

## ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



### 2022 FEDERAL CONFERENCE DISTANCE EDUCATION PORTFOLIO MOTIONS

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**A26. CONJOINED MOTION presented by:**

**CARRIED**

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

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

**Explanation Katherine Branch (NT):**

Katherine Branch thanks ICPA (Aust) for its 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 Western Australia State Council (WA):**

Recently, it was suggested that the States need to lobby for this at a State level. Whilst we absolutely support the intention of DETA and would embrace its introduction WA members feel that dealing with this at the State level could detract from the importance of such an allowance and potentially leave a situation where some States have a version of DETA and others do not.

The argument from the Federal Government is that the deliverance of education is a State's responsibility. That responsibility is being borne by the State through the deliverance of education utilising distance education and School of the Air.

Each eligible child, who boards away from home, is afforded a federal allowance (AIC) from the Federal Government to assist with the cost of boarding, as boarding is a necessity for those children to have equitable access to an appropriate education. Children who access distance education through School of the Air are no different. Instead of boarding away from the family home, these students, due to their age, are reliant on Home Tutors as a necessity for equitable access to an appropriate education.

We feel that Federal ICPA representing all States on this issue will, if DETA is adopted, support ICPA members fairly across Australia.

**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 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 to 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.

**A27. Northern Territory State Council (NT)**

**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Federal Minister for Education does table, 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 (Aust).”

**Explanation:**

We appreciate that work is in progress for this motion. We thank ICPA Federal Council for your efforts thus far and wish to advise that the issue is still relevant and ongoing.

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 that ICPA (Aust) continues to do this.

We also understand that in early 2020, the Federal Education Minister advised that the 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.

**A30. Alice Springs Branch (NT)****CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Australian Government to review and expand eligibility criteria for geographically isolated families claiming Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) through Centrelink to make it more accessible.”

**Explanation:**

Many families are having their Application for Assistance for Isolated Children denied because their place of residence is considered too close to a town school. When reviewing applications Centrelink is not taking into consideration the student’s or family’s individual set of circumstances. Perhaps the closest school isn’t the most appropriate due to the family’s work requirements, the student’s learning needs, location of where they reside, educational outcomes or safety. It is a decision that is not taken lightly and greatly impacts the family financially.

**A31. Western Australia State Council (WA)****CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to ensure that Schools of the Air (SOTAs) are not overlooked in the Governments’ *Student Wellbeing Boost*.”

**Explanation:**

The Labor Government announced pre-election that *‘every Australian school will benefit from Labor’s Student Wellbeing Boost, which will mean more school counsellors and psychologists, and extra funding for camps, excursions, as well as sporting and social activities that improve kids’ wellbeing. The average school will be \$20,000 better off this year’.*

When allocating funding to schools, it is imperative that SOTAs are included. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many camps, sporting activities and excursions have been cancelled. This has resulted in these students having either limited or no opportunity to engage with their teachers and peers in a face-to-face capacity. For students who are isolated by virtue of their geographical location, access to support services and the opportunity to reconnect with their peers is imperative for their mental health and wellbeing.