Home Care provider have also ceased operation in the last 12 months, leaving us with no state based provider that understands the needs of remote childcare within our state.

For many isolated families, access to childcare is essential to enable:

- participation in employment and primary production businesses;
- attendance at medical appointments and essential travel;
- access to education and training opportunities;
- support for children’s early learning and social development; and
- family wellbeing and mental health.

Unlike metropolitan families, many rural and remote families have no access to centre-based childcare, family day care, or casual care alternatives. Existing models fail to recognise the realities of distance, seasonal work demands, workforce availability, and the unique operational requirements of remote Australia.

A replacement childcare program must:

- be specifically designed for regional, rural and remote families provide flexible and reliable childcare options;
- support the recruitment and retention of carers in isolated areas;
- reduce administrative burden on families and providers;
- ensure affordability and equitable access; and
- recognise childcare as an essential service for remote Australian families.

ICPA Midwest branch believes all Australian children deserve equitable access to quality early childhood support and care, regardless of where they live.

A37. Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for universal access to early childhood education and care.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Evidence shows that the first 5 years in a child’s life are the most important for creating opportunities to thrive and be successful in later life. It is the most important educational opportunity we can give our children. All children, regardless of where they live, should be able to access high quality early childhood education and care.

A38. Dirranbandi Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) work with ICPA Qld to advocate the relevant departments and organisations including, but not limited to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), Human Ability, TAFE Qld and the C&K College to review the delivery of the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (C3G Plus), and CHC50121 (Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care) by investigating alternative qualification pathways."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Dirranbandi currently has a C&K Kindy that offers care 2-3 days a week for children aged 3-5. We do not have the facilities to offer placement for 'babies' (under 3). This will not be an option for the foreseeable future. This is also the case for numerous other centres like Dirranbandi. We desperately need new Kindy Teachers, and are fortunate enough to have 2 local women who are interested in the position, who both possess a degree in Primary Education. C&K require their Lead Teachers to possess a Certificate III or a Diploma in Early Childhood. Both women have undertaken training, which has come to a stand still because there is no local facility where they can complete the 'baby' component of their studies.

The nearest location would be a 3 hour round trip for them and require them to find day care for their own young children, and sort logistics for school aged children while they are away. There is also no available day care in St George (where they would have to travel - minimum 100km away) as centres are mostly at capacity. Advice from C&K College is that these families could "have a family holiday at the coast where dad could look after the kids and mum could complete a week of training."

This could include the development of a separate stream or qualification for educators who do not work with infants and are unable to meet baby-related placement requirements. Rural and remote course applicants need assurance that qualification pathways support the sustainability of rural and remote kindergarten services and workforce participation. National legislation states that observation of baby practices need to occur in a registered environment (rightfully so) and so their own personal experience raising children doesn't count for anything. Without these women taking on this role, there is a genuine concern that the centre will close.

We would like to suggest that a separate qualification be developed, omitting the baby component of the course. This would simply require relevant bodies to create a separate course that simply removes the baby units. It would offer a qualification that would fulfil the needs of centres such as Dirranbandi, ensuring our long term sustainability.

A39. Tibooburra - Milparinka Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Minister for Education, the Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education, and the Federal Minister for Housing to recognise accommodation for early childhood teachers and educators as essential enabling infrastructure for the delivery and sustainability of Early Childhood Education and Care services in rural and remote communities."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The first 5 years of a child's life are vitally important for development in all areas, including cognitive, physical and social. While the State and Federal Governments have worked hard to establish and sustain early childhood education services in remote and very remote locations, it is very hard to attract teachers and educators to these areas.

The ability of rural and remote early childhood education and care centres to provide

sustainable operations depends on reliable and steady staffing, meaning they can provide consistent care environments that improve long-term educational outcomes. A major barrier to achieving this is accommodation, it is extremely scarce and what is available is expensive for educators top access.

When educators' accommodation infrastructure is recognised as essential then this ripples through the wider community, consistent staff due to access to housing flow into consistent operational hours of care, providing consistent and reliable support to the local employment market and preventing rural and remote towns developing into "childcare deserts".

A40. Tibooburra - Milparinka Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Minister for Education, the Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education, and the Federal Minister for existing capital funding streams, including the Building Early Education Fund and key worker housing programs such as the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF), to be made available for the construction, purchase, leasing, or subsidisation of accommodation for early childhood teachers and educators in rural and remote communities."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

If Early childhood education and care centres in rural and remote areas could access multiple streams of funds to support educators to secure housing the burden will not be placed on individuals, centers and the small pool of families who access essential rural and remote early childhood care and education centres.

The lack of housing and accommodation available for early childhood educators in very remote communities like Tibooburra is even more acutely felt. The town has one public school and one not for profit early childhood education facility, they are located directly across the road from each other. A person who wants to live and work with children in Tibooburra is much more likely to choose the job that comes with state teacher subsidised housing, which is the public school. This in turn adds another layer to the recruitment and retention of staff for the early childhood education facility cross the road, as they don't have access to the subsidised teacher housing.

A41. Tambo Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education and Care and Minister for Education to urgently review and reform the In Home Care (IHC) Child Care Subsidy Hourly Rate Cap to ensure:

- 1. Remote and geographically isolated families can access lawful, affordable childcare, and**
- 2. Educators are paid in accordance with the Children's Services Award and recent Fair Work Commission gender undervaluation decisions."**

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Families in remote and isolated areas of Australia have little to no choice in childcare type or provider. In many cases, In Home Care is the only available option. Recent Fair Work Commission decisions to address the gender undervaluation of care work have increased award wages for educators. However, the IHC Hourly Rate Cap has not been adjusted to reflect the true cost of lawful employment. This has created a structural problem across the sector. The current impact on Remote Families and Educators under current settings are that families are forced into one of three outcomes: pay significantly higher gap fees to ensure educators are paid lawfully, often making care unaffordable, engage services using contractor-style arrangements, where educators are paid below lawful entitlements or use unqualified educators under Minister's Rules provisions, despite a preference for qualified

Diploma-level educators. For many families, there is no genuine choice. They are aware of underpayment risks but feel compelled to prioritise affordability and access to care. The systemic issue is that the current IHC funding model ties educator wages directly to family affordability. Where the price cap sits below the cost of lawful employment, the system produces predictable outcomes: Educator wages are suppressed, sham contracting practices persist, families carry unsustainable gap fees and providers face pressure to exit the sector or operate non-compliantly. This issue has been identified repeatedly in national reviews and is well known to government yet remains unresolved. Regarding equity the concern is that the IHC workforce is predominantly young and female, often working alone in isolated environments under highly controlled and regulated conditions. Despite this, many are: paid below Award rates, required to operate under contractor arrangements that reflect employment in practice and unable to raise concerns due to fear of losing work. This directly undermines the Government's commitment to gender equity and fair pay in care sectors.

To address these issues the government needs to:

- increase the IHC CCS Hourly Rate Cap to reflect the true cost of lawful employment under the Children's Services Award
- ensure funding settings align with Fair Work Commission wage decisions, including gender undervaluation reforms *
- remove the financial incentive for sham contracting practices within the IHC sector
- restore genuine choice for remote families, allowing them to engage qualified educators without facing unaffordable gap fees

The outcomes will be a sustainable In Home Care system where:

- families in remote Australia can access affordable, lawful care
- educators are paid correctly and safely
- providers can operate compliantly without financial compromise
- government policy on gender equity is consistently applied across all childcare settings.

A42. Broken Hill Branch (NSW)

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Australian Government provide state and territory reporting under the Preschool Reform Agreement, including funding allocations, expenditure and preschool participation rates by metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas, to provide transparency on how funding is being used to deliver 600 hours of preschool education and to identify areas where children are unable to access their full preschool entitlement due to a lack of available places."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Preschool Reform Agreement was established to ensure all children can access 600 hours of quality preschool education in the year before commencing full-time schooling. However, families in Far West NSW continue to experience difficulties accessing the full 600 hours due to a shortage of available preschool places. While funding is provided by the Australian Government to support preschool access, many families are unable to secure enough hours for their children because local services do not have the capacity to meet demand.

There is limited publicly available information showing how Preschool Reform Agreement funding is allocated and spent across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas. Without this information, it is difficult to determine whether funding is reaching the areas of greatest need or whether additional investment is required to increase preschool capacity in remote communities.

Children living in Far West NSW should have the same opportunity to access preschool as



children living in metropolitan areas. Greater transparency will help identify gaps in service delivery and support advocacy for increased preschool places where they are needed most.

A43. New South Wales State Council

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

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The b4-Kindy program operates exempt from the definition of an education and care service under section 5(1) of the Children (Education and Care Services) National Law. As per the Law, an education and care service is any service providing or intending to provide education and care on a regular basis to children under 13 years of age other than **a school providing full-time education to children, including children attending in the year before kindergarten but not including a preschool program delivered in a school or a preschool that is registered as a school.** The b4-Kindy program:

- is **provided by a school.**
- the school provides **full-time education** to children, including children in the year before kindergarten the **children attending are in the year before kindergarten**, but not two years before kindergarten or earlier.
- the program is an integrated early learning program delivered by a School Learning Support Officer (SLSO) under the direction of a teacher. It is **not a preschool program.** The National Law defines a preschool program as an early childhood educational program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher to children in the year that is two years before kindergarten.

Operating with the above the limitations, three-year-olds are not able to access early childhood education in their rural and remote communities, making it more challenging to reach the recommended 600 hours of early childhood education prior to commencing school.

In addition to this, the b4-Kindy program must also ensure compliance under the Crown Employees (School Administrative and Support Staff) Award. SLSOs employed to deliver the program must work under the direction and supervision of a teacher to support the achievement of educational outcomes. SLSOs are not to supervise students on their own. Regardless of the activity, a teacher must be in sight and/or hearing distance at all times. ICPA NSW is advocating for state Legislative change to allow SLSO's the responsibility of sole supervision, allowing for those three and four-year-olds the opportunity to be located in a purpose specific room separate from primary students.

Childcare Subsidy (CCS)

A44. Aramac Muttaborra Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education and the Minister for Education to honour the Federal Government's commitment to universal childcare by applying an additional 20% Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) to geographically isolated families accessing the In Home Care (IHC) program, with eligibility assessed using the existing criteria used to determine the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) payment.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Federal Government has stated that universal childcare is to be its lasting legacy and

has committed to a “3-day guarantee” of childcare for all Australian children. However, for children growing up in geographical isolation, this commitment remains out of reach. These children are among the most disadvantaged in Australia when it comes to accessing affordable, quality early childhood education and care. Children in geographical isolation face significant social, emotional, psychological, and physical barriers to their wellbeing and development. Access to early childhood education and care is a critical protective factor against these risks. Yet the cost of In Home Care (IHC) — the only form of childcare available to many isolated families — is rapidly escalating and increasingly unaffordable.

In addition to gap fees, IHC families in geographical isolation must provide an educator with accommodation, utilities, food, and often transportation. These are unavoidable costs with no equivalent in mainstream childcare settings. The cumulative financial burden is substantial and is worsening as gap fees increase. We ask that ICPA proposes that the Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) be applied at an additional rate of 20% to families accessing IHC in geographical isolation. Eligibility should be determined using the existing geographic framework used to assess eligibility for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) payment, a well-established federal mechanism for identifying families in genuine geographical isolation. This approach leverages existing infrastructure and ensures the measure is targeted at families with the greatest need and fewest alternatives.

If the Federal Government’s commitment to universal childcare is to be meaningful, it must extend to children in the most isolated parts of Australia. An enhanced ACCS for IHC families in geographical isolation would be a tangible step toward making that commitment a reality.

A45. Tambo Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education and Care and Minister for Education for an addition of a 5th criteria in the Additional Childcare Subsidy for Geographically Isolated Children.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Currently In Home Care gap fees are approximately four times more than those in Metro locations. Families in Rural and remote areas of Australia have many additional costs when accessing the Childcare Subsidy. These costs include covering the costs of travel, food and accommodation for the educator. It is only fair and equitable that Geographically Isolated families should be eligible for the ACCS to minimise costs.

A46. Walgett Branch (NSW)

“That the ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Minister for Early Childhood and Minister for Education to review the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) allowable absence provisions to better align with the working patterns of rural and remote essential workers, such as teachers.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The current Child Care Subsidy (CCS) provisions fail to account for the unique employment cycles of essential workers in rural and remote Australia. This creates a significant financial and logistical barrier for families, particularly those in the education sector.

Under the existing CCS, families are restricted to 40 allowable absence days per financial year. While this may suit standard year-round employment, it does not align with the working patterns of teachers and other essential workers who have mandated non-attendance periods, such as the 12 weeks of student school holidays.

The mathematics of the current policy directly penalises these regional educators:

- **Mandated Holiday Absences:** 12 weeks of school holidays equate to **60 week days**

where care is not required. This automatically exceeds the standard 40-day allowance by 20 days.

- **Childhood Illness:** Utilizing the standard allowance for holiday periods leaves a zero-day buffer for standard childhood illnesses throughout the remaining 40 weeks of the school year. A conservative estimate of 20 sick days per year means a child will realistically be absent for a total of **80 days** annually.

Once the 40-day limit is exceeded, CCS is only payable for additional absences under strictly limited circumstances, such as illness supported by a medical certificate. For rural and remote teachers who do not require care during school holidays, these absences do not qualify for additional subsidy. Consequently, families face a significant financial penalty. Based on a standard regional childcare rate of **\$120 per day**, a family must pay full fees for the 40 uncovered days (20 short from holidays and 20 sick days). This forces them to pay the full daily fee, exceeding **\$4,000 per year** in additional costs, simply to maintain access and ensure their child's placement is not lost.

In many rural and remote regions, teachers reside a considerable distance from the nearest childcare service. It is neither practical nor sustainable for these families to travel these distances during non-attendance periods when they are not required at their place of work. A stark local example of this logistical and financial burden is a teacher operating within our remote region. Living in an isolated pocket, she has two children attending the local primary school and one preschool-aged child enrolled for 5 days a week at the long day care centre. During the 12 weeks of school holidays, the mother and her two eldest children are not required on site. To keep her preschooler in care during just one single week of school holidays would require a **148km round trip each day**, equating to **740km of travel per week** solely for childcare.

The financial cost of forced attendance or absence adds up rapidly:

- **if she commutes:** At standard vehicle running costs, driving 740km a week just for childcare introduces massive fuel and vehicle wear expenses on top of standard fees.
- **if she stays home (and has exceeded the 40 days):** Keeping her child home for just one 5-day school holiday block costs **\$600 out-of-pocket in full daily fees** (\$120/day × 5 days) to preserve the position. Over the course of the 12 weeks of holidays, this layout becomes completely untenable.

Reviewing these provisions to better reflect regional work cycles is essential for:

- **Workforce Stability:** The current financial burden acts as a major disincentive for teachers to remain in or accept rural and remote postings, exacerbating critical workforce shortages in hard-to-staff areas.
- **Equitable Access:** The "one-size-fits-all" framework inadvertently penalises rural and remote families whose employment is tied to the school calendar, leading to inequitable financial outcomes compared to their urban or year-round counterparts.
- **Retention of Essential Services:** Aligning CCS absence limits with school holiday periods supports teacher retention and ensures that children of essential workers maintain access to care without being penalised for their professional calendar.

Without a targeted adjustment, such as increasing allowable absence days from 40 to 80 for this cohort to fully cover the 60 mandated holiday days and preserve a necessary 20-day sickness buffer, current policy settings will continue to contribute to workforce instability and the rural education disadvantage.

In Home Care (IHC)

A47. Western Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Australian Government for equitable and affordable access to the In Home Care (IHC) program for rural, regional and remote families who cannot reasonably access centre-based childcare services.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Many geographically isolated families rely on In Home Care due to the absence of accessible childcare centres, workforce shortages, distance and the operational requirements of agricultural and remote employment.

However, the current In Home Care system often results in significantly higher out-of-pocket costs for rural and remote families compared to metropolitan families accessing centre-based childcare services.

These inequities create substantial barriers to:

- workforce participation,
- family wellbeing,
- farm and business operations,
- and access to early childhood support services.

ICPA WA believes families living in geographically isolated areas should have equitable access to childcare support regardless of location.

ICPA (Aust) further advocates for:

- greater transparency in provider fee structures,
- equitable subsidy outcomes between metropolitan and isolated families,
- improved workforce attraction measures for remote educators,
- and recognition of the additional accommodation and operational costs borne by remote families.

A48. Tibooburra - Milparinka Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Minister for Social Services to increase the In Home Care (IHC) Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Hourly rate cap for rural and remote families.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Families in very remote and remote Australia access IHC as their only option for childcare. There is no other childcare option often within hundreds of kilometers of their homes. Due to these families locations, they are currently paying 2- 4 times the out of pocket cost of families who can access centre based childcare.

An increase to the IHC Hourly Rate Cap is urgently called for to ensure childcare is able to be accessed at an affordable rate and educators are paid appropriately in line with the Children's Services Award. The current CCS IHC cap is \$39.80/ hour/ per family. Average hourly casual wage for diploma level educator is approximately \$50. Which means families gap payments are huge and make childcare unaffordable. This flow on effect for families runs in every facet of their lives- affecting decisions about their income, employment, care and education for their children.

This change is happening because the IHC Hourly Rate Cap hasn't been updated to reflect the real cost of employing qualified educators. There have been numerous studies, reviews and advice identifying this problem and now urgent action to increase the CCS IHC cap is required.

**Case Study:**

Family 5, living in very remote NSW, children aged 7,4,3. Parents both working 40h/ week each. Means tested at 46.85 % CCS. Educator working 40h per week. Educator employed through Australia's Leading Home Care Agency on Level 2 casual award rate for the Children's Services Award.

At the beginning of 2026 the families gap payment was \$1123.20, \$53,913.60/ 48 week year. In May the families gap payment is \$1159.56 per week, \$55,658.88/ 48 week year. This was increased in March when national wage reforms were introduced to the Children's Services award.

In July the national wage reforms promises another 5 % wage increase and a 4.2 % CPI wage increase. Forecast families gap payment is \$1,458.80 per week, \$70,022.40/ 48 week year. This is a weekly cost of \$ 2223.20, CCS IHC contribution \$777.20. This represents an increase in the cost of IHC childcare of \$14,363.52 within a 12 month period, noting that neither parent's salaries have increased in this same period.

If the family were accessing centre based care, the total weekly cost for all 3 children from July 2026 estimated to be \$1800, and the gap would be \$873.75 per week, \$41,190/ 48 week year. Information from Starting Block, website recommended by Centrelink to work out costs for centre based care.

The remote based family using CCS IHC is going to be paying 41% more per year, almost \$29 000 more than the same type of family accessing a town centre based childcare.

When the only choice for very remote and remote families is to use IHC the inequity and extra financial burden in paying for childcare is stark.

Dates	Gap payment	Total/ year 48 weeks
January 2026	\$1 123.20	\$53 913.60
March (post National wage reforms to Children's Services Award)	\$1 159.56	\$55 658.88
July 2026 Forecast amount, 5% wage and 4.2% CPI wage increase.	\$1 458.80	\$70 022.40
<u>July 2026</u>	<u>\$1 800</u>	<u>\$41 190</u>
<u>Centre Based Childcare</u>		
	<u>Difference of 41% or \$ 28 832</u> <u>if using IHC</u>	

49. Aramac Muttaborra Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education, to urgently extend the Worker Retention Payment to the In Home Care program, in order to immediately address the rapidly deteriorating affordability of In Home Care for geographically isolated families."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Federal Government has mandated wage increases for workers across the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector. In mainstream childcare settings, the Government has introduced a Worker Retention Payment to fund these increases, ensuring the cost is not passed on to families. However, no equivalent measure has been applied to the In Home Care (IHC) program. As a result, IHC families are bearing the full burden of these wage increases through dramatically higher gap fees.

For families in our branch, gap fee increases in excess of 33% have been experienced between February 2025 and April 2026, with a further price increase scheduled for July

2026. Several families are experiencing similar or greater increases. This is unsustainable, and inequitable when compared to our urban counterparts. Geographically isolated families who access IHC face a unique and compounding financial burden that families in urban and regional areas do not. In addition to gap fees, IHC families are required to provide an educator with living quarters, utilities, food, and in many cases, transportation. These are not optional costs — they are prerequisites for accessing care in a remote location.

The combination of these obligations and rapidly rising gap fees is placing IHC out of reach for many isolated families. For families in geographically isolated areas, IHC is not a lifestyle choice — it is the only form of childcare available. The failure to extend the Worker Retention Payment to IHC creates a two-tiered system in which isolated families are inequitably excluded from the financial protections afforded to other Australian families. ICPA calls on the Minister for Early Childhood Education to urgently extend the Worker Retention Payment to the In Home Care program, so that isolated families are not left behind.

A50. South Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) request that the Australian Government urgently consider extending workforce and affordability support measures, including an equivalent mechanism to the Worker Retention Payment, to the In Home Care sector to ensure services remain financially viable and accessible for rural and remote families who rely upon them.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The In Home Care (IHC) program provides essential education and care services for families in geographically isolated areas where mainstream childcare is unavailable or unsuitable. For many rural and remote families, particularly those on farms, stations or in remote communities, IHC is the only viable regulated childcare option.

The program also supports families with children who have disabilities or complex medical needs, and those working non-standard or seasonal hours common in agriculture, transport, healthcare and emergency services.

Unlike metropolitan areas, rural families often have no alternative care due to distance, workforce shortages and the impracticality of centre-based models. IHC is therefore not a convenience, but a critical service that enables workforce participation and ensures children receive safe, regulated care.

However, the IHC sector is excluded from workforce support measures available to other early childhood services. Rising award wages are being passed directly onto families already facing high living costs and limited access to services.

Without urgent support, increasing fees risks making care unaffordable, forcing families to reduce work or rely on unsafe or unregulated care arrangements—posing serious risks in isolated communities. The IHC program aligns with government priorities including regional workforce participation, child safety, early intervention and equitable access to services.

We urge the Australian Government to extend workforce and affordability support, including an equivalent to the Worker Retention Payment, to ensure IHC remains viable and accessible. Without action, inequity between metropolitan and rural families will continue to grow.

Case Study 1:

We spend, on average, more than \$5000 per calendar month on childcare, and that is after our CCS is applied to our eligible hours. Our gross (pre-CCS) invoices would exceed \$8000 per month regularly. It is our largest individual expenditure, even bigger than our mortgage by a depressing margin. If, by some means, we were able to access "normal" childcare

options (which would almost certainly mean one of us pausing or slowing our medical careers to allow some regular days and fewer on-call shifts), we would pay a fraction of this sum; more like \$2000 per month after subsidies. This difference of around \$3000 per month between standard childcare and IHC is not insignificant in the current economic climate.

We are at the point of putting little to no money aside for our future or our son's future, due to the additional costs we face in childcare provision and education simply by being frontline healthcare workers with on-call and out-of-hours responsibilities, which are often unpredictable and unscheduled.

We aren't looking for government handouts, we would just like to be treated equitably with all other families in Australia who utilise CCS for their early childcare and education needs. We believe that early childhood educators are worth every penny they are paid and deserve more, but the government's support for young families must include everyone and not discriminate against those of us who cannot access mainstream care.

Summary of the above:

- the family spends more than \$5,000/month out-of-pocket on childcare after CCS is applied.
- their gross childcare costs regularly exceed \$8,000 per month before subsidies.
- childcare is their largest household expense, exceeding even their mortgage.
- if they were able to access a mainstream childcare service, they estimate their costs would be approximately \$2,000 per month after subsidies.
- means the family is paying around \$3,000 more per month (approximately \$36,000 per year) simply because they require IHC rather than being able to access standard childcare options.
- the additional childcare costs have significantly impacted their ability to save for their family's future and their son's future.
- as frontline healthcare workers with on-call and unpredictable hours, mainstream childcare is not a viable option for their family.
- Sarah emphasised that they are not seeking additional benefits, but rather equitable support comparable to that provided to families who can access mainstream childcare services.

Other

A51. North West Branch (SA)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Minister for Early Childhood Education and the Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories to investigate and develop a sustainable, fit-for-purpose funding model for flexible early childhood education and care services in rural, regional and remote Australia, including in-home and mobile service models such as the Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise (RICE), to address existing service gaps and reduce the impact of childcare deserts."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Families in rural and remote South Australia face significant barriers accessing early childhood education and care (ECEC), including vast distances, limited-service availability, workforce shortages, and a lack of informal support networks.

Flexible, place-based services such as the RICE Outback Childcare program play a critical role in supporting geographically isolated families through short-term, in-home care tailored to the operational and seasonal realities of remote living. However, these service models sit largely outside traditional Child Care Subsidy (CCS) structures, resulting in families bearing the full cost of care and creating significant affordability barriers.



Federal investment into ECEC, including the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) and recent reforms such as the 3 Day Guarantee under CCS, are acknowledged and welcomed. However, these initiatives do not adequately address the unique challenges faced by dispersed rural and remote populations, where centre-based childcare models are often not viable.

The main issue appears to be that CCS only applies to approved childcare services operating under one of four recognised service types:

- Centre Based Day Care
- Family Day Care
- Outside School Hours Care
- In Home Care (IHC)

For a service to access CCS, it must be formally approved under Family Assistance Law and primarily provide recognised childcare.

RICE Outback Childcare is not CCS-applicable because it does not fit within the Australian Government's approved Child Care Subsidy service models and regulatory requirements.

Outback Childcare is more of a flexible outreach/in-home support model designed specifically for our SA geographically isolated families. We must remember that it does not operate like a conventional childcare centre or regular Family Day Care scheme.

CCS was designed for mainstream childcare systems. Outback Childcare was designed for remote families living in places where mainstream systems simply do not work.

As a result, many children in geographically isolated communities continue to fall between funding systems that are not designed to accommodate flexible, non-centre-based service delivery.

This motion calls on the Australian Government to investigate practical and sustainable funding solutions, including alternative subsidy arrangements to support flexible ECEC services in rural and remote Australia.

Without targeted reform, rural and remote children will remain disadvantaged in accessing early childhood education.

A52. Tambo Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education and Care and Minister for Education to introduce a standalone Childcare model for rural and remote communities and families that is tailored for the unique circumstances that are in play."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Currently remote families and isolated communities are not having their needs met by any existing programs. For example, In Home Care is not fit for purpose and remote families are challenged continually in the attempt to make it work for them. In our rural communities there is a lack of workers, lack of accommodation and no amount of incentivising is attracting early educators to go rural.

RURAL SCHOOLS

A53. Walgett Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Minister for Home Affairs to expand the definition of 'specified work' under the Working Holiday Maker visa program to include employment of teachers in rural, remote and very remote educational institutions.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The teacher staffing shortage across regional Australia has progressed from a systemic operational challenge into an acute national educational crisis, heavily impacting rural, remote and very remote classrooms. Under the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*, which sets out the national vision and commitment agreed to by all Australian Governments, policy makers explicitly pledge to:

"provide all young Australians with access to high-quality education that is inclusive and free from any form of discrimination... no matter where they live."

Postcode equity cannot exist when classrooms in geographically isolated areas are routinely left unstaffed. The Working Holiday Maker visa scheme serves as a significant source of temporary labour for rural, remote and very remote communities. Under current legislative frameworks, visa holders must complete a mandatory period of 88 days for a second year visa or six months for a third year visa of "specified work" within designated industries, such as agriculture, mining, construction or hospitality, to qualify for visa extensions.

Regrettably, the education and childcare sectors are entirely excluded from this definition. This omission creates a counter productive scenario in isolated communities experiencing extreme workforce shortages:

- **Skills Wastage:** Highly qualified, university educated international educators are legally required to leave local schoolrooms to work in cafes, pubs or orchards simply to satisfy visa extension requirements.
- **Skeleton Staffing:** This represents a profound wastage of skilled human capital at a time when rural, remote and very remote classrooms are frequently running on minimal staff numbers.

Walgett Branch Case Study: Within our own branch area, our community has witnessed the absurd realities of this policy firsthand. In a recent local example, a school in our district was running on critical skeleton staff, placing immense strain on existing teachers and compromising student learning consistency.

- During this exact period, an eagerly available, fully trained and qualified international teacher was living right here in our area, residing in a small town that forms part of our branch.
- Because education did not qualify as specified work, this teacher was legally forced to take up employment pulling beers and working behind the bar at the local pub to complete her mandatory 88 days to secure her visa standing.
- Only after fulfilling these alternative industry requirements was this professional legally permitted to step into the local schoolroom.

Our students deserve eager, quality teachers from day one, yet arbitrary immigration definitions forced our local children to wait months while an essential educational professional was underutilised down the road.

By expanding the definition of specified work to include employment as a qualified teacher,

education assistant or in home educator within rural, remote and very remote areas, the Federal Government can immediately redirect skilled global talent straight into the communities that need them most.

Furthermore, this motion seeks to create an escalating structure of incentives to encourage long term retention. Rather than treating these educators as short term transient labour, the framework should introduce progressive benefits to secure workforce stability:

- **Financial Incentives:** Full visa application fee waivers for subsequent visa years for every consecutive school term an educator remains in a rural, remote or very remote geographical zone.
- **Pathways to Residency:** Streamlined or prioritised points allocations towards Skilled Migration pathways linked directly to longevity of service in an isolated school.

Amending this policy will rectify an arbitrary barrier within our immigration system, protect the educational rights of geographically isolated students, and support the long-term sustainability of our remote communities and national workforce development programs.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS

A54. Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate for improved access and utilisation of Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) funding, currently managed through the NDIS scheme.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Many remote & geographically isolated children are missing out on essential allied health supports due to the ability to access or utilise funding administered through NDIS for Early Childhood Early Intervention. In Bourke the NDIS Early Childhood Partner was McKillop, and they had around 7 staff supporting Western NSW. McKillop Family Services has withdrawn, and the workload has been transferred to NDIA staff. Remote areas also have a significant underutilisation of ECEI funding, as when children’s needs are identified, there are often no allied health services available to support them. Evidence shows that accessing Early Intervention supports improved educational outcomes.

A55. South Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Government, in collaboration with state and territory education departments, to strengthen the rural and remote specialist workforce through increased training opportunities, rural placements, incentives, and exposure to remote education settings for teachers and allied health professionals, in order to improve access to specialist support and services for students with learning difficulties who are not eligible for NDIS funding.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Students in rural and remote communities often face significant barriers accessing specialist educational and allied health support, particularly those with learning difficulties who do not meet NDIS eligibility criteria. While metropolitan families may access educational psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, tutors and other intervention programs locally, rural families frequently encounter workforce shortages, long waitlists, high travel costs and limited-service availability. As a result, schools are often the only consistent source of support, despite many rural schools lacking sufficient trained specialist staff and resources.

We acknowledge that the issue is not solely one of funding, but also of workforce capacity

and exposure to rural practice. Increasing training opportunities, rural placements and incentives for teachers and allied health professionals would help build a sustainable workforce with the skills and experience needed to support rural and remote students. Greater exposure to remote education settings during training may also encourage professionals to work in these communities long term.

Strengthening the rural specialist workforce would improve access to timely intervention and support services, helping ensure students with learning difficulties receive appropriate assistance regardless of where they live.

Case Study 1:

I tell my child to dream big — that she can be anything she wants to be, that with hard work and determination her goals are within reach. But the reality we face within the education system often tells a very different story.

My second child lives with dyslexia and significant learning difficulties. She is bright, curious and capable, but the barriers she faces are very real — and living in a rural area only makes those barriers greater.

Accessing support is incredibly difficult. The first challenge is getting an assessment. Waiting lists are long, and there are very few local professionals available. Like many rural families, we have had to travel significant distances and pay privately just to have our child properly assessed. This places both financial and emotional strain on our family.

Even after receiving a diagnosis, the support available is limited. Learning disabilities such as dyslexia are often not recognised under NDIS criteria, which means schools have minimal funding to provide the specialised support these children need. Teachers and School Services Officers do their absolute best, but they are often expected to manage complex learning needs without the training, time or resources required.

For my child, this is not just an academic challenge — it is deeply emotional. Every day she walks into the classroom knowing that tasks many of her peers find easy will be difficult for her. Reading, writing and processing information take far more effort and time. Being asked to read aloud or speak in front of others can bring anxiety and embarrassment.

Over time, I have watched this impact her confidence and self-belief. She has questioned her own intelligence and wondered why learning feels so much harder for her than it does for others.

There is also still a stigma surrounding dyslexia and learning difficulties. Too often, children like mine are misunderstood or seen as not trying hard enough, when in reality they are often working twice as hard just to keep up.

The difference between rural and metropolitan access to support is clear. Children in larger centres often have access to specialists, tutoring and intervention programs, while in rural and remote areas, these supports are limited or simply unavailable. This means where a child lives can determine the level of support they receive — and that should never be the case.

My child is resilient and determined, but resilience should not be something children have to rely on just to access education. They deserve the right support, understanding, and the opportunity to reach their full potential.

No child's future should be limited by their postcode, or by a system that does not recognise and respond to their needs.

Case Study 2:

Our son is four years old and has experienced significant challenges since birth. As he grew, we became increasingly concerned about his sensory processing difficulties, feeding issues, and frequent choking episodes.

When our son was 18 months old, we sought help and were referred to both occupational therapy and speech pathology services. We understood the importance of early intervention and hoped that accessing specialist support early would help address his

challenges and improve his development. Unfortunately, despite the referral being made when he was still very young, we have faced lengthy waitlists. It was not until he was three years old that he was finally able to see a speech therapist. Following assessment, the speech therapist confirmed that he really needed to see an Occupational Therapist to work and support his issues around sensory processing, eating, and choking. Due to the length of time this has been going on it is now causing further issues as once he has choked on a food he will not try that food again and he now has a very limited diet.

Since then, there have been multiple referrals and follow up phone calls which have been made by our GP, paediatrician, CaFHS nurse and now two separate speech therapists, and ourselves. Every professional involved in his care has advised that occupational therapy is the most appropriate intervention and that he would greatly benefit from receiving support as soon as possible.

Despite these recommendations, we continue to face the same response: there are simply not enough occupational therapists available in rural and remote areas. We have been informed that due to the lack of therapists and extensive waiting lists, it is unlikely our son will be able to access occupational therapy services anytime soon.

Living in a rural area should not mean that children miss out on essential healthcare and developmental services. If our family lived in a metropolitan area, it is likely our son would have already received assessment and intervention years ago. Instead, we find ourselves watching valuable early intervention opportunities pass while waiting for a service that may never become available.

Case Study 3:

I am a single mother living in a rural community more than 500 kilometres from the nearest capital city, raising a child with Dyslexia and Dyscalculia.

What should be a time of growth and discovery for my child has often felt like an uphill battle. I have watched my once bright and confident child begin to lose self-belief — not just in their learning, but emotionally as well. I see how hard they try every day, often working twice as hard as others, yet still struggling with tasks that many people take for granted.

We are incredibly fortunate to have a small local school with dedicated teachers and School Services Officers who do everything they can with the resources they have. However, I can also see that they are limited — not through lack of care or effort, but through lack of access to specialist training, support, and services.

Living in a rural area creates significant barriers when it comes to accessing the help my child needs. Learning difficulties such as Dyslexia and Dyscalculia are often not supported under NDIS funding, which means the responsibility for organising and funding support falls back on families like mine.

Accessing specialists is one of our greatest challenges. Educational psychologists, speech therapists, and specialised tutors are extremely difficult to access. We often rely on visiting professionals, and even then, availability is limited. This leads to long delays for assessments and inconsistent ongoing support.

The cost of this is not just financial, although travel, accommodation, and private services quickly become expensive. It is also emotional. The constant effort to find support, advocate, and keep everything moving forward can be overwhelming — particularly as a single parent.

Despite these challenges, I continue to advocate not only for my child but for all rural families facing similar experiences. The reality is that children in rural and remote areas do not have the same access to specialist support as those in metropolitan areas, and that is simply not fair.

Our children deserve the same opportunities to learn, grow, and succeed, regardless of where they live. Access to timely, appropriate, and affordable specialist support should not

depend on distance or postcode.

This is why strengthening the rural and remote specialist workforce is so important. Increasing training opportunities, providing incentives, and ensuring greater exposure to remote communities for teachers and allied health professionals will help bridge the gap. No family should have to carry the burden of distance alone, and no child should miss out on the support they need to reach their full potential.

Case Study 4:

As a Reception teacher and Autism Inclusion Teacher at Burra Community School, I see firsthand the impact that limited access to allied health services has on students, families and schools in regional communities.

We know that early intervention is critical for children experiencing developmental delays, speech and language difficulties, learning challenges, autism and ADHD. However, in rural areas, access to these services is often delayed or unavailable. Families frequently face long waiting lists, significant travel requirements and substantial out-of-pocket expenses to access support that metropolitan families can often obtain locally. For families not eligible for NDIS funding, accessing allied health support often relies on costly private services or long public waitlists.

At our school, specialist support has reduced significantly in recent years. Following the resignation of our visiting speech pathologist, the service has not been consistently replaced, leaving schools and teachers to identify, monitor and support students with complex needs without the specialist expertise required. Many students who would benefit from assessment and intervention are waiting years for access to services, meaning they often do not receive formal diagnoses or targeted support until the middle primary years.

As a Reception teacher, this means I am regularly supporting students with significant speech, language, sensory, social and behavioural needs while they wait for assessments and intervention. Teachers are increasingly expected to fill gaps that would traditionally be supported by speech pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists. While schools do their best, we cannot replace the specialised knowledge and services these professionals provide.

Burra sits on the edge of remote South Australia, yet there are no local occupational therapy services and families often need to travel considerable distances to access support. For many families, the time, cost and logistics involved create further barriers, resulting in children missing out on the early intervention that research consistently shows leads to the best outcomes.

The challenge is not simply funding services; it is attracting and retaining a skilled specialist workforce in regional and remote communities. Increased rural placements, incentives, training opportunities and exposure to remote education settings would help build a sustainable workforce and improve access to timely support for students who need it most. A child's opportunity to access assessment and intervention should not depend on their postcode. Rural and remote students deserve equitable access to the specialist services that enable them to thrive at school and beyond.

A56. New South Wales State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the NDIA against the changes to travel allowances for allied health providers under the 2025–26 NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits, as these cuts pose a significant risk to the delivery of essential support services for students with disabilities in rural, regional, and remote communities."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

With these changes, providers will face limits on the travel they can claim when supporting students in harder-to-reach areas. This poses a major threat to clinicians working in rural



Australia assisting students with a disability, where long-distance travel is a necessity, not a choice and public transport is often non-existent. The long-distance travel can become a barrier to the student receiving the much-needed allied health care to assist with their education. Rural students should not be penalised because of where they live when it comes to gaining allied health care. Every effort needs to be made to ensure appropriate care is available without any barriers.

A57. Julia Creek Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to amend its policies and guidelines regarding parental care requirements for rural and remote National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants under the age of 16 who are attending boarding school, to recognise these students as *not under parental care* while residing at boarding school.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Students from rural and remote areas are often required to attend boarding school to access appropriate educational opportunities. While at boarding school, these students are no longer in the daily care of their parents, yet current NDIA requirements continue to assess them as being under parental care.

This classification fails to reflect the reality of their living arrangements and places an inequitable burden on families, who must meet care expectations despite being geographically separated from their children. It can also limit access to appropriate NDIS supports, as funding decisions are based on the assumption that parents are available to provide daily care.

Recognising boarding school students as not under parental care during school terms would better align NDIS policy with the lived circumstances of rural and remote families. This change would ensure equitable access to supports, improve participant outcomes, and acknowledge the unique challenges faced by geographically isolated families.

Case Study:

At a recent NDIS reassessment, a Julia Creek member found herself in the difficult position of having to strongly advocate for her son’s needs—needs that were already recognised, but not adequately supported under current policy.

Her son, a young student from a remote property, must attend boarding school to access his education. At home, the family’s isolated location means that many essential therapies and supports simply do not exist. There are no local providers, long travel distances make regular appointments impractical, and options are extremely limited despite best efforts. However, while attending boarding school, her son is finally within reach of a wide range of supports—therapies, specialist services, and interventions that are critical to his development and wellbeing. For the first time, consistent and meaningful support is possible.

Despite this, during the reassessment process, she was required to justify why her son needed funding for supports that he could only access while at boarding school. The NDIA’s position remained anchored to the assumption that parental care and the home environment should dictate funding decisions—even though those supports are not available in that home environment.

As a result, although her son is physically located where services exist, funding was not aligned to allow him to access them. The system effectively recognised the supports he needs, and acknowledged that they are available where he currently lives during school terms, yet denied adequate funding because his *parental home* is in a remote area where those supports do not exist. This placed the family in an incredibly unfair position. A child finally able to access essential services was prevented from doing

so—not due to lack of need, but due to a policy that does not reflect the reality of rural and remote life.

The mother was left feeling that she had to “fight the system” simply to secure equitable access for her child—something families in metropolitan areas can often take for granted. Her experience highlights a critical gap in current NDIA policy: boarding school students from remote areas are living away from home specifically to access opportunities and services, yet they are still assessed as if those services should be delivered in their home environment.

Without change, families like hers will continue to face unnecessary barriers, and children will miss out on vital supports during the very time they are most accessible.

A58. Western Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Australian Government to ensure the implementation of the Thriving Kids program delivers equitable, accessible and appropriate services for children living in rural, regional and remote Australia.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The proposed transition to the Thriving Kids model represents a significant reform to early childhood disability and developmental support services.

ICPA WA acknowledges concerns regarding the potential impacts on geographically isolated families, particularly:

- reduced service accessibility,
- workforce shortages,
- regional service deserts,
- and inequitable access to early intervention services.

Children living in rural and remote Australia already experience significant barriers to accessing allied health and disability services.

ICPA WA believes any reform must ensure:

- fair and equitable access regardless of location,
- meaningful consultation with rural and remote families,
- appropriate workforce planning for regional Australia,
- and safeguards to ensure isolated children are not disadvantaged under the new model.

STUDENT TRAVEL

A59. Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Minister for Social Services to allow geographically isolated students access to seats on flights chartered by ABSTUDY through the Fares Allowance.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

In many remote regions, flights chartered through the ABSTUDY Fares Allowance already operate to transport eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to and from boarding schools and places of study. Allowing other geographically isolated students to access vacant seats on these chartered flights would provide a practical and cost-effective way to improve equity in education access for all rural and remote students living away from home to study.

Examples of how Services Australia could facilitate this access;



1. Boarding Schools or hostels who pre-book travel for ABSTUDY students at the start and end of term could have the option to include other geographically isolated students going to the same destination on a charter flight as travelling companions or “linked travellers” with their own Safe Travel Plan.
2. Use the National Business Gateway line to have an ABSTUDY travel officer link geographically isolated students directly to corporate travel management to be able to secure available seats on ABSTUDY chartered flights.

A60. Northern Territory State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for geographically isolated students receiving the AIC allowance to be permitted access to available seating on existing ABSTUDY-funded travel services where capacity exists.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) advocates for a practical, inclusive, and cost-effective policy change: allowing geographically isolated students who receive the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance to access available seating on existing ABSTUDY-funded travel services where capacity exists.

This motion is grounded in the principle of equity in education. Remote families—regardless of background—share the same fundamental challenge: distance. Whether a child is eligible for ABSTUDY or AIC, the reality remains that access to education often depends on long-distance travel, significant planning, and substantial financial commitment. Where government-funded transport is already operating with unused capacity, there is a clear opportunity to extend its benefit more broadly.

At its core, this is about inclusivity. Enabling AIC-supported students to access vacant seats on ABSTUDY-funded flights **and connecting transport**, acknowledges that educational disadvantage in remote Australia is not defined by race alone, but by geography. It ensures that all children living in isolated areas are supported to attend school safely, efficiently, and affordably. This approach strengthens support for marginal and geographically disadvantaged families as a whole, fostering a more united and equitable remote education system.

Importantly, this motion delivers a stronger return on investment for the government. These flights are already funded and are regularly not filled to capacity. Allowing additional eligible students to travel on these services maximises the value of existing expenditure without requiring significant new infrastructure or funding. It is a practical, low-cost improvement that enhances service utilisation while reducing duplication across travel support programs.

For families, the benefits are tangible. Reducing travel costs and logistical pressures can significantly alleviate the financial and emotional burden already associated with boarding school. It provides greater certainty, improves safety by reducing reliance on multiple travel arrangements, and ensures that more children can access consistent education without unnecessary barriers.

This motion does not seek to diminish or alter ABSTUDY support. Rather, it respectfully builds upon it—extending the efficiency and reach of an existing system to better serve all remote families. It recognises that fairness in modern Australia means ensuring opportunity is not dictated by postcode, and that where capacity exists, it should be used to support every child who needs it.

Case Study 1: Inequitable Access to Student Air Transport in Remote NT

At NCW Station, our family lives just 50 metres from a privately maintained airstrip regularly used by a government-funded 6–8 seat aircraft. This plane services the nearby M. community, transporting three students to and from boarding school in Darwin each term.



While this service operates at our doorstep, our three children—also requiring boarding education—receive no equivalent transport support. Instead, we must personally drive them approximately 700 km to Darwin each term. This journey requires:

- four days away from work each term
- over 1,400 km of travel per round trip
- accommodation costs in Darwin
- significant vehicle and fuel expenses
- disruption to station operations during peak periods

Across a school year, this equates to 16 days of lost productivity.

This situation highlights a clear disparity in access to transport support between families living in the same remote area. Despite identical geographic isolation and comparable educational needs, support is provided to some students while others—living effectively beside the same airstrip—are excluded.

Case Study 2:

We reside 120km from Darwin and have two sons away at boarding school in Queensland. They both travel by plane from Darwin to Brisbane and return each term. Due to the timing of flights, they often do not arrive/depart in time to catch the school bus drop off/pick up from the airport. In this case we must hire a private driver to pick up/drop off the boys to school at a cost of approx. \$250 per trip. There is one Abstudy student from the NT that is also often on the same flights. They are provided with a private driver to pick up/drop off to school at no cost to their family, with spare seats in the vehicle.

Why do we have to pay for this service while the Abstudy student does not? It would be very helpful if we were able to access the unused, available spare seats in this vehicle that is travelling to the same destination.

Case Study 3:

This case study gives an example of Abstudy / non Abstudy student travel working together. My son needed transport from Townsville airport to Boarding School in Charters Towers. The Boarding School was not able to pick him up. Boarding staff were aware that Abstudy travel would be occurring between Townsville and Charters Towers for that particular flight pickup. My son was able to have a seat on the Abstudy coach to Charters Towers.

A61. Mt Isa BOTA (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Minister for Social Services to allow the same provisions given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students under the ABSTUDY Fares Allowance be given to all geographically isolated students needing to live away from home to study.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Students from rural, regional and remote areas have long been underrepresented in higher education for a variety of reasons; one of which is the financial, emotional, and social challenges associated with relocating to study. Whilst we welcome the Tertiary Access Payment as a once-off payment to assist school leavers relocating for higher-level tertiary education, to better support these students, they should also receive the many allowances granted through the ABSTUDY Fares Allowance throughout their educational journey as outlined below:

Student at High School	Student at TAFE, Uni or another higher education provider
Orientation travel	Orientation travel
Start and end of term travel	Start and end of studies travel
Emergency & compassionate travel	Emergency & compassionate travel
Special purpose travel (homesick)	Placement & residential travel
Special purpose travel (school event)	Travel for graduation or exams

This would go a long way in supporting these students to remain connected to their families and communities whilst pursuing their education. Equitable fare allowances will combat the additional costs associated with distance and ensures no student is disadvantaged simply because of where they live.

A62. Boulia-Bedourie-Birdsville Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for the Australian Government to amend the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme to include a ‘school travel criteria’ comparable to that provided under the ABSTUDY Scheme.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Families living in rural and remote Australia face unavoidable and often substantial costs in accessing education, particularly where boarding school attendance, distance education, or extensive travel is required. Many geographically isolated families must travel significant distances to attend School of the Air events, access educational services, or transport children to and from boarding schools.

A disparity currently exists between the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme and the ABSTUDY Scheme. While both programs are designed to support students experiencing geographical isolation, ABSTUDY provides more comprehensive assistance, including support for school travel, higher boarding allowances, and additional supplementary benefits. Consequently, families who do not meet the eligibility requirements for ABSTUDY, but who experience the same level of isolation and educational disadvantage, receive significantly less financial support through the AIC Scheme.

This inequity is evident in communities such as Boulia, where boarding students who qualify for ABSTUDY may access government-funded charter flights to and from boarding schools through approved travel arrangements. These flights are often not operating at full capacity, yet those students who don’t meet the ABSTUDY criteria travelling to the same destinations are unable to access available seats because they are not eligible under the same scheme. Families in identical geographic circumstances are therefore treated differently despite facing the same travel requirements and educational challenges.

Aligning the AIC Scheme with the school travel provisions available under ABSTUDY would create a fairer and more equitable system. It would ensure that assistance better reflects the true cost of educational access in remote Australia and supports all geographically isolated students according to their level of need, regardless of their eligibility pathway.

A63. South Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Government to work collaboratively with regional airlines, state and territory governments, and education stake holders to establish a nationally consistent, fixed-fare or capped-airfare scheme for school and tertiary students who are required to travel between rural and remote communities for education purposes.”

Carried/Lost



Explanation:

Rural and remote students across Australia deserve equitable access to education opportunities, including affordable, reliable, and accessible transport to and from boarding schools, universities, vocational training providers and other educational institutions.

For many geographically isolated families there is no practical alternative but to send their children away from home to access secondary or tertiary education. The cost of air-travel places a significant and ongoing financial burden on families already managing the additional costs associated with distance, accommodation and limited service access.

Across regional and remote Australia, families rely heavily on regional aviation networks to maintain access to education. In South Australia, for example, students frequently depend on flights from centres including Coober Pedy, Ceduna, Port Lincoln, Mount Gambier and Broken Hill to Adelaide. Similar challenges exist in many other states and territories where long travel distances and limited transport options make affordable air access essential.

Queensland's "Bush to Boarding" initiative has demonstrated that capped or concessional airfare schemes can provide meaningful financial relief and improve educational accessibility for geographically isolated students. Expanding a comparable model nationally would provide greater equity and consistency for rural and remote families, regardless of state or territory boundaries. Given the continuing challenges facing regional aviation services, including route sustainability and affordability, Federal Government leadership is essential to coordinate a long-term, nationally accessible solution in partnership with regional airlines and state governments. Such a scheme would support educational participation, reduce cost-of-living pressures on isolated families and contribute to stronger outcomes for rural and remote students across Australia.

A64. Port Augusta Branch (SA)

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

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Families in remote and regional areas are frequently faced with substantial travel costs when students must fly between home and their boarding school or tertiary institution. Current one-way airfares from Adelaide can cost approximately \$190–\$220 to Port Lincoln, \$200–\$270 to Whyalla, and \$220–\$270 to Ceduna, with fares often increasing significantly during peak travel periods. Families travelling to and from communities such as Roxby Downs and Coober Pedy can also face considerable costs, particularly where flight availability is limited and alternative travel options involve lengthy road journeys. These expenses quickly accumulate throughout the year as students travel home during school holidays, long weekends, exeats, family events and emergencies.

Introducing a consistent and affordable student airfare would help alleviate these costs and ensure students have equitable access to educational opportunities, regardless of their geographic location. While families living in geographically isolated areas accept that students may need to leave home to access secondary or tertiary education, this should not mean that regular family contact becomes financially out of reach. Maintaining strong family connections is vital for the mental health and wellbeing of both students and their families. Affordable airfares would enable students to return home more regularly and allow families to remain actively involved in their children's lives throughout the year.

Affordable travel is also important to ensure students and their families can attend significant family milestones and events, including birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, funerals and other important occasions. Geographic isolation should not prevent families

from being together during these important moments.

A dedicated student airfare would help reduce the financial burden on families, support the wellbeing of geographically isolated students, strengthen family connections and promote equitable access to education for all students, regardless of where they live.

A65. Julia Creek Branch (QLD)

“That the ICPA (Aust) continue to advocate to Qantas for the development and implementation of a nationally accessible airfare discount program for all rural and remote students.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Julia Creek Branch thanks Federal Council for its previous advocacy to Qantas through Motion S10 (2024), which called for the establishment of a discount code to assist rural and remote students in accessing their educational facilities without the burden of excessive flight costs.

Our branch supports the ongoing efforts of ICPA Aust to continue engagement and lobbying with Qantas on this matter.

Qantas currently offers a limited Residents Fare program for eligible Frequent Flyer members; however, access to this program is inequitable. Rural and remote students in Northern Queensland, the Northern Territory, and Northwestern Australia may benefit, while those in New South Wales, Tasmania, and South Australia are excluded.

In addition, the Residents Fare program is restrictive, operating only on designated routes with no flexibility in departure or return points. This does not reflect the realities faced by rural and remote families, where travel is often impacted by weather events, medical requirements, and other unforeseen circumstances.

Branch members attending the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association Conference in Darwin observed that Qantas was able to provide attendees with a secure discount access code. This demonstrates that such a system is both feasible and achievable.

A practical solution would be the introduction of a verified Student Travel ID system, where eligibility is confirmed annually through an existing trusted body such as Services Australia or through school enrolment. Students could then be issued a unique ID linked to their booking profile, allowing discounted fares to be automatically applied. This approach would ensure privacy, reduce administrative burden, prevent misuse, and provide a consistent, national framework while allowing flexibility in travel arrangements.

If Qantas can issue secure event-based discount codes, and government already verifies student eligibility through AIC, then integrating a one-time verified digital ID for rural and remote students is both achievable and appropriate.

A66. Western Australia State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Australian Government for travel assistance to be made available for geographically isolated students required to travel to compulsory in-school learning activities associated with approved distance education programs.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Students enrolled in School of the Air and distance education programs are required to attend face-to-face in-school learning activities throughout the year.

These activities are essential educational delivery components involving curriculum instruction, assessment, social development and teacher engagement.

Families often travel hundreds of kilometres at their own expense to attend these compulsory educational activities.

**A67. Alice Springs Branch (NT)**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) program to review and amend the Schooling Resource Standard Base and Calculations Methodology (SRS Review), particularly the zoning for geographically isolated students, so that rebates consider the distance required to travel from a student's geographical address of learning to the School of Distance Education location, rather than base the rebate solely on the address of their School of Distance Education location.”

Carried/Lost**Explanation:**

The PACER program currently determines eligibility and rebate levels for distance education students using the postcode of their distance education school. This approach does not accurately reflect the actual location of students, nor the significant distances they travel and costs they incur to attend interstate excursions. Revising PACER zoning to recognise distance education students would ensure more equitable access and reflect the true costs of participation for distance education students. This would assist schools with the additional costs and operational expenses regional and remote areas incur as their distance from metropolitan centres increases.

Case Study

In 2024, Alice Springs School of the Air students attended an interstate excursion to Canberra. PACER classified these students as ‘Remote’ using postcode 0871, which corresponds to the location of their distance education school. The students reside in postcode 0872, which PACER classifies as ‘Very Remote’. Had the students been correctly zoned based on the location of their classrooms the school would have received an additional \$150 per student in funding. As a result, distance education students are disadvantaged compared to their peers, despite facing significantly higher travel costs.

Distance from home to Alice Springs	Additional costs (fuel) to travel to Alice Springs	Additional Costs (e.g. overnight accommodation etc) to travel to Alice Springs	Cost
Family 1 620km/1240km return trip	Approx. 74L of fuel used to travel one way to Alice Springs. Average fuel costs in Alice Springs as of 02/06/2026 being \$2.33/L, this works out as \$172.42 each way, a total of \$344.84	Overnight accommodation is required both to drop child off at the airport and also to be there to collect them. Accommodation = \$275 per night, a total of \$550 Two days off work to drive to Alice Springs to drop child off, and two days off work to drive back to Alice Springs to pick child up - \$200 each day, total of \$800 lost income	\$1694.84 total cost to family
Family 2 350km/700km round trip	Approx 130L of diesel for round trip. \$2.33/L as at 02/06/2026 equally total of \$302.90 for a round trip	Overnight accommodation is required both to drop child off at the airport and also to be there to collect them. Accommodation = \$275 per night, a total of \$550 Two days off work to drive to Alice Springs to drop child off, and two days off work to drive back to Alice Springs to pick child up - \$200 each day, total of \$800 lost income	\$1 652.90 total cost to family
Family 3 340km/680 km round trip	Approximately \$280 in diesel for round trip	Family owns a home in Alice Springs so no accommodation fees apply however there is still loss of income relevant in this scenario for 4 days in total (approximately \$800 total)	\$1080 total cost to family

Family 4 740km/1480km round trip	Most recent trip fuel cost \$243.88 one way = \$487.76 round trip	Overnight accommodation is required both to drop child off at the airport and also to be there to collect them. Due to this being a larger family, they require a room for their family plus a cabin for their governess to ensure other children aren't missing out on schooling during time away. Accommodation = \$340 per night, a total of \$680 Two days off work to drive to Alice Springs to drop child off, and two days off work to drive back to Alice Springs to pick child up - \$200 each day, total of \$800 lost income	\$1967.76 total cost to family
---	--	--	--------------------------------------

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Permission To Teach (PTT)

A68. Winton Branch (QLD)

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

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

In Queensland, a range of rural teacher incentives currently exist to attract teachers to rural placements and are made available to PTT staff. One key incentive for teachers to work in remote schools is to access the HELP debt reduction scheme after completing four years of rural employment. At present, the time spent working under the PTT program does not count towards this four year period.

Case Study:

A teacher in Winton moved to town in 2024 as part of the Permission to Teach (PTT) scheme. They worked full-time at Winton State School in 2024 and 2025 while completing their tertiary studies (teaching a 0.9FTE). Upon completing their studies, they have continued in their position at Winton State School. As Winton is classed as 'very remote', teachers working for the Department of Education are eligible for the HELP debt reduction scheme after four years of service; however, time working as a PTT does not count towards this service. Therefore, this teacher would have to complete six years of service in a very remote location, whereas a teacher with provisional or full QCT registration working in a very remote location would only be required to complete four years of service.

A69. Dawson Valley Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) seek clarification from the Department of Education as to whether teaching service undertaken under Permission to Teach (PTT) arrangements qualifies toward service requirements for the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt reduction initiative for teachers in very remote areas, and advocate for its inclusion if it is currently excluded."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Australian Government HELP debt reduction initiative aims to attract and retain teachers in very remote areas by offering:

- waiver of indexation on HELP debt, and
- reduction of accumulated HELP debt after four years (1,400 days) of eligible service



Eligibility requires teachers to:

- hold a completed teaching qualification enabling registration, and
- be employed in a face-to-face teaching role in a very remote location as defined by the ABS <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-loan-program/reduction-help-debts-teachers-very-remote-areas>

Permission to Teach (PTT) arrangements allow pre-service teachers to undertake classroom teaching in these same locations while completing their qualifications, often in response to workforce shortages. However, there is limited clarity as to whether this service is recognised under the HELP debt reduction framework.

Clarification and inclusion would:

- ensure equitable recognition of all teaching service in very remote areas
- strengthen early-career pathways into rural and remote teaching
- improve attraction and retention in hard-to-staff schools
- align federal incentives with workforce realities in regional Australia

Higher Education Loan Program (HELP)

A70. Dawson Valley Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Education for the expansion of the HELP debt reduction initiative for teachers to include remote schools, beyond those currently classified as very remote.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The current HELP debt reduction initiative is limited to teachers working in very remote areas as defined by the ABS Remoteness Structure.

<https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-loan-program/reduction-help-debts-teachers-very-remote-areas>

However, many small rural schools outside this classification continue to experience significant challenges in attracting and retaining teachers.

These schools often operate with:

- smaller staffing cohorts
- multi-age classrooms
- reduced access to services and professional networks

Recent policy discussions and reviews have highlighted the need to extend incentives beyond very remote areas to address workforce shortages more broadly across regional Australia.

Expanding eligibility would:

- improve teacher attraction and retention across rural and remote Australia
- provide more equitable support across varying degrees of remoteness
- strengthen educational outcomes for students in small and isolated communities
- better align incentives with workforce demand and service delivery challenges

With around 70% of people repaying a HELP debt being 35 or younger—a critical stage for financial stability, home ownership and family commitments—those who choose to teach in regional communities should not be disadvantaged. Extending this initiative would provide meaningful financial relief, strengthen the appeal of rural teaching pathways, and play a practical role in addressing ongoing workforce gaps across small and remote schools.

A71. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate the Minister for Education and the Federal Treasurer to change the timing of debt indexation for study and training support loans.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The indexation of Higher Education Loans Program (HELP, or also known as HECS) and other study and training support loan debts has long been an issue for graduates. Although these loans have been promoted in the past as 'interest free', the loan has always had indexation applied at the rate of the current CPI (Consumer Price Index) or WPI (Wages Price Index) (whichever is lower) at the time of indexation, 1 June. A recommendation from the Australian Universities Accord (2024) is to change the timing of indexation. Once a graduate earns above the compulsory repayment threshold (currently \$69,258 in 2026-27), repayments are deducted from wages through the tax system and held by the government until the graduate lodges their tax return when the funds are then applied to reduce the debt. The total amount deducted from wages over the financial year is not applied to the loan until after the graduate lodges their tax return. The unjust issue is that indexation is applied to the debt on 1 June, which is before the repayments have been applied to the loan, disregarding the fact that the graduate has had repayments deducted from their wages over the previous 11 months. This is not like a bank loan which applies the repayments immediately.

We understand that this is a complex system for the tax office to administer, but we feel that the timing of the indexation of the debt is unfair. Applying indexation after the lump sum repayment has been applied to the debt would be far more equitable.

This could be remedied by indexation being applied 1 November each year after the Individual Tax Return due date of 31 October. If this indexation date was adopted, any repayments deducted from wages during the previous tax year would be included in the balance of the student loan debt before indexation is calculated and applied.

Youth Allowance (YA)**A72. North West Branch (SA)**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Social Services and Services Australia to amend the Youth Allowance guidelines to enable eligible tertiary students to retain their qualification for Youth Allowance payments throughout the course of their degree."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Students in receipt of an eligible Commonwealth income support payment (ISP) such as Youth Allowance or Austudy are eligible to receive the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) and are not subject to the Need to Work Income Test. However, there are occasions where students work and earn too much to receive actual weekly income support payments but continue to keep reporting to Centrelink. This reporting enables their information to remain in the system and able to receive the CPP when they attend their mandatory university placements and must forgo paid employment.

However, if the Youth Allowance payment reduces to \$0 for 12 consecutive fortnights due to income, eligibility for Youth Allowance is cancelled and a new application must be submitted. No information is rolled over.

Student income is often casual in nature and can fluctuate greatly over a number of weeks. If the qualification for Youth Allowance and the continued reporting to Centrelink could extend to the duration of a student's degree, it would assist in stream lining the process for Youth Allowance and the CPP.



A73. Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) request the Federal Government to change the eligibility criteria for Independent Youth Allowance, so that those rural and remote students who choose to save or invest their earnings during the working period prior to attending University are not disadvantaged by the Liquid Assets criteria.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Students who choose to save their earnings during their gap year should not be disadvantaged due to the Liquid Asset Waiting Period. Many students work hard to save their earnings but instead must use their savings to support themselves and pay rent while attending university until the Liquid Asset Waiting period is fulfilled.

The Liquid Asset Waiting Period applies if the applicant has more than \$5500 in liquid assets prior to application for Youth Allowance and means waiting a number of weeks based on the amount of liquid assets. It tapers from \$5500 to \$11,500 meaning there may be a maximum 13 week waiting period before Youth Allowance payments begin.

Fellow students who earn the amount required to be considered eligible for Independent Youth Allowance but spend everything they earn, are eligible for the allowance straight away but those who have saved and have money in the bank are not eligible for the allowance until after the required waiting period, and therefore not eligible for Rent Assistance either until payments begin.

Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP)

A74. Port Augusta Branch (SA)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate for the Federal Government to increase the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) to reflect the current cost of living and the additional expenses incurred by rural and remote students undertaking mandatory placements as part of their tertiary studies.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Commonwealth Prac Payment provides financial support to eligible students undertaking mandatory placements in a bachelor's or master's degree in teaching, nursing, midwifery and social work. While this payment is welcomed, the current rate does not adequately reflect the cost of living or the financial pressures faced by students undertaking compulsory placements.

Many placements extend for six weeks or longer, during which time students are often unable to undertake paid employment due to the full-time nature of their placement commitments. This loss of income can place significant financial strain on students who must continue to meet everyday living expenses while receiving limited financial support. For students from rural and remote areas, the cost of fuel and travel associated with attending placements can add a further financial burden. Combined with increasing costs for accommodation, food, utilities and other essential expenses, the current payment is insufficient to offset the financial impact of undertaking mandatory placements.

Increasing the CPP to better align with the current cost of living would provide meaningful support to students completing compulsory placements and ensure that financial pressures do not become a barrier to successfully completing their studies and entering the workforce.

Other

A75. Louth Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the University Council of Deans to continue to look at the way credits and advance standings could be transferred from one academic transcript to another when a rural and remote student moves from one university to another.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Louth ICPA asks for this because we believe the circumstance is unfair when a university degree course unit has been completed and passed that a student is required to re-do and pay again for that same unit.

When degree courses are certified by DoE, we feel the lack of unit acknowledgment is an inequitable deterrent for students’ success in achieving qualifications; requiring more time to complete (increased accommodation costs) plus having to pay twice for the unit.

A76. Port Augusta Branch (SA)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate for the Federal Government to establish a rental assistance program for rural and remote university students that is not means-tested against parental income and provides support while undertaking full-time study.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Students from rural and remote areas face additional financial pressures, as they are frequently required to relocate significant distances from home to attend university. Many families incur substantial accommodation costs while also maintaining the family home, creating a considerable financial burden. The current system’s reliance on parental income can disadvantage students whose families may not be in a position to provide ongoing financial support, despite being assessed as having the capacity to do so. Many agriculture focused families hold substantial assets but have limited cash flow.

Given these challenges, there is a strong case for establishing a dedicated rural and remote university student rent assistance program that is independent of parental income and assets. Such a program would better recognise the unavoidable costs faced by students who must live away from home to access tertiary education and would provide greater financial security while they complete their studies. It would also support students’ wellbeing by reducing financial stress and helping them remain connected to their families and communities throughout their education.

A77. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

“That ICPA Australia advocate to the Australian Government Department of Education to expand the eligibility criteria of the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship Program to allow students who are currently enrolled in teaching degrees to apply for a part-scholarship for the remainder of their study.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship Program is currently only available to students who are commencing their studies in the first semester of the year in which they apply. This excludes students who are already part way through their teaching degree or those studying part time.

Given the significant and ongoing teacher shortage across Australia, particularly in regional, rural, and remote communities there is a need to support all future teachers, not only those at the beginning of their studies. Students already enrolled in a teaching degree face

financial pressures that may delay completion or force them to withdraw altogether.

Expanding the program to allow enrolled and part-time students to access a part-scholarship for the remainder of their study would provide meaningful financial support, improve study retention and help increase the number of qualified teachers entering the Australian workforce.

Case study

My family and I manage a remote cattle station, approximately 6.5 hours south of Alice Springs. As well as managing the station, I act as a Home Tutor, supervising my younger child as they complete their distance education through the Alice Springs School of the Air. At the beginning of 2026, I commenced a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) in an online, part-time capacity, the only capacity I currently have to be able to complete study around work and schooling commitments. With my younger child heading off to join their older sibling at boarding school in a couple of years' time, I intend to increase my study load to full-time. Under the current eligibility criteria of the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship Program, I am currently unable to apply due to my part-time study load. I will also be unable to apply for this in the future, as, when I switch to a full-time study load, I will be about halfway through my degree, not at the very beginning as the eligibility criteria currently requires. While I am thankful for the fact that my degree falls under the Commonwealth Supported Place subsidy, the cost of studying is still quite prohibitive, and this will be exacerbated when swapping to a full-time study load. Completing placement later in my studies will require me to take weeks off work, travel a significant distance, and pay for accommodation for the duration of my placement period, due to having no potential placement locations within 150km of my home.

Remote students face a variety of extra costs due to living in remote locations, including extra materials such as printer ink and setting up a learning space, providing their own fast and reliable internet service to be able to attend lectures (often more expensive in remote areas than in urban locations), and travel and accommodation costs in regards to completing placements, attending face-to-face study, etc. Many remote students are likely to be seeking work in the remote locations where they live upon completion of their study, areas that often struggle to attract teachers. By supporting remote students to be able to complete their studies, you would be supporting remote areas in being able to retain teachers who have community and family connections.

A78. Dirranbandi Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to relevant departments and government bodies to establish a dedicated 'rural and remote assessment team' within Centrelink to ensure consistent, informed and equitable decision-making for financial assistance programs, including the Tertiary Access Payment, AIC etc. by requiring assessors to have appropriate understanding of rural and remote circumstances and applying clear, consistent criteria for eligibility, or a team who can sort through any 'grey areas' that are specific to rural and remote areas."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Families in rural and remote areas are currently experiencing inconsistent and inequitable outcomes when accessing Centrelink-administered financial assistance, due to a lack of understanding of rural contexts and inconsistent interpretation of eligibility criteria. Cases have arisen where applications within the same family receive different outcomes—such as one child being deemed eligible for the Tertiary Access Payment while another is not—based solely on who assesses the application. This inconsistency creates confusion, financial strain, and a lack of confidence in the system. A dedicated 'rural and remote assessment team', staffed by appropriately trained assessors, is essential to ensure fair,

transparent and consistent decisions that accurately reflect the unique circumstances of geographically isolated families and support equitable access to education.

A79. Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Government for funding to be sought to further encourage and incentivise experienced teachers to take up contract and long term rural, regional and remote positions.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Students from rural, regional, and remote areas are facing disruptions to their education due to teacher shortages. Teacher retention in rural areas is low and even in those schools where teachers are committed long term their workload is far greater than the metropolitan counterparts due to the lack of colleagues, relief teachers and/ or support staff.

It is not uncommon for small schools to have only two classroom teachers across all year levels and minimal funding for additional support staff such as EAs or Library Technicians. When one teacher is away from the classroom the other teacher must take the whole school and/or EAs are being asked to step in and take classes. In some cases teachers are being called in without completing their training which effects the students and teacher alike.

The states all have varying incentives to encourage teachers to rural schools however it has been our experience that these incentives are not always well advertised and targeted at graduates and not experienced teachers. As well as federal funding we suggest the federal government run an advertising campaign to get teachers into the bush pitched at experienced teachers and their families.

Additional Incentives to those already on offer could include.

- Significant Financial incentives for short term or contract work in the regions.
- Increased childcare rebates for teachers with young families wanting to take up rural positions.
- Housing/mortgage allowances
- Clear potential for permanency.
- Increased potential for permanency in the city after completing a set amount of time in a rural, regional or remote schools.

A80. Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate that the Federal Government through Services Australia recognises the adversity geographically isolated students face when living away from the family home to access a tertiary education, by reviewing and simplifying criteria for assistance.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Geographically Isolated students have already typically endured 6 years boarding away from home. They are expected to live independently to attend higher educational institutions, this should be recognised.

We suggest the following changes to criteria:

- allowing geographically isolated students to automatically access Youth Allowance & Rent Assistance as independents so that students can focus on the task at hand and complete their studies without having to work several part-time jobs to earn enough to establish themselves as Independent.
- increase the amount that they can save for going to University. - The current limits are discouraging students from saving.

- eligibility for Assistance for Isolated Children and BAHA to carry over into Tertiary Studies if commenced immediately following School - or eligibility for these payments automatically qualifies students for Youth Allowance and Rent Assistance.

TRAINING

A81. Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) request the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to amend guidelines, so that the Apprentice Connect Australia Providers (ACAP) ensure rural and remote Australian Apprentices are fully supported by each provider and are recognised as a Service Specialisation within the 2024-2026 AASN contract guidelines.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Recognition that ‘rural and remote’ are a separate specialisation group is required to ensure appropriate assistance is provided so those in need have equity of access to post school qualifications. Bourke Branch appreciates that this has been somewhat addressed in the 2024 review of non-financial support for apprentices - where the four Key Client Groups to be supported by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations contracted ACAP’s are:

- Australian Apprentices in Remote Australia, along with
- Women in Male Dominated Trades,
- First Nation Australian Apprentices,
- Australian Apprentices with Disability

Although the guidelines contain positive changes the latest contract for ACAP’s has not placed Australian Apprentices in Remote Australia as a Service Specialisation, as it has for the other three Key Client Groups (section 2.3 of Request for Tenders for ACAP 2024-6 document page 29).

Still operating under the 2024 contracts ACAP’s are no longer the provider of the full non-financial support system for Australian Apprentices as was previously the case. Within this structure our understanding is that if an Apprentice sits within the geographic area the ACAP has been contracted to cover, yet may have Apprentices who have needs outside of the ACAP’s contracted Specialisations, who is supporting these apprentices who require the specialist support as Rural and Remote? Should an apprentice require specialist support, it is concerning that if their ACAP is not contracted to offer this support they may either not receive the identified supports or will have to navigate contact and assistance from a second ACAP.

A82. Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) request the Minister for Skills and Training and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to extend the data collected on a commencing Australian Apprentices’ in the Apprentice Data Management System (ADMS) to identify those who relocate from rural and remote regions to engage in trade training.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Many rural and remote students undertake an Australian Apprenticeship without the Apprentice Connect Australia Provider (ACAP), Employer or Registered Training Organisation (RTO) knowing they have relocated away from family and supports to engage

in employment as a trainee or apprentice and Vocational Education and Training (VET). To add the apprentices' home address as well as the residential address of the Australian Apprentice to ADMS, and to add a Relocation Required option, would allow all stakeholders to see the distance many employees/apprentices have relocated and may also still be travelling considerable distance for the relevant VET delivery.

On the current NSW Apprenticeship/Traineeship – Training Plans there are multiple address options for the Employer, and also for the Training Details (including mode of delivery and training address) but only one address format for the Apprentice requiring a Street Address and Suburb.

Once collected, the relocation data could be part of the financial and non-financial support process, for organisations who collate Apprenticeship data to inform policy and practices in the apprenticeship space. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) could utilise the additional data to build a more informative profile on those who relocate to undertake an apprenticeship – our branch understands that they currently categorise apprentices' as rural and remote through the data they do have which is the address of the employer.

A83. Bourke Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations for financial supports to Australian Apprentices' who relocate from rural and remote regions to commence their employment and trade training.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The process of relocating away from family and community support, often for the first time is a financially and emotionally difficult time for young apprentices. These young people need to set up a place of residence, live independently, including undertaking activities such as shopping and household management for the first time while also commencing a new occupation. Coupled with this, the on-going living costs and that apprentices are on very low wages, often with minimal financial assistance. Trade pathways are often avoided due to the financial barriers that prevent many rural and remotes students from commencing or continuing along this pathway. It was disheartening for a branch family to learn late last year that their son was overlooked for an apprentice position as the employers knew the relocation requirements would make it too difficult for him to sustain the apprenticeship. Access supports such as Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) are available to Tertiary Students to offset the high costs of relocation; despite ICPA(Aust) requests to the relevant department and ministers Australian Apprentices remain ineligible under the current criteria.

Case Study – Bourke Branch

My son lives in remote NSW 125km from Bourke in far western NSW. Upon completion of his HSC last year, he decided to apply for apprenticeships. He applied for an apprenticeship based in Wollongong where he had a successful first interview. He was not given a second interview and upon enquiring as to how to improve for his next application he was told that he was a very strong candidate, but they were concerned about his ability to relocate so far from home due to affordability, as the opportunity was 947km away from home.

He successfully gained an apprenticeship in Dubbo which is 500km from our home. He would not have been able to do this financially except that we have a small block of land 20km from Dubbo that has a relocatable basic building on it where he can live. There are no services connected (power or town water). He spends \$120 per week on fuel for a generator to get power and by the time he pays \$100 for fuel for his ute to go to work and food for the week, there is very little left over. Due to low rainfall, 2 weeks ago he ran out of rainwater, and we had to get a truck in, to resupply water (a cost of \$450 which we paid for as he could not afford to).

He has also had the costs of buying tools for his apprenticeship and has spent over \$2500



in the first 3 months on them. He does not have Internet and has limited mobile service where he is located. We have helped through buying household appliances and furnishings to make his situation more comfortable, however cannot afford to support him more than this due to still having twins in Year 8 away at boarding school that we are paying for. There is no way he could have afforded to relocate to Dubbo and rent commercially and still have enough money to buy the basics.

He luckily has a very good employer who helped him get to medical treatment last week when he was sick and also paid for his medication that he needed.

He has met with his ASSN but has had no information about applying for LAFHA despite them being told of his home address. He has only been informed of Apprentice Training Support Payments.

MISCELLANEOUS

A84. New South Wales State Council

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate for a national working with children check”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The current system of state-based Working With Children Check (WWCC) is problematic and difficult to manage for people working as, or employing, educators, particularly in NSW, as we are sandwiched between several borders. A National WWCC would eliminate duplication and errors in the administration of this important accreditation.

Trying to qualify for a WWCC in multiple state jurisdictions across Australia is cumbersome and difficult. Educators in border areas who live in other states find it difficult to get a NSW WWCC as they don't have a registered address in NSW and are required to attend a Service NSW location in person. A valid WWCC is necessary when working in school canteens and sports days, or volunteering in a child supervision role at public schools.

A85. Midwest Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) must progress with recurring payments as rolling membership has created an onerous process for branches.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The motion to move to rolling memberships, allowing for recurring membership payments, was carried at Federal Conference in 2023. However, Branches are yet to see the intended benefits.

Recurring payments have not been implemented due to technical limitations. As a result, rolling memberships now mean that memberships fall due at any point throughout the year. This has created additional work for Branches, particularly in following up overdue memberships and responding to member uncertainty.

This is a significant issue, as volunteer burnout is increasing. The disruption to the email reminder process in February highlighted the impact that membership administration has at Branch level. Three months after this issue occurred, the Branch is still dealing with confusion from members about their membership status.

Given the technical problems remain unresolved three years after the motion was carried, the Midwest Branch is considering opting out of the Federal membership model and returning to manual memberships. This would allow memberships to be aligned with our reporting period, being the calendar year, and would remove inefficiencies that are increasing the administrative workload.

Once the Federal technical challenges are resolved, we would support a staggered state-

by-state rollout of the new system. This would allow for improved testing, clearer communication, and a smoother transition for Branches and members.

It must be acknowledged that the current Branch workload is onerous while membership payments are not recurring. Recurring payments need to be implemented as the default, with an option for members to opt out.

A86. Boulia-Bedourie-Birdsville Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for the Australian Government to formally recognise, within the National Education Strategy, the unique educational needs of rural and remote children identified under the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme as a key target group. This recognition should ensure equitable financial support for all geographically isolated students, regardless of their eligibility pathway.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Students identified within the AIC Scheme face unique educational challenges because of geographic isolation and should be afforded the same recognition and consideration as other key target groups, including ABSTUDY recipients, international students and students with disability.

Rural and remote families often incur significant additional costs to access educational opportunities that are readily available to metropolitan students. These costs may include travel, boarding, distance education support and supervision arrangements. Despite these challenges, geographically isolated students are not consistently recognised as a distinct cohort within national education policy frameworks.

Formal recognition of rural and remote students within the National Education Strategy would acknowledge the barriers they face and support the development of policies and funding arrangements that promote equitable educational outcomes for all Australian students, regardless of where they live.

A87. Boulia-Bedourie-Birdsville Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for the Australian Government to implement consistent, transparent and timely processing of all allowances under the AIC Scheme, including travel assistance, distance education support, remuneration for classroom supervisors, and both basic and additional boarding allowances.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Families accessing the AIC Scheme are often required to cover substantial upfront expenses, particularly for student travel. These costs can be significant in rural and remote areas where distances are vast, and transport options are limited. Delays in reimbursement place additional financial pressure on families who are already managing the considerable costs associated with educating children away from home.

The absence of a consistent and timely reimbursement process reduces confidence in the scheme and can act as a barrier to accessing education. Establishing clear, transparent and reliable processing timeframes would provide families with greater certainty and financial stability.

One member reported waiting almost nine months for reimbursement of travel expenses. It was only after contacting her local Federal Member of Parliament that the matter was escalated to the complaints management department. Following this intervention, reimbursement was received within three weeks. This experience highlights the need for improved accountability and service standards within the scheme.

ICPA Australia therefore calls on the Federal Government to implement a standard maximum processing timeframe of six (6) weeks for travel reimbursement claims and to



ensure all AIC allowances are administered in a timely, transparent and consistent manner.



SUPPLEMENTARY MOTIONS

COMMUNICATIONS

S1 Belyando Mt Coolon Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocate to Telstra to ensure the transition timeline for the closure of the CAN Radio Network is extended, clearly communicated and adequately resourced to guarantee that all affected customers are successfully migrated to reliable, secure and future-ready telecommunications services, with no loss of access or service continuity for rural and remote users.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The CAN Radio Network is operating on ageing and increasingly unsupported technology that can no longer be reliably repaired or maintained. While its closure is inevitable, the current transition timeline raises significant concerns regarding whether it is sufficient to meet the needs of rural and remote customers, particularly our rural small schools and distance education classrooms who depend on these services.

Under the Universal Service Obligation, Telstra is required to ensure that Standard Telephone Services (STS) are reasonably accessible to all Australians on an equitable basis, regardless of location. This includes providing a reliable voice service, maintaining consistent connectivity and ensuring faults are rectified within reasonable timeframes.

Telstra has indicated that the CAN Radio Network exit may commence as early as April 2026, with full closure planned by 16 November 2027. However, as Queensland accounts for approximately half of all High-Capacity Radio Concentrator (HCRC) services nationally, meaning a significant proportion of affected customers are located in rural and remote areas of this state.

These regions face unique challenges, including limited connectivity alternatives, geographical isolation, infrastructure constraints and increased reliance on telecommunications for safety, education, business operations and emergency response. Transitioning such a large and dispersed user base within the proposed timeframe presents considerable risk.

A key concern is that replacement services may not be fully operational, resilient or capable of delivering continuous access at the point of changeover. In rural and remote environments, where power supply is often unreliable and dependent on generators or solar systems, any replacement service must be able to operate effectively during power outages. If the existing service is decommissioned before the replacement is fully installed, tested and capable of providing a 24/7 reliable service, this effectively results in a loss of service for the user such as our small schools and distance education classrooms.

Without a carefully managed, adequately resourced and potentially extended transition period, there is a real likelihood that customers will experience service gaps, reduced reliability or be left without a fit-for-purpose solution. This would represent a failure to meet equitable access obligations and would disproportionately impact rural and remote communities.

A transition of this scale must prioritise:

- Guaranteed continuity of service with no disconnections before replacement services are fully operational, independently powered where required, and capable of 24/7 reliability
- Access to solutions that are genuinely fit-for-purpose in remote conditions, including resilience during power outages
- Clear, consistent and proactive communication with all affected users
- Sufficient time for installation, testing and troubleshooting of replacement services
- Ongoing support for customers during and after the transition

Given the scale of reliance on HCRC services in Queensland, it is critical that the proposed timeline is reassessed to ensure it is realistic, achievable and does not disadvantage rural and remote Australians.

S2 Belyando Mt Coolon Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to Telstra to ensure that any replacement for the CAN Radio Network provides a reliable, fit-for-purpose telecommunications service with an appropriate and supported power solution, ensuring rural and remote customers maintain continuous access to essential communication services.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The closure of the CAN Radio Network is proceeding without a clearly demonstrated, like-for-like or better replacement that meets the needs of rural and remote users particularly, our rural small schools and distance education classrooms. A key concern is the lack of a practical and supported power solution for replacement technologies, with proposed services relying on mains power or customer-managed systems.

In many rural and remote areas, there are no alternative telecommunications options, such as mobile coverage, and schools and communities are heavily reliant on a single service for communication and safety. At the same time, power supply is often unreliable, with both scheduled and unscheduled outages occurring, and many properties dependent on generators or solar systems. Maintaining continuous power under these conditions is complex and costly. Telstra has stated that power supply is not their responsibility. However, without reliable power, telecommunications services cannot function. In these regions, phone services are a critical safety lifeline for staff and students, not a convenience. Replacing a service that has historically operated independently of mains power with one that relies on consistent power supply does not provide an equivalent level of service, as it introduces gaps in operation during outages.

The CAN Radio Network has historically provided resilience and continuity of service, including operation during power outages through supported backup arrangements. This has enabled consistent access to emergency communication and essential services. Consideration should be given to incorporating similar, supported power solutions such as solar or other fit-for-purpose alternatives into new technologies to ensure they deliver reliable, continuous service in remote conditions.

The current approach shifts both responsibility and cost onto customers, creating inequity and increasing the risk of service loss. Without reliable service and supported power solutions, rural and remote users including small schools and distance education classrooms face reduced connectivity, increased costs and potential gaps in emergency communication.

To ensure equitable access, replacement services must deliver reliable coverage in remote conditions, include a fit-for-purpose power solution and provide a level of service equal to or better than the existing network.



DISTANCE EDUCATION

Remuneration for Isolated Classroom Supervisors (RICS)

S3 ICPA Federal Council

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Education and government bodies for the Remuneration of Isolated Classroom Supervisors (RICS), progressing the three options identified through the RICS roundtable discussions:

- **payment of a wage**
- **provision of a subsidy through a new program**
- **an additional Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) subsidy."**

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Two national roundtable meetings were hosted by the Regional Education Commissioner, Ms Fiona Nash with state and territory education departments, ICPA representatives and a range of key stakeholders to examine options for remunerating Isolated Classroom Supervisors (also referred to as home tutors).

Distance Education school policies across Australia require a classroom supervisor to be present to support a child or children undertaking their education through Distance Education. Despite this being an essential requirement for student participation and educational outcomes, the role is currently undertaken without remuneration, whether by way of a wage or subsidy.

Following extensive discussion at the roundtables, three possible remuneration pathways were identified:

- payment of a wage by state or territory education departments (such as a School Learning Support Officer (SLSO) wage or equivalent)
- provision of a subsidy through a new dedicated program (separate from the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme)
- an additional Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) subsidy paid directly to the classroom supervisor

Subsequent discussions with Federal Councillors and the Regional Education Commissioner, Fiona Nash, reinforced the need to present these options to government for consideration.

ICPA (Aust) seeks to work collaboratively with the Department of Education, government bodies and relevant stakeholders to determine the most practical and equitable approach to recognising and remunerating the vital role of Isolated Classroom Supervisors in supporting the education of GI students.

S4 Katherine Branch (NT)

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

Carried /Lost

Explanation:

Currently, the AIC provides an allowance for assistance for families with children who live in an isolated area, have a disability or have special health needs. The AIC Distance Education Allowance is currently approximately \$1,300 per child, per term for a child enrolled in compulsory schooling.

As a condition of enrolment to school of the air, it is a requirement for students to have adequate supervision and environment to undertake their studies. Although the AIC does alleviate a small part of the cost, the current allowance per child does not come close to the

actual cost borne by the families of Geographically Isolated students, many families employ a classroom supervisor, or one parent must take on the responsibility of supervising children in the Distance Education classroom. This means that the family must forgo an income or one parent must take a step back from their role in the family business.

ICPA (Aust) has been advocating for some time for RICS, without success. It is disappointing that the government have not come to the table with assisting our isolated families who have no other choice than to educate their children via distance education and we applaud and commend the ICPA on all levels for all their diligence in pursuing the ongoing issue.

The fact stands, while the AIC Distance Education Allowance does help, it does not even come close to subsidising the cost of isolated families undertaking compulsory government funded education. In the situation where a family or company employs a classroom supervisor, this needs to be a fulltime role. It is not practical for a classroom supervisor to be employed for the 40 weeks of school, due to the isolated location of many of the families it is incredibly expensive and impractical for a classroom supervisor to be 'sent away' during school holidays. To attract and retain a classroom supervisor, continuation of employment is required not only for the hours spent supervising in the school room, but also for preparation and set up of the schoolroom, submission of the students work and keeping the area clean and tidy. Further to this the classroom supervisor must be provided with board and keep, annual leave and superannuation entitlements in line with fair work guidelines. Further to the classroom supervisor's wage, internet must be installed and maintained, classroom furniture and resources must be provided, which are all out of pocket expenses for the families.

A substantial increase to the AIC needs to be considered and then implemented in order to support these families. Many young families leave remote Australia because they simply cannot afford the huge costs incurred in the pursuit of educating their children via distance education, further to this we run the risk of the businesses potentially overlooking families when considering employment options because it simply costs so much, and there is little relief provided to support these businesses.

Case Study

Family a) Three children in the classroom and parents employ a full-time classroom supervisor. Children are enrolled in Katherine School of the Air. The classroom supervisor has qualifications in Childcare.

Annual Costs for Family (a)	
Home Tutors (HT) Annual Salary	\$66,300
HT Superannuation	\$7,624
Total	<u>\$73,924</u>
HT Board & Keep (Annually) cost to the employee	\$8,004
School Fees & Laptop Hire \$100 p/child	\$300
Resources & Uniforms p/child \$300 p/child	\$900
Internet plan (annually)	\$1,668
Travel & Accommodation 4 Annual Trips (4 x 5 nights)	\$8,500
Total	<u>\$19,372</u>
Plus, Enrolment and Start-up costs	
Enrolment Per Child	\$700
Internet Hardware	\$599



Table & Chairs Per Child	\$300	
Schoolrooms Supplies	\$600	

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION and CARE

S5 Longreach Branch (QLD)

"That ICPA (Aust) endorse working with The Future Care Project to establish robust data collection and analysis on early childhood education and care (ECEC) access across rural, regional and remote communities, including the hidden costs and impacts of informal care arrangements and to use that evidence base to advocate to the Australian Government for fit-for-purpose ECEC policy that meets the demonstrated needs of these communities."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Early childhood education and care policy, including the Child Care Subsidy framework, is set and funded at the federal level. Current government data measures participation in CCS-supported services, not unmet demand. This renders rural and regional and remote communities, where centre-based services are absent, statistically invisible in national funding and planning models.

Furthermore, the government does not measure or track the costs and impacts of informal care arrangements, the reliance on family, neighbours, nannies, and au pairs that rural and remote families use when no funded service exists. These arrangements carry real costs: lost workforce participation, forgone income and wellbeing impacts on rural families. Because they are invisible in the data, they are invisible in policy. The evidence base must capture and document these costs, which are the true measure of unmet demand in communities the current system fails to reach.

Without data that captures genuine unmet demand, including the cost of informal care families rely upon due to the market failure of mainstream CCS providers, federal policy cannot effectively reach thin markets. Flexible, CCS-eligible models, such as In-Home Care, are the care types best suited to serve dispersed populations, yet they remain under-supported in current frameworks.

This motion mirrors the approach endorsed by ICPA Queensland State Council and seeks to elevate it to the federal level, partnering with The Future Care Project to build an independent evidence base and convert it into targeted advocacy for policy reform and service delivery.

This motion asks federal ICPA to commit to two things. First, a partnership with The Future Care Project <https://thefuturecareproject.org.au/> to collect and analyse data that measures actual ECEC access and unmet demand in rural and remote communities, rather than relying on existing supply-side metrics that overlook them. Second, using that evidence to advocate to the federal government for fit-for-purpose policy, since all ECEC policy and funding sits at the Commonwealth level.

The data generated by ICPA members will feed into a central body of work undertaken by The Future Care Project, combining with data and information from other rural and remote communities facing the same barriers to ECEC. This makes the evidence base stronger and the argument more unified, driving a more coordinated push for genuine regional policy reform.

The outcome sought is a shift in how rural and remote childcare need is measured and funded: from a system that counts only existing services to one that recognises true demand, including the hidden cost families bear when forced into informal care due to market failure. That evidence base underpins ICPA's case for federal reform supporting flexible care models suited to thin markets.

In Home Care (IHC)

S6 Cunnamulla Branch (QLD)

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Minister for Early Childhood Education, as the Federal Government commences the ECEC Commission, that the IHC system be reformed to fit remote realities.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Where no other ECEC services are viable, IHC stands as the gateway to children’s development and parents’ workforce participation. The IHC system was designed as a catch-all to serve three distinct groups: complex needs, parents working non-standard hours, and geographic isolation. In trying to cater to all, it has failed to respond adequately to the specific realities of any.

Children in remote areas are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable with an ineffective ECEC system preventing children from accessing care or hindering the quality of care. Cunnamulla has 64% of children starting school developmentally vulnerable according to AEDC data and having increased by 16% between 2021 - 2024. These communities are also vulnerable with these parent’s juggling childcare with keeping vital sports, cultural activities and social connections alive through extensive volunteering.

Two Cunnamulla case studies, among many others, from the 2023 [Choiceless report](#) offer a window into the real-life experiences of these families — stories that reveal how starkly childcare needs differ from the city, and how the current system doesn’t meet them.

How can it be fixed?

The challenges are not new—and they are not unknown. Reviews by the Department of Education ([2023 IHC Review](#)) and the ACCC ([2023 Childcare Inquiry](#)), submissions by the ICPA and the Choiceless report by The Parenthood, have all recognised that a more tailored approach is overdue to consider the needs of the three cohorts which stands to benefit all three cohorts, not just isolated children. System change provides the opportunity to consider the core outcomes and the environment in which it will operate, implementing improvements that address challenges at their roots.

1. **Engage rural stakeholders:** As the Government considers the findings from the review and inquiry, it must improve stakeholder engagement. The challenges have been long term, and the childcare needs are complex in regional Australia. Remote families are solutions focused, understand their communities and can support good decision making. Their advocacy organisations are small and often volunteer run, relying on being given a seat at the table. This must not exclude their vital contribution to system reform. Inclusion of the ICPA should be a bare minimum.
2. **Move forward with recommendations to tailor the IHC system:** For agricultural families that are geographically isolated, the major challenges with IHC and their causes are discussed below.

Costs

High service provider fees (ineligible for CCS) are passed onto families in addition to the already higher “gap” between CCS and educator fees. **Costs can be reduced** by ensuring employment models, including the role of service providers, are designed to minimise or remove ambiguous, unnecessary, unclaimable fees, and additional costs (board, meals and travel) are addressed. Subsidies such as the worker retention payment must also be extended to include IHC, not just center-based care.



In 2023, IHC fees rose by \$25/day (compared to \$13/day for centre-based care and more than any other ECEC model), with out-of-pocket expenses around 25% higher (excluding food, board, and travel). This is compounded by few rural providers (ACCC) and costs like service provider fees not covered by the CCS.

In late 2025, costs rose further with the Government approving only a 2.39% increase to the IHC hourly rate cap while the actual increase will include a 3.5% educator wage increase (plus rising superannuation, insurance and payroll tax). One service provider also quoted a 4.5% increase to their systems like compliance and timesheet platforms as well as 2026 wage increases for educators, suggesting the rate cap would need to increase by \$17/hour (30%) to reflect the actual cost of safe, high-quality care. This provider stated, "These increases mean we are now forced to pass on higher fees to families.", citing support from reviews by ACCC, WWC, ACECQA and Dandolo.

Under the current IHC system, families must use a service provider to access CCS, despite providers charging fees that can exceed \$10,000 a year, offering limited transparency between fee structures, and ACCC reporting that many providers are not very profitable. While providers formally employ educators, rural families often handle recruitment, supervision, timesheets, accommodation and day-to-day management themselves. As many farming families already run businesses and manage staff, payroll and WHS obligations, they are well placed to directly employ educators. Allowing this could reduce costs for families, improve provider sustainability by refocusing their role on quality assurance, and lower overall childcare costs for government and families alike.

Administration

High administrative requirements do not consider the long-term stability but day-to-day variability of agricultural families in IHC. **Administrative burden can be reduced** by design of processes that match the realities of the cohorts, for farming families, minimal long-term change with day-to-day flexibility.

For farming families, home and work are one and the same, that is, the farm. Farming demands long hours and unpredictable work tied to weather, livestock and seasonal pressures like harvest and shearing, often requiring both parents to work at short notice. IHC must reflect this reality by providing flexible support that many families rely on until children leave for boarding school.

Previous IHC system development prioritised consistency, to the detriment of the three distinct cohorts. While the removal of mandatory quarterly reviews in 2025 is a welcome improvement, annual reviews still fail to reflect the stable, long-term needs of geographically isolated families.

Providers are also ill equipped to adapt to day-to-day flexibility required in agriculture, including changing hours, shared educators, and educators caring for their own children alongside others. These are practical efficiency measures, not misuse of the system. Implementing the 2023 IHC Review recommendation to increase administrative flexibility could reduce Government costs while improving access, predictability, and flexibility for families.

Workforce

Specific recruitment, skill and retention characteristics for educators in agricultural families are not considered by the IHC program, exacerbating workforce shortages.

Workforce attraction can improve through employment models more suited to the demographic of the workforce, eligibility requirements are considered to prioritise quality of care, realistic and reasonable work scenarios are considered such as sharing educators in remote settings, and training pathways exist for the relevant demographic such as remote study for working holiday makers.

The 2023 IHC Review noted workforce shortages as a major barrier to access, with challenges varying across cohorts. Agricultural families often rely on gap-year students or

working holiday makers, yet current eligibility and compliance requirements are impractical for remote settings and place greater value on formal qualifications than quality of care. Many providers also favour contractor arrangements to remain financially viable, despite young educators reporting concerns about being “handballed” the administrative burden and insecurity of this model. The recent introduction of mentored pathways for remote educators is a positive step, but further workforce growth could come through visa and remote training pathways aligned with IHC.

NFF and other agricultural advocacy bodies demonstrate the need for agricultural visas, and childcare needs should be considered as interlinked pillars for rural economic viability. Consistent with ECA’s call for place-based workforce solutions, reducing barriers to educator entry in undersupplied regions, is critical to ensuring rural families can access childcare.

Subsidy

Volatile farm income can leave families out of pocket. **Removing unpredictability from CCS income test** by using previous year’s income as per ATO management of farm income variability.

Variability of income for farming families is well acknowledged, with the taxation systems allowing for 5 year averaging to support a fairer assessment. The CCS is calculated in advance, however based on estimated annual income for the coming year. Estimating farm income is hugely challenging and inaccurate, meaning families can become ineligible after utilising the IHC system. Should this occur, families may have already paid over \$10,000 in fees they could have avoided had the eligibility system provided more certainty.

S7 Cunnamulla Branch (QLD):

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates that the Minister for Education and Minister for Early Childhood Education ensure rural, regional and remote is well consulted and engages with the ECEC commission, with special attention to IHC review and strategic, long term support for rural, regional and remote centres lacking consistent services and experiencing different challenges with childcare, even in centres, to metropolitan Australia.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Families living in rural, regional and remote Australia continue to face significant inequities in accessing reliable, affordable and appropriate Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services. Recently, the Federal Government committed to 3 Day Guarantee with the roll out in remote settings unclear. Similarly, Government support for wage increases for educators was not extended to the In Home Care (IHC) system, overlooking this cohort completely. The establishment of the ECEC Commission aims to strengthen and expand the sector nationally, but the challenges experienced outside metropolitan areas are often fundamentally different and require dedicated consideration.

Many rural and remote communities experience chronic workforce shortages, low population density, limited infrastructure, long travel distances and inconsistent service availability. In some locations, centres operate with reduced hours, cannot maintain staffing ratios, or close intermittently due to workforce constraints. In other areas, there are no centre-based services available at all, leaving families reliant on IHC, mobile services or informal arrangements in order to participate in employment, training and community life.

For geographically isolated families, childcare is not simply a workforce participation issue but an essential service that enables children to access early learning opportunities comparable to those available in metropolitan areas. Current policy settings and funding models are often designed around metropolitan service delivery and do not adequately account for the realities of operating services in small, dispersed or isolated communities where viability and

accessibility challenges are significantly greater.

Beyond childcare, ECEC services like playgroups, maternal health and childhood screening, are sporadic, lack coordination and are often absent. The funding for such programs is often short lived, contributing to the lack of continuity, loss of staff, and inability for families to easily know about and access the services. This has contributed to Cunnamulla facing years of continued increase in the number of children entering school developmentally vulnerable in more than one area.

We recognise the importance of the ongoing IHC review and broader ECEC reform process and believe it is essential that rural, regional and remote stakeholders are meaningfully consulted throughout the work of the ECEC Commission. Without direct engagement from families, service providers and communities in isolated areas, there is a risk that future reforms will fail to address the practical barriers faced by geographically isolated children and families.

S8 Katherine Branch (NT)

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

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

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

The reason for this is that there are often multiple families employed by and living in the same location in remote areas (for example pastoral stations, tourism and conservation operations). Due to the remote location all staff and the educator live at the same location. Allowing an educator to care for children from more than one family in these circumstances solves the practical problem of limited accommodation - accommodating more than one educator is likely to be difficult.

It also provides the opportunity for a greater range of people to be employed in these areas (including single parents) who would otherwise be unable to take these jobs as they wouldn't have access to childcare. By potentially increasing the number of children living at a location, all children will benefit from the social interaction.

Allowing an educator to care for their own children would also increase the range of people available as In-Home Carers in remote areas. It is extremely difficult to find appropriately skilled people willing to live in remote areas. Allowing someone with their own child to be care for other children at the same remote location would be of great benefit.

Example 1: A single mother applies for a station hand position. She is highly qualified and prior to becoming a mother had extensive experience working on remote cattle stations. The owner of the station she has applied to also has a small child and already employs an educator through IHC. There is suitable accommodation for the mother and child but not enough for another educator. By allowing that educator to also care for the station hand's child, the station hand gets a job for which she is qualified for (it is also difficult to find good station hands so expanding the pool of people who could take these jobs is important) and both children have access to good quality childcare and a playmate bringing valuable social interaction.

Example 2: A man applies for a station hand position on a remote cattle station. He and his partner have a toddler. There are no childcare facilities within 200km. The managers of the station also have a toddler. By allowing the employees partner to become the In-Home Carer (dependent on obtaining the relevant qualifications etc) the manager's child has access to high quality care, the manager(s) can concentrate on their jobs, the station hand is not separated from his partner and his partner has a fulfilling job.



The rules around Family Day Care provide a starting point for a structure to determine the appropriate number/age of children and how the CCS would work in this situation. Further consultation with families living in remote areas with young children would be required to refine these structures to ensure they are practical and suitable for their situation.

MISCELLANEOUS

S9 Eastern Districts Branch (WA)

“That ICPA (Aust) investigate options for a streamlined online membership portal that allows pro-rata memberships, automated renewal reminders with payment links, and branch executive access to current membership records.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

A streamlined membership system would reduce the administrative burden on volunteers, improve member retention, encourage new memberships throughout the year, and provide branches with accurate and accessible membership information.

S10 NSW/VIC Lone Members (NSW)

“That ICPA(Aust) advocate to the Ministers of Health, Disability & Aged Care and Social Services; along with the Department of Health and Services Australia for the age at which children have sole access to their Medicare records to be increased from 14 to 16 years.”

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Parents of children in rural and regional areas often face significant challenges when their children turn 14, the current age at which they gain sole access to their Medicare records.

In one example, a boarding family struggled to manage school immunisation records and medical correspondence while their daughter was seriously ill at school, highlighting the practical difficulties of remote management. The legal requirement for a 14-year-old to have total authority over their medical needs can create safety and logistical issues, as teenagers are generally **not developmentally ready to make complex health decisions independently**. Increasing the age of sole access to 16 would better align with developmental readiness and allow parents to support their children in managing health needs, particularly for rural families who often must coordinate care from a distance.

In another example, even when children are home from boarding school, the current system creates barriers for parents. A parent could not access their son’s immunisation details after he injured his hand on rusty wire during school holidays. The parent was not permitted to speak directly to Medicare and the child had to set himself up in myGov and request permissions — despite the parent being responsible for care. The parent was also unaware that the Medicare access age was 14, highlighting a systemic communication failure.

S11 South Australia State Council

“That Federal Council undertake a structured and transparent consultation process with members, Branches and State Councils before any revised Constitution is presented for adoption, including:

1. Purpose and Need for Change

Providing members with clear, plain-English information explaining why constitutional change is needed, what ICPA is seeking to achieve, including national registration and DGR status, and the expected benefits to the organisation and its members

2. Required and Optional Changes



Clearly identifying which changes are required by law or for registration purposes and the timeframe for those changes, which are recommended as good governance practice, and which are choices about how ICPA will be structured and governed in the future

3. Member Consultation

Providing members, Branches and State Councils with meaningful opportunities to ask questions, provide feedback and consider the practical impact of significant proposed changes before constitutional wording is finalised

4. Constitutional Review Working Group

Establishing a representative working group to assist with the review, with clear Terms of Reference outlining its role, membership and responsibilities, and how its recommendations and member feedback will be considered and responded to by Federal Council

5. Draft for Comment

Circulating any revised Constitution as a draft, together with a clear comparison to the current Constitution, allowing sufficient time for member consideration and feedback before a final version is presented for adoption."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

Members support the need to review and modernise the Constitution. However, the proposed changes are significant and members need to first understand the purpose of the changes, which changes are required and which are governance choices.

A structured consultation process will allow members to contribute meaningfully, assist Federal Council in understanding member expectations and help ensure any future Constitution is fit for purpose and reflects ICPA's unique member-driven and federated structure.

S12 Queensland State Council

"That ICPA (Aust) communicates and consults with members, branches and State Councils on any proposed constitutional changes over a minimum consultation period of twelve (12) months, providing opportunities for both face-to-face engagement at State Conferences and virtual consultation throughout the process. ICPA Australia will also provide a detailed comparison between the current Constitution and the proposed amendments, together with a clear explanation of the intended impact of those changes on all levels of membership across the organisation."

Carried/Lost

Explanation:

ICPA is widely recognised as a grassroots, volunteer-led organisation with a proud 55-year legacy. The strength of ICPA has always been its members, branches and State Councils, whose collective commitment has built a respected national organisation and a trusted voice for rural and remote education advocacy. The ICPA brand is respected throughout Australia and has played a significant role in creating opportunities for advocacy and advancing educational equity for rural and remote students.

While modernisation may be necessary to ensure the organisation remains effective and sustainable into the future, any significant constitutional changes must be carefully considered. Members need a clear understanding of what is changing, why the changes are being proposed, and how they may affect the structure, governance, efficiency, integrity, and outcomes of the organisation.

It is important that the benefits of any substantial proposed changes are clearly demonstrated and understood by members before decisions are made. Equally important is ensuring that any changes do not dilute the grassroots nature, values, and purpose of ICPA, nor compromise the advocacy focus that has underpinned the organisation's success for more than five decades.



The organisation has been built and sustained through the goodwill, commitment and financial support of members, communities and supporters who have contributed in good faith to advance equitable educational opportunities for rural and remote students. Members have a reasonable expectation that organisational resources will continue to be directed primarily towards advocacy outcomes and member services. Any proposed structural or constitutional changes should therefore clearly demonstrate how they will strengthen advocacy efforts, improve organisational effectiveness and deliver tangible benefits to members, rather than increasing administrative complexity or distancing decision-making from the grassroots membership.

This motion recognises that there is a clear difference between routine constitutional amendments required to maintain and improve the operation of the organisation, and major constitutional reforms that fundamentally alter the foundation upon which ICPA has been built. While routine updates may reasonably be considered within existing constitutional and AGM notification requirements, transformational changes demand a higher standard of consultation. When proposals have the potential to significantly change governance structures, representation, decision-making processes, organisational control or the relationship between members, branches, State Councils and Federal Council, consultation must be extensive, transparent, and accessible. Changes of this magnitude cannot be rushed or confined to processes that are not readily accessible to the majority of members. Members must be provided with adequate time, information, and opportunities for engagement to ensure any decision reflects informed consideration across the organisation.

A consultation period of at least twelve months is considered necessary to ensure meaningful engagement across the organisation. Given the geographic spread of members and the important role State Conferences play in facilitating discussion, the consultation process should include opportunities for face-to-face engagement at each State Conference as well as virtual forums and other communication channels. This approach will provide members, branches and State Councils with adequate time to consider proposed changes, seek clarification where required, and contribute informed feedback before any decisions are made.

S13 Western Australia State Council

“That Federal Council undertake a comprehensive constitutional review process that ensures members, Branches and State Councils are fully informed and meaningfully consulted prior to the adoption of any revised Constitution, including:

- 1. providing clear explanatory material outlining the purpose, legal necessity and practical effect of proposed constitutional changes, together with a comparison between the current and proposed Constitution;**
- 2. providing opportunities for member consultation over an appropriate period, including face-to-face and online engagement, and considering feedback prior to presenting a revised Constitution for adoption;**
- 3. establishing an appropriate mechanism, such as a Constitutional Review Working Group, with representation from State Councils and members with relevant governance expertise, to assist in reviewing proposed constitutional reforms; Review group, through a nomination process, should consist also of past federal presidents and/or life members.**
- 4. providing members with information regarding the legal, governance, financial and operational implications of the proposed reforms, including implementation costs, ongoing obligations and anticipated impacts on Branches, State Councils and volunteers;**
- 5. providing members with a financial breakdown of the past 2 years worth of professional service costs directly related to the creation of the recently proposed constitution and going forward, for constitution associated costs to be defined in their own right and not joined with media service costs;**



6. outlining the rationale, anticipated benefits and implications of pursuing Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status; and
7. ensuring future By-laws and substantive amendments are communicated to members and presented for ratification at the next appropriate general meeting.

Carried/Lost

Explanation

ICPA members support strong governance and recognise the need for constitutional review where appropriate. However, proposed constitutional reforms represent significant changes to the governance of the Association and should be accompanied by a transparent, well-communicated and consultative process. This motion seeks to ensure members have sufficient information and opportunity to understand, contribute to and support any future constitutional reforms. Good governance transparency is of the utmost importance to our membership-based organisation, which has been built upon by generations of people coming together from vast distances to enable the strength of rural communities to be heard.

WA state council also wishes to acknowledge the immense work already undertaken by ICPA volunteers across Australia and into the future the work that will be undertaken by volunteers at the time and place we are in now and those into the future that will need to work with a future constitution should one be adopted by the association members.

RULES OF DEBATE

The following Rules of Debate shall apply to all meetings of the Association.

1. Any member desiring to speak shall stand and address the Chair respectfully.
2. No member shall speak more than once to a question, except in explanation or reply.
3. A member who formally seconds a motion or amendment without making a speech may speak at a subsequent state of debate.
4. A reply shall be allowed only to the member who has moved a substantive motion.
5. No member shall use offensive or unbecoming words.
6. The mover of a motion shall not speak more than **three** minutes nor any other speaker more than **two** minutes.
7. No speaker shall digress from the subject under discussion and imputations of improper motions and all personal reflections on members shall be deemed disorderly.
8. Whenever the chair rises during the debate the member then speaking shall resume their seat.
9. No member shall interrupt another while speaking, except on a point of order.
10. Upon a member raising a point of order the members then speaking shall sit down until it has been decided. The member rising to order shall state concisely the point of order, then the chair, without discussion, shall give their ruling.
11. It shall be competent for any member to move a motion of dissent from the Chair's ruling. The mover of the motion of dissent shall concisely state his point. The seconder and Chair may speak only to such motion.
12. A member may move the adjournment of debate. If the motion be resolved in the negative the mover shall not be allowed to speak again on the question under debate. If the motion be resolved in the affirmative the mover shall have the right of resuming the debate. No member shall move the adjournment at the end of their speech.
13. At any time during debate any member, except any person who has spoken for or against the motion may, without notice, move "that the question now be put and such motion being duly seconded, shall be put without debate." If carried, the mover of the original motion may then reply and the question shall be put to vote; if lost the debate shall proceed.
14. An amendment may be moved on an original motion. The Chair shall put the amendment to the meeting first, and, if carried, it shall be declared to embody the decision of the meeting, superseding the motion. When the amendment has been decided a further amendment may be moved, which, if carried, shall in turn supersede the motion.

**THE MOVER AND SECONDER OF ANY MOTION OR OF
AN AMENDMENT MAY SPEAK TO ANY FOLLOWING
AMENDMENT.**

If there is no amendment carried, the original motion shall be put after the mover has replied.

15. The Chair shall refuse to receive any amendment which is a direct negative or which does not preserve the substance of the original motion.
16. All matters not covered by these rules of procedure shall be according to David Julian Price's 'Meeting Procedure Made Easy'.



ACRONYMS

Acronym	Meaning
AACUHO	Australasian Association of Colleges & University Housing Officers, Inc.
AADES	Australasian Association of Distance Education Schools
AASS	Australian Apprenticeship Support Services
AATSP	Australian Apprentice Training Support Payment
ABARE	Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics
ABN	Australian Business Number
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABSA	Australian Boarding Schools Association
ACAP	Apprentice Connection Australian Provider
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACCAN	Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACMA	Australian Communications and Media Authority
ACSF	Australian Core Skills Framework
ACSSO	Australian Council of State School Organisations
ADMS	Apprenticeships Data Management System
ADSL	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line
AHPPC	Australian Health Protection Principal Committee
AHWISE	Aussie Helpers Volunteers for Isolated Students' Education (Qld,
AIC	Assistance for Isolated Children
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
AM	Member of the Order of Australia
APC	Australian Parents Council
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
AVST	Alternative Voice Service Trials
B4BA	Broadband for the Bush Alliance
BAHA	Boarding Away From Home Allowance (Western Australia State Allowance)
BBF	Budget Based Funding
BIRRR	Better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia
BLM	Branch Life Member
CCCF	Community Child Care Fund
CCF	Consumer Consultative Forum
CCS	Child Care Subsidy
CEF	Country Education Foundation of Australia
CM	Corporate Membership
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CRISA	Coalition of Regional Independent Schools



CRSP	Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program
CSC	Conspicuous Service Cross (Australia)
CSG	Customer Service Guarantee
CTC	Capacity to Contribute
CUC	Country Universities Centre
D2D	Direct to Device
DE	Distance Education DoE Department of Education
DETA	Distance Education Teaching Allowance
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DH4B	Digital Health for the Bush
DMI	Direct Measure of Income
DSS	Department of Social Services
DTC	Direct to Cell
DTH	Direct to Handset
ECA	Early Childhood Australia
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECEI	Early Childhood Early Intervention
ECT	Early Childhood Teacher
EMM	Education Ministers' Meeting
ESA	Education Services Australia
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
FBT	Fringe Benefits Tax
FLM	Federal Life Member
FRRR	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
FTB	Family Tax Benefit
FTTN	Fibre to the Node
FUP	Fair Use Policy
GEO	Geostationary Equatorial Orbit
GIDE	Geographically Isolated Distance Education
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HCRC	High-Capacity Radio Concentrator
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HELP	Higher Education Loan Program
HEP	Higher Education Provider
HEPPP	Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
ICPA	Isolated Children's Parents' Association
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDA	Individual Disability Allocation
IDC	Inter-Departmental Committee
IEBA	Indigenous Education & Boarding Australia
IEU	Independent Education Union of Australia
IHC	In Home Care
IRRRE	Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education
ISCA	Independent Schools Council of Australia
ISDN	Integrated Service Digital Network
KICS	Katherine Isolated Children's Services
LAFHA	Living Away From Home Allowance (Federal support for Apprentices)
LAFHAS	Living Away From Home Allowance Scheme (Qld Tuition Allowance)



LDC	Long Day Care
LEO	Low Earth Orbit
LLN	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
LM	Life Member
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
MBS	Medicare Benefits Schedule
MBSP	Mobile Black Spot Program
MOCR	Model of Critical Reflection
MSD	Mass Service Disruption
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy nbn National Broadband Network
NCCD	National Consistent Collection of Data
NCI	National Careers Institute
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NFF	National Farmers' Federation
NFRC	National Federation Reform Council
NGWL	Next G Wireless Link
NRHA	National Rural Health Alliance
NRHC	National Rural Health Commissioner
NSCP	National School Chaplaincy Program
NSS	nbn Satellite Support Scheme
NSWP	National Student Wellbeing Program
NTD	Network Termination Device
OAC	Open Access College (SA)
OAM	Medal of the Order of Australia
PACER	Parliament and Civics Education Rebate
PIEFA	Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia
QTAC	Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre
RAFS	Remote Area Families Service
RAMUS	Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarship
RAN	Telstra Regional Advisory Network
RASSS	Remote Air Service Subsidy Scheme RAISEducation Remote and Isolated Support in Education
RCP	Regional Connectivity Program
REVISE	Retired Educator Volunteers for Isolated Students Education (WA & SA)
RFDS	Royal Flying Doctor Service
RICE	Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise Inc. (SA)
RREAP	Rural and Remote Education Access Program (Qld)
RRESP	Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships Program
RRRCC	Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition
RSA	Rural Skills Australia
RTH	Regional Tech Hub
RTIRC	Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
RUC	Regional University Centre
SAPS	Stand Alone Power System
SCM	School Corporate Membership



SDE	School of Distance Education
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SIDE	School of Isolated and Distance Education (WA)
SLIK	School Leavers Information Kit
SLM	State Life Member
SOTA	School of the Air
SPERA	Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia
SRS	Schooling Resource Standard
SSBI	School Student Broadband Initiative
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
STM	Satellite to Mobile
STS	Standard Telephone Service
TAA	Tertiary Access Allowance
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAP	Tertiary Access Payment
TIO	Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman
TUSMA	Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency
UCA	University Colleges Australia
UOMO	Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation
UPS	Universal Power Supply
USG	Universal Service Guarantee
USO	Universal Services Obligation
VAST	Viewer Access Satellite Television
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETiS	Vocational Education and Training in School
VoIP	Voice over Internet Protocol
WHM	Working Holiday Maker program
WWCC	Working with Children Check or Card
YA	Youth Allowance



2026 Federal Council Agenda Motions