



**PORTFOLIO NAME: Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum**

**Portfolio Report**

*DATE: March 2026*

**SOTA**

The School of the Air Advisory Group met on 23 February 2026, bringing together Department of Education representatives, SOTA principals, parent representatives, and advocacy groups including ICPA WA and REVISE WA. The group acknowledged ICPA WA's foundational work in establishing the advisory body and confirmed the continuation of Esther Kerr's Network Principal role until June 2026. Key discussions focused on improving consistency of practice across SOTAs, clarifying the scope and influence of the advisory group, and progressing a clear, workable Terms of Reference.

A major focus was the suggested development of a consistent SOTA Model of Service, aligned with the Department's Quality Teaching Strategy. This model would aim to ensure that qualified teachers deliver the core curriculum through on-air lessons, while home tutors play a supportive role in reinforcing learning. Participants highlighted the need for explicit teaching in early literacy and numeracy, professional learning for teachers delivering online instruction, and clearer documentation outlining the roles and relationships between teachers, home tutors and principals. The importance of maintaining flexibility to meet the diverse needs of remote families was also emphasised.

**RICS**

During the 2025 ICPA Federal Conference held in Adelaide, updated terminology was formally adopted to recognise RICS (Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor). This change represents a significant step in improving the recognition and framing of financial support for geographically isolated education supervisors.

The term RICS will replace the previously used terminology of GIESS (Geographically Isolated Education Supervisors Subsidy) and DETA (Distance Education Teaching Allowance). While motions relating to GIESS and DETA have been presented at numerous ICPA conferences over the past 50 years, they have historically gained limited traction. Going forward, all branches are requested to ensure that the term RICS is used consistently in future motions and advocacy related to this area.

The adoption of the RICS terminology reflects a deliberate shift in emphasis. The previous term "DETA" referred specifically to an allowance, which constrained broader consideration of

alternative or enhanced payment structures. In contrast, RICS allows for a wider interpretation of potential remuneration mechanisms.

Additionally, the inclusion of the term “Supervisor” has been intentional, as it aligns with existing education policy language. This alignment strengthens the case for formal recognition of the role within established policy frameworks.

On 27 October, a virtual roundtable was convened with The Hon Fiona Nash, Regional Education Commissioner, to discuss options for potential payments to geographically isolated supervisors. The roundtable was well attended, with 23 participants representing ICPA Federal and State Associations, the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, the National Farmers’ Federation, and Distance Education Schools.

Contributions from ICPA representatives across jurisdictions strongly articulated the need for both recognition and remuneration in this space. Feedback from the session was constructive and positively received.

Following the roundtable, an options paper is currently being developed to explore viable approaches to recognising and remunerating RICS. There is clear consensus that formal recognition of RICS is essential. Ongoing work is focused on designing a model that is both effective and appropriately targeted to those affected. A 2<sup>nd</sup> Roundtable discussion is scheduled for the 18<sup>th</sup> of March.

**COUNCILLOR NAME:** *Lauren Lewis*

**DATE:** *March 2026*