

## ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



### 2021 FEDERAL CONFERENCE DISTANCE EDUCATION PORTFOLIO MOTIONS

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**A25. CONJOINED MOTION presented by:**

**CARRIED**

**Western Australia State Council (WA), Alice Springs Branch (NT), Katherine Branch (NT), Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA), North East Branch (SA)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Families and Social Services, the Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education, and the Federal Government, to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) in recognition of the role home tutors play in educating geographically isolated students via distance education.”

**Explanation Western Australia State Council (WA):**

For several years members across Australia have asked ICPA to lobby the Federal Government for a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA). WA State Council consider Federal Council is best placed to continue the lobby and would like to thank Council for its continued efforts in this area and for highlighting the hard work that home tutors throughout Australia undertake daily to provide an education for their students.

Due to their age, many children are reliant on home tutors to assist with their education. Home tutors are not considered teachers or education assistants. They are, however, accountable for the delivery of face-to-face educational support and supervision of students undertaking a compulsory government education program.

Children who access distance education rely on home tutors who are a necessity for equitable access to appropriate education. The DETA would assist in financially recognising the work of home tutors.

**Explanation Alice Springs Branch (NT):**

An introduction of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA), as financial recognition of the essential work a supervisor/tutor who is often the mother, performs in Distance Education classrooms would help alleviate the pressure placed on remote families whose only option is to home-school their children via Distance Education. In many cases the mother is unable to be a member of the workforce on the property, community or out station where they live due to the need for them to stay at home and teach their children. This in turns strips the family of a second income and places further financial pressure on those families who educate their children via distance education. If in the event the family employs a Home Tutor to deliver the distance education lessons to the children, they are effectively paying award wages for a child to receive a public education. This can amount a family paying a Home Tutor between \$25,000 to \$45,000 depending on salary / wage agreements. On top of the wage a Home Tutor is paid, they in many cases, home tutors are living with the family and have all food, board and other sundry expenses such as internet provided by the family.

**Explanation Katherine Branch (NT):**

Katherine Branch thanks ICPA (Aust) for your continuing pursuit of this motion and considers the Distance Education Resource Video to be a great resource illustrating the commitment of home tutors

to education and the challenges faced by families on distance education. For many young people living in remote regions, their only access to education is to study by distance education. It is clear that distance education provision is provided on the assumption that all children have ready access to a person able to deliver the program in the geographically isolated classroom. This person is the distance education tutor who must be available and able to provide the practical, day-to-day supervision and support required for the effective delivery of a distance education program. With the responsibility of the distance education tutor position often falling on the mother, fulfilling this position further compounds her workload. This can place increased pressure on other family members and may necessitate the employment of additional staff.

**Explanation Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA):**

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.

**Explanation North East Branch (SA):**

**Case Study:**

I lived and worked alongside my husband on our sheep station until my daughter began School of the Air lessons. When my daughter started school, we realised we had to employ someone else to either supervise in the school room or help on the station. As I am a qualified teacher - I took on the role of supervisor, and we employed a station hand. We were in the middle of a drought, paying an extra wage and additional expenses. Everything became more difficult with extra money going out - and not enough flowing back in. We made the difficult decision to split our family so our children could attend face-to-face school and I could earn a wage teaching again. A Distance Education Teaching Allowance would have made a significant difference to our family - and we would have been able to stay together.

**A26. Northern Territory State Council (NT)**

**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Federal Minister for Education tables, at a forthcoming Education Ministers Meeting, a national approach to financially assisting distance education tutors in their delivery of public education in geographically isolated home schoolrooms; and to provide outcomes of this meeting back to ICPA Australia.”

**Explanation:**

Australian, State and Territory government ministers responsible for education attend the Education Ministers Meeting (previously COAG/Education Council). In addition to early childhood education and care, international and higher education, the Education Ministers Meeting is a forum for collaboration and decision-making on school education.

In previous years, our motions have asked ICPA (Aust) to advocate for a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA), and we appreciate ICPA (Aust) continue to do this.

We also understand that in early 2020, the Federal Education Minister advised that lobby for a DETA should be directed to State Education Ministers.

NT State Council have gained the support of Northern Territory members to advocate to our State Education Minister for a DETA, however we believe that until there is willingness from all levels of government to recognise the value and necessity of distance education tutors in geographically isolated schoolrooms, our chances of individual success, state by state, are diminished.

In this motion we call for Australian, State and Territory government ministers to have a collaborative discussion, in a forum that has the collective power to bilaterally appreciate and agree that distance education tutors in geographically isolated schoolrooms are critical to the delivery of public education in rural & remote Australia, and indeed the cost of delivering this public service should be carried, or at least shared with government, not carried by the family alone.

**A27. Broken Hill Branch (NSW)**

**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Ministers and Departments to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) for geographically isolated students undertaking secondary education via Distance Education.”

**Explanation:**

As students reach secondary level of their schooling through distance education, their needs become greater from the primary years. Currently the AIC allowance is the same for secondary students studying via distance education as primary students. Once a student reaches year 7, more than likely they will be changing schools. This means extra cost of setting their student up for the school year. Changing schools encompasses new costs such as uniforms, appropriate furniture, educational resources, technology devices and access to satellite internet.

With students moving into secondary schooling through distance education will quite often mean that the school is a much further distance from their home. This makes travel and accommodation expenses higher for students to be able to attend residential events.

For example, many ex Broken Hill School of The Air students are continuing their education into secondary through Dubbo School Of Distance Education or ECalrossy. As students move on from BH SOTA, they need to return all furniture, resources, and access to satellite internet to the school. Another example are White Cliffs and other students who live in a town which has access to primary school but not secondary schooling. These students will be studying via distance education for the first time which means students need to be set up for their secondary schooling including new appropriate furniture, learning resources and new uniforms. With more demand on technology for student learning the families need to set up access to satellite internet and have the appropriate devices to carry out their schoolwork. Dubbo and Tamworth are a much greater distance from students in far west New South Wales which adds to travel and accommodation costs for students to have equal access to educational experiences at the student’s school.

All of these expenses are the responsibility of the student’s family.

**A28. Alice Springs Branch (NT)**

**WITHDRAWN**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Australian Government to reassess entry requirements and conditions for rural families claiming assistance for isolated children through Centrelink.”

**Explanation:** currently a lot of families trying to claim the assistance for isolated children are having to jump through hoops. Their applications are being denied because their cattle station/home is too close to town schools but in fact the property they live and work on can be over one million acres wide spread and could take the family hours to get to a town school when out mustering/fencing etc. Each case should be assessed individually, and decisions made based on each family's life and working conditions. At present it seems there is just generic criteria and it's either a yes or no answer. Once families have been accepted and are enrolled into a school of the air, they should automatically be accepted for isolated children assistance payments.

**A29. Mount Isa Branch of the Air (Qld)**

**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Minister of Social Services and relevant bodies the need to include in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance an eligibility criteria for students who travel with their families for the purpose of rural work to areas without access to schooling and live away from their listed permanent place of residence for the majority of the school year.”

**Explanation:**

Families who work as contractors and other roles in rural and remote areas often have their children with them in stock camps, fencing camps, yard building, etc.... where there is no school available to attend. As these families only work temporarily at each place of contract, and sometimes change locations frequently while they fulfil their work commitments, they do not have an address other than their permanent home address to list where they live and can be contacted. This permanent or home address is sometimes in a town/area far from where they are working and may actually have a school available, however, these children are not living there during the school year to access that school. As these families are contractors and move about, they cannot list the address of the properties where they are living and working as their address/place of residence for the purpose of applying for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance even though their children don't have access to a school while they are in the camps and are studying at times in some of the most remote places possible. These families do not live permanently at the properties where they are working and still need an address listed where they can receive their mail, application forms etc...and their 'home' address may not qualify for AIC even though the actual living situation of their students does. The AIC application process should take into consideration the situation that children in contracting camps face and offer a means for these families to show eligibility for the AIC when their students are in an area without access to a school for the majority of the school year.