
Distance Education Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Distance Education Portfolio Report.

Firstly, I would like to thank Bourke ICPA convening committee for hosting such a special milestone in ICPA's History, your hard work is greatly appreciated!

Here we are at the 50th conference of ICPA, what an achievement! I would like to acknowledge all the past and present members and Councillors of ICPA for all their hard work, dedication, and time away from loved ones, which has guided to the place we are at now!

Around 12 months ago we gathered in Hay and were told that by this time next year Geographically Home Isolated Distance Education students would be connected onto the NBN Sky Muster system. This was music to our ears for many families who have been waiting for this day for years and struggling with the bad internet resulting in outdated technology and constant issues with the video conferencing platform REACT. Sadly, this has not happened to date, due to many things including COVID!

Since Hay, Bree and myself have had many meetings with the NSW Department of Education (DoE) regarding the roll out of the NBN Sky Muster. We would like to thank DoE for allowing us to have this interaction and communication around the roll out. During these meetings we have discussed a range technology issues and what we feel are requirements for an interactive home classroom. Sadly, with the restructure of DoE Mike Tom who was our main contact has been reassigned, and we would like to thank him for commitment and correspondence regarding not only NBN Sky Muster but other issues that come about throughout the year.

On a positive note, we are excited to have a new contact within the newly formed Regional, Rural and Remote Educational Policy Team. We have already been meeting with them regarding the NBN Sky Muster and hopefully our members got some answers at the Distance Education Meeting on Tuesday.

In terms of NBN Sky Muster, currently on the Optus network only Primary Students have access to DoE provided internet, but when we get this new system, it is going to also be available to Pre-schoolers and Secondary students. We will also be receiving upgrading desktop computers and the REACT program will be upgraded with more availability for student/teacher interactions. We are very excited about this addition and will continue to advocate for our Distance Education students to have more interactive home classrooms.

During 2021 we were contacted by a family as Distance Education Schools were unable to apply for Aurora College. We were informed that this was due to our Optus network being unable to support the program needed to attend lessons. Unfortunately, any children accepted for 2022 had to decline. Once Distance Education rolls out onto NBN Sky Muster these children will be able to have this opportunity.

We have had a few wins this year in the Distance Education space which include the introduction of the Preschool Drive Subsidy and the new roll out of Distance Education Preschool Programs into small schools such as in Ivanhoe.

On the 1st of November 2021 we celebrated the 2nd Geographically Isolated Distance Education (GIDE) Day in which ICPA Australia launched their Geographically Isolated Distance Education Campaign. They are hoping to raise awareness of the sacrifices families make to educate their children due to their isolated location.

I hope that everyone has an enjoyable conference at the Bourke 2022 “50 years on, 50 years strong!”

I will end my presentation with a video we created to celebrate the GIDE Day

Laura Stalley

Distance Education Portfolio