

ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



2023 FEDERAL CONFERENCE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE PORTFOLIO MOTIONS

Early Learning

A21. CONJOINED MOTION presented by: **CARRIED**
Western Australia State Council, Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA), Katherine Branch (NT), Wentworth Branch (NSW)

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate to the Federal Government for geographically isolated pre-compulsory school students enrolled in a registered distance education program to receive the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance where they meet other eligibility criteria.”

Explanation Western Australia State Council:

The AIC Distance Education (DE) Allowance is designed to assist families to set up and maintain the schoolroom. Currently, part-time distance education students are ineligible, therefore families enrolled in pre-compulsory programs must bear the costs. Most early learning programs require significantly more learning materials than that of older students studying at primary levels, with families having to provide learning resources for these students. If families received this Allowance, it would assist with the cost of suitable learning resources.

The majority of children who are enrolled in a pre-compulsory program are found to have better educational outcomes in later years, by forming these important foundations early on. Full-time or part-time, every child needs a schoolroom.

It is disappointing that the Federal Government continues to overlook this important Allowance each year.

Explanation Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA):

Under the current guidelines, part time distance education students are ineligible for the Distance Education (DE) component of the AIC Allowance, which means families enrolled in the 4-year-old programme must bear the costs of maintaining and setting up the classroom in that first year of schooling. This first year is often extremely costly for families.

The AIC DE Allowance is designed to assist families to set up and maintain the schoolroom. The schoolroom must be set up and maintained the day the child begins their education. Full-time or part time, the child needs a schoolroom.

Explanation Katherine Branch (NT):

The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program. From the website www.education.gov.au/universal-access-early-childhood-education “The Australian Government is providing funding certainty for preschool, having

committed \$453.1 million in the 2019-20 Budget to extend the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education until the end of 2020 ... This funding ensures that every child will continue to have access to a quality preschool program for 600 hours (15 hours a week) in the year before school. Universal Access [has] a focus on participation by Indigenous children, vulnerable and disadvantaged children in a range of settings in order to meet the needs of working families, and will be accessible to all Australian children, regardless of their location.”

If that was actually what was happening in rural and remote areas, this motion would be unnecessary! Setting up the classroom for distance education delivery for Pre-schoolers costs the same, if not more, as for the first year of compulsory schooling. The number of children accessing this pre-compulsory year by distance education is not huge. For example: Katherine School of the Air (KSA) has had a structured Pre-School Program in place for over 20 years and currently (Sem 1 2022) has 16 enrolments. On average KSA enrolments have been around 20-25 each year. The NT Government already recognises this cohort of students by making available half of the “NT Correspondence Site Allowance – Preschool” to assist all four-year-old children that are enrolled in pre-school with the Alice Springs and Katherine Schools of the Air.

Extending the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) distance education allowance to include these students will ensure greater and more equitable participation in Early Childhood Education by rural and remote students. Distance education students could benefit enormously from a minute portion of the billions of dollars allocated to early childhood education and care, including the funding intended to ensure the system is more accessible, affordable and fairer for families.

Explanation Wentworth Branch (NSW):

We congratulate many ministers both at the federal and state level for continuing to increase access to preschool, reduce costs and introduce additional access to this vital early education. Unfortunately, in remote areas this access will not be as accessible as it is for regional and city-based children.

In remote areas preschool comes at a huge cost to the family with either increased travel or the need for a dedicated supervisor. It is unrealistic to think that remote families can facilitate this increased preschool with no assistance.

Childcare

A22. Katherine Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education amend the In Home Care rules for families in remote areas to allow:

1. An educator to care for children from more than one family at the same time.
2. An educator to care for their own child whilst caring for children from another family(ies) under In Home Care.”

Explanation:

The reason for this is that there are often multiple families employed by and living in the same location in remote areas (for example pastoral stations, tourism and conservation operations). Due to the remote location all staff and the educator live at the same location. Allowing an educator to care for children from more than one family in these circumstances solves the practical problem of limited accommodation - accommodating more than one educator is likely to be difficult.

It also provides the opportunity for a greater range of people to be employed in these areas (including single parents) who would otherwise be unable to take these jobs as they wouldn't have access to

childcare. By potentially increasing the number of children living at a location, all children will benefit from the social interaction.

Allowing an educator to care for their own children would also increase the range of people available as In Home Carers in remote areas. It is extremely difficult to find appropriately skilled people willing to live in remote areas. Allowing someone with their own child to be care for other children at the same remote location would be of great benefit.

Example 1: A single mother applies for a station hand position. She is highly qualified and prior to becoming a mother had extensive experience working on remote cattle stations. The owner of the station she has applied to also has a small child and already employs an educator through IHC. There is suitable accommodation for the mother and child but not enough for another educator. By allowing that educator to also care for the station hand's child, the station hand gets a job for which she is qualified for (it is also difficult to find good station hands so expanding the pool of people who could take these jobs is important) and both children have access to good quality childcare and a playmate.

Example 2: a guy applies for a station hand position on a remote cattle station. He and his partner have a toddler. There are no childcare facilities within 200km. The managers of the station also have a toddler. By allowing the partner to become the In-Home Carer (dependent on obtaining the relevant qualifications etc) the manager's child has access to high quality care, the manager(s) can concentrate on their jobs, the station hand is not separated from his partner and his partner has a fulfilling job.

The rules around Family Day Care provide a starting point for a structure to determine the appropriate number/age of children and how the CCS would work in this situation. Further consultation with families living in remote areas with young children would be required to refine these structures to ensure they are practical and suitable for their situation.

A23. Mitchell-Tomoo/Dunkeld Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government and the Minister for Education to change the In Home Care (IHC) requirements for educators so that the enrolment in an education degree also makes them eligible for IHC positions in geographically isolated areas."

Explanation:

Families in geographical isolated areas are finding it difficult to find educators who are eligible to be enrolled in IHC. Educators need to be only enrolled in at least a Certificate III in Early Child Care, however a potential educator who is in 2nd year of Bachelor of Primary Education is not eligible to be enrolled with IHC until they have completed their degree and become a registered teacher.

The educator is employed for before and after school care of primary aged children so why do they then have to have an Early Childcare certificate. If the educator was employed in a town with before and after school care of primary aged children, they would not need this certificate.

A24. Wentworth Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the relevant departments for geographically isolated families to be able to access the In Home Care program to provide supervision in the home classroom when the student is studying via an approved Distance Education School."

Explanation:

The government encourages parent participation in the workforce right across Australia, unless you have a primary school aged child studying via government approved distance education school. The expectation on those parents is that they will give up their work and running their business to tutor

their children for the entirety of the primary school years. You cannot enrol your child in these schools without agreeing to provide constant supervision.

Many people across Australia should now appreciate that supervising your children to complete their schoolwork whilst doing your own job is almost impossible, yet that is what we expect of remote families every day.

Families should have access to In Home Care to ensure children are appropriately supervised during working hours and ensure productivity across remote Australia remains.

A25. Flinders Ranges Branch (SA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the Minister for Education and the Minister for Early Childhood Education seek an inclusion to the Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011 SI 653) - Regulation 124 (NSW Legislation) to enable two approved family day care educators to care for children in an approved family day care venue in disadvantaged rural and remote areas of Australia where there is an absence, or limited supply, of Centre Based Day Care or Family Day Care services.”

Explanation:

Our community in rural South Australia, like many rural towns across Australia, struggle with the lack of childcare. We are too small to attract a private provider to offer centre based long day care, our demand profile makes it unviable. The State Government have a Rural Care program where a childcare service is integrated within government preschools in rural communities where there are limited childcare options, to provide families with access to long day care for children from birth to 12 years. We have been advised by the Department for Education that there will be no further Rural Care places offered above the 17 that currently exist.

We are simply seeking a small inclusion into the current legislation to enable more than one approved family day care educator to care for children in our approved family day care ‘in-venue’ location. This provides a cost-effective solution to the government to cover childcare demand in small disadvantaged rural communities where no appropriate childcare exists. It strikes us as remarkably unfair that rural communities must continually do all the leg work (volunteering/financially) to provide solutions to issues such as childcare, because it is easier to let us fall through the cracks than support us. Childcare is not going to be a profitable venture in small rural and remote communities that attracts providers, but that does not mean we do not deserve to be supported in providing it.

This small change means that we will be able to meet our current childcare demand, at little to no cost to either state or federal government. It importantly provides the community with an approved and regulated care model, it enables eligible families to claim the childcare subsidy and has the added benefit in that approved family day care educators will have the support of each other in what is widely known as an isolating environment for family day care providers to work in.

Current legislation:

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS - REG 124

[Education and Care Services National Regulations \(2011 SI 653\) - NSW Legislation](#)

Number of children who can be educated and cared for--family day care educator

124 Number of children who can be educated and cared for--family day care educator

- (1) A family day care educator must not educate and care for more than 7 children at a family day care residence or approved family day care venue at any one time.
- (2) In determining the number of children who can be educated and cared for by a family day care educator for the purposes of sub regulation (1)--
 - (a) no more than 4 can be preschool age or under; and

(b) if the children are being educated and cared for at a residence, the educator's own children and any other children at the residence are to be taken into account if--

- (i) those children are under 13 years of age; and
- (ii) there is no other adult present and caring for the children.

(3) No more than 7 children can be educated and cared for as part of a family day care service at a family day care residence or an approved family day care venue at any one time

Requested addition to the above current legislation:

In disadvantaged rural and remote areas of Australia where there is an absence, or limited supply, of Centre Based Day Care or Family Day Care services two approved family day care educators may care for children in a single approved family day care venue with an exception to (1), (2) and (3) as follows:

(1) Two family day care educators must not educate and care for more than 14 children at an approved family day care venue at any one time.

(2) In determining the number of children who can be educated and cared for by a family day care educator for the purposes of sub regulation (1)--

(a) no more than 8 can be preschool age or under; and

(b) if the children are being educated and cared for at a residence, the educator's own children and any other children at the residence are to be taken into account if--

- (i) those children are under 13 years of age; and
- (ii) there is no other adult present and caring for the children.

(3) No more than 14 children can be educated and cared for as part of a family day care service at an approved family day care venue at any one time.

A26. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for sufficient funding from streams such as the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) Sustainability stream (or any other funding streams that may be similar), be made available for services in remote and very remote locations to meet their operational costs which are unable to be met through the Childcare Subsidy (CCS)/Parent Fee model.”

Explanation:

Services providing Childcare Subsidy Model childcare are currently capped at the maximum amount of CCCF Sustainability funding they are able to apply for (\$200,000 pa) despite the operational gap they are able to demonstrate, which is often significantly larger. The same cap applies to services in regional areas as in remote and very remote locations, and the only longer-term funding is in the CCCF-Restricted pool, which services may not be eligible for. Remote and very remote services have to meet significantly higher staffing and operational costs – such as providing housing for teachers and meeting the pay parity gap for teachers to attract and retain adequately qualified teachers. Early Childhood Services in remote and very remote locations should be able to provide a service with teachers and staff at the same level as their city cousins - our children are worth no less, and often have significantly more vulnerabilities according to the AECD (Australian Early Childhood Development) Census Data.

Early Childhood Education and Care - Other

A27. Louth Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant Federal Ministers amend the lack of salary parity between four year trained early childhood teachers and four year trained primary and high school teachers to assist with access to early childhood education in rural and remote communities.”

Explanation:

It is necessary that salary payments of early childhood teachers can be afforded the same salary package as their four-year trained peers who are working in primary and high schools.

Currently, the pay gap is so significant it is impossible to recruit and retain teachers in early childhood centres and new recruits often use early childhood jobs as a steppingstone into the primary school sector.

Particularly in the remote context where the early childhood packages are without comparable incentives such as holiday pay, provision for housing, access to professional support and travel to attend professional development.

Some centres are unable to offer early childhood packages which are equal to those in state primary and high schools.

A28. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant Federal Ministers for funding to be sought to address Early Childhood Teacher pay parity to assist with access to early childhood education in rural and remote communities.”

Explanation:

Pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers is a significant issue. An Early Childhood Teacher completes a 4 year degree course. In a remote early childhood service, an Early Childhood Teacher can expect a salary of around \$85,000. If they maintain NSEA proficient accreditation and elect to work in the Public School System, at a Connected Beginnings School, such as Bourke, in a rural and remote location, the additional benefits they would get compared to working as an Early Childhood Teacher would tally to \$114,500 p.a and includes:

- Additional 8 weeks of annual leave valued at \$17,500p.a.
- Significantly shorter contact hours per week
- Approx \$30,000 additional salary
- Professional mentoring by other Teachers
- Structured Professional development programs (\$10,000 pa)
- Access to Teacher Housing/Rural Teacher Incentive \$25,000
- Retention bonus \$5,000
- Recruitment bonus \$20,000
- Climatic, Social and Geographic allowance \$3,000
- In addition to the above, there is also the impact on superannuation to be considered \$4,000.

Early Childhood services are significantly limited in their budgets. It is important to find long term solutions to address pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers in rural and remote locations.

A29. Meekatharra Air Branch (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant minister instigate changes to the Working Holiday visa (subclass 417), of the Working Holiday Maker Program (WHM), to include as eligible employment, the positions of governess/nanny/au pair for Working Holiday visa holders intending to complete the required 88 days of work within the specified industry of ‘Plant and Animal Cultivation in Regional Australia’.”

Explanation:

There is a constant skills shortage when it comes to experienced workers in agriculture. The broadening of eligible work positions within the visa regulations, may not mean that qualifying workers on visas would directly engage in the cultivation of plant and animals in regional Australia. The direct impact however, would be that already competent agricultural workers could return to the workforce, which would still achieve the desired aim of an increase in skilled workers actively engaged in agriculture.

As it currently stands, the WHM program declares the position of a nanny on a farm, to be an ineligible employment option when seeking to increase the time on Working Holiday visas. By revising the Working Holiday visa regulations, it would allow skilled and experienced members of a farm workforce, undertaking duties at home, such as childcare and the home tutoring of distance education children, to return to every day agricultural work. This would be due to these childcare/education positions on rural properties being effectively filled by visa holders.

Due to the restrictive job criteria of the WHM program, many capable applicants are not applying for childcare or education related positions in rural areas when needing employment counting towards extensions to their visas.

It is expected that the inclusion of these suggested new employment positions would result in the 88 workdays undertaken as a governess/nanny or au pair, also counting towards qualifying workdays for second or third year visa extension applications.

A30. Western Australia State Council

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate that the Federal Government implements a nationally recognised and administered Working with Children Card (WWCC).”

Explanation:

WA State Council fully supports the implementation of a nationally administered police clearance, specifically for children.

Employees who move across state borders are required to reapply for a WWCC when applying for employment in a new state. This process can result in lengthy delays when employing staff of up to eight weeks, causing disruptions to students and families. Currently, a person who wishes to obtain a WWCC for work purposes is checked nationally, which is then administered at a state level.

A31. Far North Queensland Branch (QLD)

DEEMED COVERED BY A30

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to implement a national Blue Card system, or relevant Working with Children Check in Australia.”

Explanation:

In Australia, the blue card system, or relevant working with children check, regulates activities that are essential to children’s lives including education, childcare, healthcare, sporting, and cultural activities. There are eight Blue Cards, or Working with Children Checks (WWCC) in Australia, a separate one for each state and territory, and each working independently of each other.

Having a state-by-state/territory Blue Card, or WWCC, is affecting tutors, teachers, health professionals, police, volunteers, and volunteer organisations, as they have to navigate the relevant state and territory legislations and research what is involved in the screening and application processes to work or volunteer with children. This is and can be a barrier to workers and volunteers coming into rural and remote areas to work and volunteer with children and makes it difficult for them to move from one state or territory to another.

For example, the BushED tutoring program, places educational volunteers from around the nation with rural and remote families to provide relief and educational support. This program is called upon particularly by geographically families to provide educational tutoring assistance to students enrolled in distance education. However, the state-by-state/territory Blue Card system, or relevant WWCC, can be a hindrance to volunteers from interstate as they must have the relevant Blue Card, or Working with Children Card, for the state or territory in which they wish to volunteer. Further, the application

process can be time consuming, particularly if tutors (and their partners) wish to volunteer in multiple states or Territories.

The need for a national approach to the Blue Card or WWCC has been advocated for many years. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2015 recommended a nationally consistent approach to the WWCC which if implemented would not only protect children, but also address the problem of a Blue Card or WWCC issued in one jurisdiction not being recognised or transportable to another.

S3. Queensland State Council

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates that In Home Care (IHC) Australia and other relevant stakeholders establish a dedicated or stand-alone rural and remote In Home Care branch that works with families who are geographically isolated.”

Explanation:

The In Home Care scheme is currently providing funding for a large number of families whose circumstances prevent them from accessing a standard child care centre. This funding enables families to employ a suitable educator to deliver childcare in their home regardless of where they live. The funding is individually tailored to meet the needs and circumstances of each family. Throughout Queensland there is a number of IHC support agencies that families are enrolled with to help with the administration of having an IHC educator. It would be highly beneficial for all rural and remote families who use the IHC scheme to work with one agency that solely supports and fully understands rural and remote families and their needs living in geographically isolated areas.

F1. Northern Territory State Council

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to establish funding to deliver mobile remote playgroups to geographically isolated children, aged 0-5 years who are currently without access to any such service because of where they live.”

Explanation:

Geographically isolated families that reside outside of the "remote community footprint" have been without access to any early learning childhood services prior to preschool for more than a decade as has many remote communities in our region. Early education is a vital tool in all children's development, along with being a foundation for learning, it's how they build confidence, interact with others, and learn important social and emotional skills. It's also an opportunity for parents to come together, share stories and support one another.