

**DISTANCE EDUCATION PORTFOLIO
CONFERENCE REPORT – June 2023**

At the 2022 ICPA State Conference in Blackall, a total of 16 Distance Education motions were passed on the Conference floor. Topics included the flexible delivery of curriculum and streamlining and reducing the large number of online platforms being used across Distance Education Schools. Motions called for Home Tutor recognition, and an understanding of Geographically Isolated (GI) students, their home tutors and unique learning environments. Prioritising GI students' enrolments at Schools of Distance Education (SDE) and on-air grouping of GI students were a concern for families. Lastly, establishing an enrolment Management Plan for Distance Education students to attend other schools on a part time basis was presented.

During the year, the Distance Education portfolio has participated in reviews for Distance Education schooling. ICPA Qld has commented on the *Revised Draft Distance Education Enrolment and Fees Procedure* for the Department of Education and was also invited to provide input into the *Review of Virtual Education Services*. At every opportunity during these reviews, ICPA Qld has reiterated the importance of our Distance Education School for Geographically Isolated students. ICPA Qld has shared members' concerns around flexibility, appropriate class groupings of on-air students, and the prioritisation of students enrolled who have no other option for their schooling. ICPA Qld is delighted to see that some of our comments and suggestions have been incorporated into the reviews.

At last year's conference there were several motions around the prioritisation of GI students in Schools of Distance Education. As GI numbers within SDEs become a minority, parents are concerned the schools that were originally established for GI students are no longer serving their intended purpose. ICPA Qld raised this issue with the Director-General of Education, Michael De'Ath, as well as the State Schools Performance Department. We were informed that the GI students will always be the priority in SDEs. ICPA Qld reiterates this at every opportunity when meeting with the Department of Education. Only 16% of Distance Education enrolments across the state of Queensland are Geographically Isolated students. Flexible delivery of curriculum and understanding of the essential role the Home Tutor plays in GI schoolrooms was raised with the Department of Education and all relevant bodies. Flexibility and delivery are usually school-based issues and need to be raised with the principals at SDE schools. The critical role of the Home Tutor was also noted by the Department.

ICPA Qld further discussed the process of Distance Education students attending another local school on a regular part time basis. This practice has been around for a long time and is a benefit to both schools and students. ICPA Qld has worked with the Department of Education and the original pilot process that was in place called a *Flexible Arrangement*, is now a permanent procedure. Distance Education Principals have the template on hand and will need to share this with the partnering school. This process is in place to ensure mandatory reporting is achieved and appropriate resources are in place. ICPA Qld has received some incredibly positive feedback around students utilising this program. Although the Department of Education has this arrangement in place, participating schools must be agreeable and have the required resources available for this to occur.

The onsite accommodation closure issue (due to not meeting compliancy standards) at Distance Education Schools, led to students being unable to camp onsite. It was the topic of many motions presented at the 2021 conference. This issue has been high on ICPA Qld's priority list during

Delegations throughout the past two years and was raised with various stakeholders, including the Minister for Education. ICPA Qld was delighted when the Department of Education engaged the Infrastructure Division to implement projects to upgrade these facilities in order to meet compliancy standards. Most of the upgrade work has been completed or is nearing completion on most SDE campuses. Students have been excited to return to onsite camping in those schools where work has been completed.

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