

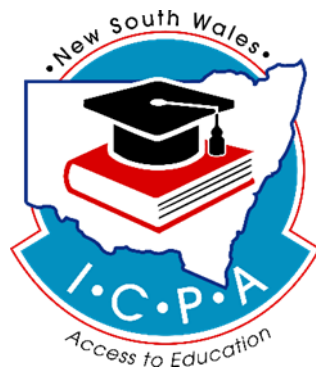
**Isolated Children's Parents' Association
of
New South Wales Inc.**

**MINUTES
of the
49th ANNUAL CONFERENCE
10th and 11th March 2021**

Held at

HAY

Hosted by Hay Branch



**Convenors: Sandra Ireson
Hay Branch Convening Committee**

This is a transcript of the 2021 Annual Conference of ICPA-NSW Inc.

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PARTICIPANTS

STATE COUNCIL

Claire Butler	President
David Butler	Vice President and Travel Convenor
Libby McPhee	Vice President and Communications Convenor. Apologies.
Deborah Castle	Secretary
Shennah Joiner	Treasurer
Kate Warby	Assistant Secretary
Irene Lund	Lone Members Officer, Membership Officer
Monique Watkin	Boarding School, Ag High Schools and Hostels
Tanya Mitchell	Allowances State
Laura Stalley	Distance Education/AHWISE
Deborah Nielsen	Early Childhood
Annabel Strachan	Rural Schools & Early Childhood
Kelly Turnbull	Special Education
Tim Fletcher	Tertiary
Bree Wakefield	Health & Wellbeing
Gabbie Le Lievre	Webmaster/Publicity Officer
Kerrie Johnston	Top Wire Editor
David Shrimpton	Merchandise Manager

FEDERAL COUNCIL

Alana Moller	President, ICPA(Aust)
Wendy Hick	Immediate Past President, ICPA(Aust)

ICPA-NSW DELEGATES

Kirsty Wilson	Balranald Branch
Lisa Duryea	Balranald Branch
Kathleen Harris	Balranald Branch
Clare Sandford	Louth Branch
Scott Mitchell	Bourke Branch
Ali Allison	Broken Hill Branch
Laura Finch	Broken Hill Branch
Heather Druce	Central West Plains Branch
Rob Haddrill	Goolgowi Branch
Penny Haddrill	Goolgowi Branch
Melita Turner	Hay Branch
Bill Ryan	Hay Branch
Carol Huggins	Hay Branch
Emma Laird	Hillston Branch
Stacey Storrier	Hillston Branch

Kate Treweeke	Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch
Kylie Baty	Louth Branch
Pam Fletcher	Monaro Branch
Duncan Taylor	Monaro Branch
Amanda Garner	NSW/VIC Lone Members
Nerida Sadler	NSW/VIC Lone Members
Amanda McClaren	NSW/VIC Lone Members
Rikki Allen	NSW/VIC Lone Members
Jodie Stewart	Nyngan Branch
Kate Yabsley	Nyngan Branch
Kerrie Johnston	Rankins Springs Branch
Megan McCarten	Rankins Springs Branch
Bernadette Maxwell	Tibooburra-Milparinka Branch
Robin Beckwith	Walgett Branch
Cath Deshon	Walgett Branch
Liz Powell	Walgett Branch
Karen Ricardo	Walgett Branch
Nerida Healey	Wentworth Branch

BRANCH LIFE MEMBERS

Jenny Sheaffe	Hay Branch
Helen Rogers	Hay Branch
Sue Gordon	NSW/VIC Lone Members
Jenny Caughey	Rankins Springs Branch
Michael Davis	Brewarrina Branch
Heather Druce	Central West Plains Branch
David Cameron	Namoi Branch

OBSERVERS

Aishling Gillbee	Balranald Branch
Trish Williams	Balranald Branch
Zack Harris	Balranald Branch
Ange Spinks	Balranald Branch
Shane Butler	Balranald Branch
Helen Edmonds	Balranald Branch
Ros Davis	Brewarrina Branch
Suzannah Palmer	Broken Hill Branch
Chrissy Harvey	Broken Hill Branch
Rebecca Pearce	Broken Hill Branch
Britt Anderson	Broken Hill Branch
Donna Brown	Goolgowi Branch
Sandy Taylor	Goolgowi Branch
Dimity Ryan	Goolgowi Branch
Emily Barber	Goolgowi Branch
Bill Sheaffe	Hay Branch
Michelle Crossley	Hay Branch
Jess Schiller	Hay Branch
Rebecca Bunyan	Hay Branch

Gabrielle Flattery	Hay Branch
Meg Merrylees	Hay Branch
Helen Morphett	Hay Branch
Duncan Fraser	Hay Branch
Andrew Davies	Hay Branch
Anne Milliken	Hay Branch
Jocelyn Cameron	Namoi Branch
Jesse Donoghoe	NSW/VIC Lone Members
Lindy Kitto	NSW/VIC Lone Members
Ellen Walker	Rankins Springs Branch
Geoff Walker	Rankins Springs Branch
Emily Barnes	Wentworth Branch
Kate Bradshaw	ICPA Qld, State Council

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

Mike Tom
 Martin Dickens
 David McLeod
 Gaye Dunshea
 Mark Greentree
 Katrina Worrall
 Michelle Michael

ORGANISATIONS

Senator Perin Davey	Senator for NSW, Parliament of Australia
The Honourable Sarah Mitchell	Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning
Helen Dalton, MP	Member for Murray
Roy Butler, MP	Member for Barwon
Oliver Jacques	Office of Helen Dalton, MP
David Webb	Hay Shire Council
Sally Taylor	NSW Government
Sue Kingwill	Contact Inc. CEO
Lana Young	National Flood and Drought Agency
Kate Woodbridge	National Flood and Drought Agency
Lewis Clark	Transport for NSW
Rachel Williams	Transport for NSW
Chris Taylor	Telstra
Larissa Copeland	Telstra
Nick Stacpoole	Telstra
Andrew Cottrill	NBN Co.
Tom O'Dea	NBN Co.
Jenn Pegler	NSW Health, Murrumbidgee Local Health District
Kristy Schwager	NSW Health, Murrumbidgee Local Health District
Louise Fraser	NSW Health, Murrumbidgee Local Health District
Emma Dyball	Down the Track. Lake Cargelligo
Richard Stokes	Aust. Boarding School Association
Thomas Dunsmore	Aust. Boarding School Association
Jared Daunt	Aust. Boarding School Association

Douglas Melrose-Rae	Australian Independent Schools of NSW
Peter Grace	Council of Catholic Schools Parents, NSW/ACT
Wayne Davie	Council of Catholic Schools Parents, NSW/ACT
Gillian Bale	NSW Centre for Effective Reading
Lynne Young-Dwarte	NSW Centre for Effective Reading
Natalie Downes	University of Canberra
Philip Roberts	University of Canberra
Richard Dougan	Bush Children's Education Foundation of NSW
Lesley Dougan	Bush Children's Education Foundation of NSW
Natalie Walker	Federation of Parents & Citizens Association of NSW
Hannah Pia Baral	Federation of Parents & Citizens Association of NSW
Sally Ware	Riverina Local Land Services
Carolle Leach	Department of Planning, Industry & Environment
Samantha Davies	Petaurus Education Group
Cas Tidy	Hay Children's Services
Brenda Borg	TAFE NSW

SCHOOLS

Chris Van Styn	Ballarat Grammar
Courtney Coe	Calrossy Anglican School
Michel Wilson	Calrossy Anglican School
Fleur Cullenward	Hay Public School
Anthony Begg	Kinross Wolaroi School
Brian Sullivan	Knox Grammar
Kate Kovacs	Loreto Normanhurst
David Gates	Macquarie Anglican Grammar School
Peter Roe	Macquarie Anglican Grammar School
Muffie Sproat	NEGS
Kathy Bishop	NEGS
Carolyn Burgess	Pymble Ladies' College
Kate Murphy	School Of The Air, Hay
Kylie Green	School Of The Air Broken Hill /Hay
Anthony Le Couteur	Scots All Saints College
Brendan Morris	SHORE
Luke Morrissey	St Gregory's College
Adrian Byrne	St. Ignatius' College
John Reading	St. Joseph's College
Ben Chadwick	The King's School
Sean Cox	Wesley College Melbourne

SPECIAL THANKS

Jenny Dwyer	Mayor Hay
Lana Masterson	Down the Track, Lake Cargelligo
<i>Students of Hay War Memorial High School</i>	
Joseph Wilson	
Delilah Crighton	
Asha Watkin	
Benjamin Caughey	

A big thank you to Brian Cox, Rentfast, for looking after our sound and recording systems again this year. Also, a big shout out to Lindy Kitto who does all our transcribing for the conference and the AGM minutes.

That's the introductions for today and now I would like to move the following motions.

Motion 01.03.21 *"That the 2019 conference minutes as circulated electronically be accepted."*

Moved by Debra Castle, Secretary. Seconded by Laura Stalley, State Council. Carried

Motion 02.03.21 *"That the apologies as received and as posted in the conference room be accepted."*

Moved by Debra Castle, Secretary. Seconded by Laura Stalley, State Council. Carried

Claire Butler. President, ICPA-NSW

Distinguished guests, members and friends of ICPA. The first introduction for today is to introduce myself I am Claire Butler, ICPA-NSW President. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land on which our meeting is being held and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

On behalf of ICPA-NSW, I would like to welcome branch life members, Michael Davis, Brewarrina Branch; Heather Druce, Central West Plains Branch; Jenny Sheaffe, Hay branch; Helen Rogers, Hay Branch; David Cameron, Namoi Branch; Jenny Caughey, Rankins Springs Branch; Sue Gordon, NSW/VIC Lone members Branch. Welcome all dignitaries, guests, delegates and observers, to the 49th Annual State Conference.

I must say it is an absolute pleasure to be standing before you all today. Finally at a face-to-face conference! It would be very remiss of me to not acknowledge the position we were in this time last year with conference in Moree all ready to go, many of us having travelled to Moree and we had to cancel at the 11th hour due to COVID. This whole organisation is entirely voluntary with countless hours of work happening before hours, after hours and on weekends, so when 12 months of hard work planning a conference of such importance doesn't come to fruition, it's tough. So, here we are meeting in the Riverina of NSW, in Hay where we can discuss our concerns and issues surrounding access to education with ICPA members, Ministers and members of Parliament, guests and representatives from various NSW government departments. It's a time for us to really put on the table the challenges, and that can be confronting and at times it can be overwhelming so please remember all the successes too and the positive reasons why we live where we live and why we are so passionate about these rural areas and how important our communities are in providing a future for the children of regional, rural and remote NSW. Ironically, there are now some words that sit more prevalently in everyone's minds no matter where we live and these are the all too familiar words that we have always been accustomed to. Isolation and Social Distance. Who would have thought that a pandemic would have made those words that we have lived our lives by so much more relevant and understood by our metro counterparts? So, maybe there is a silver lining in covid whereby EVERYONE has a better understanding and empathy for what it means to live in isolation.

I'm pleased to see 16 Branches represented here at Conference. I welcome all delegates, in particular those who are attending for the first time, and thank you to those who are returning. Over the next two days, you will learn from our guest speakers as well as from each other, so I encourage all attending to take the opportunity to engage in robust, passionate debates and informed conversations, even off the floor and into the evenings.

On the conference agenda, there are portfolio reports to be presented and, due to time constraints, many of the reports you will hear from our convenors will be condensed. However, the full reports have been emailed to you. These reports will also be added to the ICPA-NSW website after the conference.

We are very fortunate, as we are every year, to have representatives from the Department of Education and Department of Transport. Some of the Education Department people here today continue their work, alongside ICPA-NSW, through the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Group, known as RREAG and the Disability Strategy Group just to name two of the many groups ICPA sits on. There are many other people, organisations and schools here this week with whom ICPA-NSW often work closely with and are great supporters of ICPA. Some local schools and boarding schools are in attendance, not just from NSW but also from interstate. Your support in striving for equity of access to education for rural and remote students is very much appreciated.

Thank you to Federal President Mrs Alana Moller and Immediate Past President Mrs Wendy Hick for attending. Your perspective on all matters, and particularly those of a federal nature, will be very much appreciated.

Some housekeeping details.... Although all the motions will be debated and voted on at this conference, any that are Federal in nature will be addressed to the Federal Government and will go unaltered to be presented at the ICPA Federal Conference in Longreach on the 28th and 29th July. The reason that State Council leaves them on our agenda is so that you, the members, get to hear all comments and debate to understand and hopefully come up with some fresh ideas in progressing an issue.

To date, there are 80 conference motions to be debated and decided on. We therefore have a very firm programme to get through over the next two days, so we do ask that you are prompt in returning to the conference after the breaks. Floor motions can be handed to ICPA-NSW Secretary, Deb Castle until lunchtime tomorrow. Only delegates to this conference can vote on the motions but we encourage the guests and observers of the conference to take part in any discussions and debate. State Council has found, over the years, that guests might have some knowledge or experience that, when shared with the conference, will enable better decision-making for State Council. This is one of the many reasons why it is so good to have so many of you here.

A reminder that delegates are given three minutes to read out their branch's explanations for motions and at the two-minute mark, a bell will be rung by the Secretary, and again at the three-minute mark. If you have a changed explanation that is different to the one printed, please make sure that your explanations are handed to Kate Warby, Assistant Secretary, before the end of each day or after you have read your explanation.

All conference proceedings are recorded to assist in the process of creating the conference minutes. Please use the microphones provided here today by Brian Cox from Rentfast whenever you are either presenting a motion or commenting. Please also clearly identify yourself for the recording with your full name and branch before you move the motion. For example, "Claire Butler, Balranald Branch, I move that..."

I know our hosts, Hay Branch and its convening committee, have been looking forward to this day for quite some time. State Council congratulates you on your preparations for the 49th Annual State Conference, which have had the added challenges of incorporating COVID safe procedures and you have all taken on these preparations with such enthusiasm and good nature that is at the heart of ICPA.

I wish you all a very enjoyable and exciting conference.

I would like to invite Joseph Wilson from Hay War Memorial High School, to present the Welcome to Country so that we can get ourselves underway for 2021.

Welcome to Country

I am Joseph Wilson, Year 11 of the Hay Memorial High School and a representative of the aboriginal and Torres Strait community. I'd like to begin by welcoming you all to the land of the Nari Nari and Wiradjuri people of which we have the privilege to stand on today. I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the country throughout Australia and the Hay area and recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and culture. We pay our respects to elders, past, present and emerging in our local communities today, tomorrow and always and I would also like to extend this to the descendants who are present today. Thank you.

Welcome to Hay

Delilah Crighton

Asha Watkin

Benjamin Caughey

Daisy Barnes is an apology.

Delilah Crighton

Good morning special guests and delegates to the ICPA-NSW State Conference for 2021 and welcome to our town and community of Hay. My name is Delilah Crighton and I am one of the school captains of the Hay War Memorial High School. I am extremely proud of our town and our community. My parents own an engineering business in town and are very passionate about Hay, the incredible community and the length that the town goes to, to provide opportunities to its youth despite our isolation. I'm so proud to attend Hay War Memorial High School. The High School is unique in that it is a War Memorial entwining the Hay District War Memorial Service and the life of the school itself. It was officially opened in 1923 as the town's official War Memorial. Its museum commemorates those who served and honours those who dies in active service. Our school motto is, "Pro Tanto Quid Retribuamus. For so much, what shall we repay?" We live by that motto when we enter the school gates. We are determined to make those who sacrificed of their lives for us proud of the children who attend the living War Memorial.

Asha Watkin

My name is Asha Watkin and I am also a school captain of the Hay War Memorial High School. Thank you for attending today. Despite the obstacles that isolation brings we have a school with students who are determined to achieve. Through Aurora and distance education we are able to access many subjects which otherwise we would not have access to. I am currently completing an Early Childhood and Care course through TAFE via distance education whilst, at the same time, completing my HSC. While the work load and lack of direct access to teachers does make the course more difficult, the support from our teachers at school and community at large is invaluable. Our community's isolation does, at times, affect our access to education and opportunities that are available to those who are in larger centres. Often travelling to workshops, sporting events and health care can be very time consuming and expensive for families. However, we realise that we must be resilient and to embrace opportunities and do the best we can with what we have. We are so proud of the past students of our high school who, with support from our teachers, have overcome isolation to follow their dreams in the field of medicine, veterinary science, mechanics, electrical, school teachers and finance. We are lucky to have organisations such as ICPA who work hard for equal access and act as our voice.

Benjamin Caughey

My name is Ben Caughey and I am incredibly proud to be one of the leadership team members and captain at Hay War Memorial High School. Our school has allowed me to pursue my goals and ambitions through many opportunities including agricultural experiences, virtual education through Aurora and recently becoming a Rural Youth Ambassador. In this latter role I have attended a National Forum in Canberra in February where we met many Ministers to whom we presented three concepts to enhance the role of isolated schools. They were connecting isolated schools in close proximity to enable them to share resources, supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our youth in rural towns by implementing support and preventative measures and, finally, providing access to after-school pathways. Our goals and concepts are very similar to those of the ICPA which strongly lobbies on our behalf. My family has a long connection with ICPA and I recognise the importance of having such a powerful voice. On behalf of all the students at Hay War Memorial High School I welcome you and wish you all the best for your conference.

Opening of Conference**Jenny Sheaffe, Hay Life Member.**

Madam President, NSW State Council members, Life Members, delegates and distinguished guests, it gives me great pleasure and it is an honour to be standing here today before you all some fifty years since the first meeting was held in Bourke and organized by Pat Edgely through the Grazier's Association. Pat could not have envisaged how the Association would grow and develop and the definition of an isolated child still stands today and I quote, "An isolated child is one who, for geographical reasons, has no reasonable daily access to an appropriate school." Standing here before you I feel a little bit like a first-time delegate so, please forgive me if I refer to my notes. I thought I would give you a little glimpse into how Hay Branch formed and my time on as the NSW Publicity Officer and the Federal Publicity Officer. I'm a little bit like a dinosaur here today. In 1979 the NSW State Council received the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme in postcodes. I think it fell off the back of a truck. I don't think it was well thought out and, somehow, they got it a little bit wrong. Anyhow, they noted that on the 2711 postcode which is the Hay and surrounding districts, were the most recipients of the AIC and yet there wasn't an ICPA branch formed. The State Council put an ad in our local magazine that they were going to have a meeting in Balranald and those who would like to attend from Hay please come. Two car loads went down. I wasn't in one of those car loads as I was a member of the Ivanhoe Branch then. So, the branch wasn't formed but, on the 12th June 1980, Rory Treweek, who was the NSW President and the Federal President at the time, came to Hay and a Branch was formed. The first President was David Houston. The Vice-President was Bob McCormick. The Secretary and Treasurer Di and Mark Ronald respectively. Now those of you who know David know that he is not backward in coming forward and he put his hand up immediately for us to host the 1981 State Conference and I was relegated to the task of morning and afternoon tea. It was held in the Wiradjuri Club and I can remember standing there in the Wiradjuri Club and in rolled the cakes, the slices, the sandwiches and there was not an ounce of spare space on the bench and I looked around and I thought, "Oh, my goodness. I've got enough food here to feed the whole Australian Army for at least two months!" Anyhow, then David again put his hand up and said that Hay Branch will wrap Pedals. So, there we were on the Budgewah dining room table wrapping 1,383 copies

of Pedals. I have never known so much discussion take place on how to wrap a magazine or what glue to use. I had joined the Hay Branch by then so in 1983 I went to a branch meeting and put forward a motion which, when I look at some of the motions today, they are not dissimilar in a way, but it was that a one teacher school 's position become a principal's position. In those days we were being sent out first year out teachers and they were being billeted in our homes so my motion was passed and off I went to my first State Conference in Broken Hill. Again, it was passed and it was absolutely awe inspiring to be at that conference because I saw some of the inaugural members of the Association such as Pat and Peter Edgeley, Bob Lynch, Wally Mitchell, Toni Ridge, Marilyn Knight, Rory Treweek. I don't think Geoff Green was there but it really was awe inspiring. Anyhow, on day two of the conference I was approached by Toni Ridge and Marilyn Knight and asked to stand for NSW State Council. I said that honestly, I didn't know enough, I truly didn't. So, they said that they would give me one year. The next year the conference was held in West Wyalong in 1984 and I certainly did not attend. Anyhow, on day two of the conference those persistent girls, Toni Ridge and Marilyn Knight, rang me and said that they were putting me up for State Council and said not to worry because I wouldn't get on because I wasn't there and no one knew me. Blow me down if I didn't get a telephone call that night to say that I had been elected to the NSW State Council. Thus started my love affair with ICPA. I then held the position of Lone Members and Rural Schools and then in 1989 I became the Publicity Officer. Now, believe it or not, in those days, folks, we sent our media releases out by post, snail mail. Then in 1990 State Council purchased for me a fax machine. That was just fantastic. I can remember sitting on the floor and hand feeding through 120 media releases. Then we got fax stream and you coded in the telephone number and it was just one fax went off to all the numbers so that was fantastic. In my time as State Publicity Officer, I was able to get a few interviews that I thought were good for the Association. One was with Ray Martin on the Midday Show. Kerri-Anne Kennerly on The Morning Show. The late Andrew Ollie, Paul Lockere, Peter Luck, Margaret Throsby and the list goes on. I remember one particular interview with Margaret Throsby and it was when Jim Swales was the NSW President then, and we went along to Ultimo for a talk back show and we were going to do a talk about the need for the State Living away from Home Allowance to be increased and all was going well in the interview and we were talking and people were ringing in and we were explaining what it was like to live out in remote rural Australia. All of a sudden, this woman rang in and she said, "I'll take some." I thought that she had missed the plot here somehow. We were wanting the State to take responsibility for the State Living Away from Home Allowance. Anyhow, we thanked her very much but explained that we would like the State to take responsibility. After the interview had finished, I looked at Jim and I said, "You know Jim, we are not giving away kittens here." Another interview that went slightly pear shaped was with Peter Luck and it was at the Royal Easter Show and Peter rang in and it was before the days of hand-held phones, and it was just the phone on the wall. Anyhow, he rang in and we had a house dog at the time and we were about a minute into the interview and the dashed house dog started to bark at the door and I thought that this was not going well. So, while he was asking me a question, I put my finger over the mouthpiece and yelled, "Sit down! Sit down!" To no avail. He kept barking. I then took off one shoe and chucked it at him. To no avail. Took off the other shoe and chucked it at him. Still to no avail. By then Peter said that the background noise is so bad we are going to have to terminate this interview. Now, those who know me, I'm a little bit of a drama queen and I thought that this is not going to happen on my watch so I said to him that I thought he had a snake bailed up. I'm sure he has a snake. "Oh!" he said. "I'll ring back in about ten minutes."

Anyhow, I got the dog, chucked it out the door because I'd had him by then and Peter rang back in ten minutes time and asked how I got on with the snake. "Aww," I said, "it got away, mate. It got away." Anyhow, we went on and we got our interview done and that was the whole crux of the thing. I needed that interview. I wanted to talk about the state Living Away from Home Allowance and what it was like to live in remote rural Australia. In 1990 I was elected as Publicity Officer at the Federal level in Dubbo and so for two years I held the position of State and Federal Publicity Officer. In 1992 I thought it was time to retire from State Council. My children were growing up on a diet of ICPA and we were heading into a drought and I was needed at home. Maybe I wasn't needed but I thought I was anyhow. From a State and Federal perspective, the hardest nights, as you would all know, are budget nights and as a Publicity Officer I always wrote two media releases. One positive and one negative. Then when the budget came down and we tried to dissect it as best we could, and that was always very difficult, I promise you, and there is nothing there for you. But anyhow, with the help of the State President and the Federal President we would tweak it. I always wanted it out by six in the morning at the very, very latest because you had to get it out so they, the media, would respond straight away. So, we did that. I love the cut and thrust of politics. I'll be honest. I really did. Navigating my way around Parliament House by carpet colours, art works, you name it. David, who was the Federal President at the time, had a firm belief that we should get as many appointments as possible at the Federal level as he wanted to educate as many politicians as possible about the plight of children living in remote rural Australia and whether they were Labour or Liberal didn't really matter. It was my job to get the appointments and I held the position of Federal Publicity Officer for eight years with one year off in between when the late Carmel Chalmers took over. So, I got to know the secretaries quite well in that period of time which was really helpful for securing interviews. I can remember some of the interviews we had with the Hon. Tony Abbott when he was Minister for Education, Prime Minister, Paul Keating, Prime Minister John Howard, The Hon Kim Beasley, Simon Crean, Mark Latham, John Anderson, Tim Fisher, Bob Katter, and the list goes on. Some of the interviews stand out. Some don't. I remember one appointment with Bob Collins at 8.15 in the morning and we arrived at Parliament House and Bob greeted us in his pyjamas. I remember looking a little bit stunned because here we were dressed up to the nines. Anyhow, he said that they had been sitting into the wee small hours of the morning but he said that he felt as though he was amongst friends so he hoped we didn't mind. We didn't. Another appointment I remember was with Mark Latham at the time and we were trying to educate him about getting children to school, the need for the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme to be indexed to the CPI etc., and all was going swimmingly. It was going really well and he said, "I understand exactly where you are coming from. I have the same problem in my electorate." I thought, "Oh really?" "Yes", he said, "I'm trying to get a footbridge over Parramatta Road." Well, I thought that was slightly different. We always got two minutes from Tim Fisher. It has been a privilege to have worked with three amazing State Presidents. David Houston, Helen Withers and Jim Swales. Three fantastic Federal Presidents. Bob Baker, David Houston and Jenny McClelland as well as many state and federal councillors. We have debated fiercely. We have had a lot of fun along the way and a couple of drinks to. Federal Conferences, as you know are held around the States and the Northern Territory ones were always colourful. I worked with two publicity officers from the NT, one was Terri Underwood and the other was Toni Coutts-Tatt. At the last Federal Conference which I attended in 1999 in the Northern Territory, Toni said that each state would put on a skit and some of you may remember. Anyhow, as a state, the late Rob Seekamp was to play the bagpipes and we were to sing a medley of songs. That is the NSW delegates, the

State Councillors and the Federal Councillors. We got up on the stage and we started to sing and I can tell you we were terrible and that was to put it mildly. As far as the voting went, NSW got the thumbs down. I don't think any of us could hold a tune was the truth of the matter. By the time I retired from Federal Council in 1998 Bill had been elected onto the Hay Shire Council and in 2011 he was elected mayor, a position he held until last year. In his time as mayor, he certainly faced some challenges from floods to droughts to Council amalgamations and the GM's termination. We had had a role reversal in the family. To my Hay Branch I am enormously proud of you for hosting the 49th Annual State Conference. Hay has had a proud tradition of always sending delegates to conference and having members on both the State and Federal Council. I heard an Australia Day Ambassador speak about passion and purpose and that is something ICPA members have in spades. Keep up the fight for your isolated kids. Good luck with your forthcoming motions. As I've read through the motions and I can certainly relate to some of the issues faced by certain branches such as the A47 motion and A48 from Louth Branch. I wish you nothing but the best over the next two days and thank you for giving us the honour of opening your 49th Annual Conference. The theme of your conference, "Thrive in Isolation" is very apt. I'm very proud to have been part of an organisation that has achieved so much for children living in remote rural Australia. I'll now hand over to Bill before we declare your 49th Annual Conference open.

Bill Sheaffe.

I think, actually, it needs a little explanation because you can probably all sympathise with me that I became a victim of ICPA in 1984 and I think it is a condition that they call you an ICPA widow. I suppose I'd know a bit about isolation having lived here all my life and I think we are very fortunate to have been so isolated recently and I think, actually, the people in the city are only just starting to wake up to that which has been alluded to earlier on. So, there is probably a silver lining in every cloud. I actually started my education at Blackfriars correspondence school which makes you realise how technology has changed things over the years because we used to sit down in some designated place in the house and do the lessons and put them in a big brown envelope and send them off, and the only thing I could really complain about was that Australia Post was so efficient. Anyway, that was Blackfriars. One thing that really stands out in my mind was budget night as Jennifer alluded to. We got really upmarket and about in the mid-eighties or something, we bought a MacIntosh computer. We marvelled at what it could do and I think it marvelled at what we couldn't do. But it whizzed and banged and clattered away with a sort of green and white screen. One particular budget night I remember there was always a flurry of paper and much phoning up and discussing with David Houston and someone else, and someone else and someone else, about what had been said and what hadn't been said. Anyway, this particular night, and it was a bad one, I decided that I'd go to bed. So, I went to bed and I hadn't been there very long when the next minute the phone went. Jennifer was busy bashing away at the keyboard. Phone went and it was one of my neighbours. "Oh, one of my workmen has got lost. Can you go for a fly and have a look for him?" he said. "I will when the light comes around, in the morning but I can't now." I said. So, I went back off to bed then the phone goes again. "How long until it gets light?" he says. "In the morning normally." I said. Anyway, Jennifer is still bashing away at the computer and eventually she came to bed. I don't know what time it was and the phone went again at four o'clock. I got out of bed again and answered this damn phone and Jennifer sat bolt upright and she said, "Save it! Save it!" I don't know if she didn't know how to save the work on the computer or was having a bad dream or what but she thought that four hours of work had just

gone to waste. Anyway, it was my neighbour on the phone again. Then he rang again at about six o'clock in the morning and told me that his working man had turned up. So, that was a pretty exciting sort of a budget night but it was really actually nothing out of the norm. Computers certainly made a huge difference because sitting down and feeding bits of paper through a fax machine was not much fun but it was better than putting them in envelopes. Anyway, I think the way we communicate has changed enormously over the years as everyone would appreciate and what the future holds for us, I don't know. I know we have a representative from Telstra here so he might be able to tell us more about that later on. Unless you have a mobile phone in your hand apparently you can't even order a cup of coffee. Anyway, I think that is probably enough from me. I'm sure that our mayor will enlighten you a bit about our little patch of paradise here. The only thing I will tell you is that Hay Council area is regarded as one of the flattest areas in the world and in our area, we have a variation in height of a whole 17 metres. I have never actually checked that out but I have been told that it is right. Anyway, on that note I'll ask Jennifer to do the formalities because I usually stand behind.

Jenny Sheaffe, Hay Life Member.

It gives us great pleasure to declare your conference open and you enjoy your two days folks.

Jenny Dwyer, Mayor of Hay Shire Council

Good morning everyone. I am delighted to be here today to welcome you to Hay Shire Council for your 49th Annual ICPA-NSW Conference. It is wonderful to see so many of you here as volunteers of course and a special thank you to the Hay ICPA Branch for essentially showing Hay off for us. That's wonderful. And yes, Bill, Hay is flat. It is one of the flattest sections in the world. I believe it might be 11 meters between our highest and lowest, just enough gradient for a river but our sources might be different. We are halfway between Sydney and Adelaide. Straight up from Melbourne and while some people would use the term, "in the middle of nowhere," I would much rather say that we are "in the centre of everything." We are on the intersection of three major highways. Our Shire is one of the largest in size but one of the smallest in population which, as you can imagine, creates a certain number of challenges for us. But we are doing alright. You'll see that, at the moment, we are doing some works in the main street creating a new civic meeting area and we have the building of a new TAFE on our high school grounds. While you are here, I do hope you can check out some of our attractions and enjoy exploring the history of our old settlement and agriculture. Shear Outback, our prisoner of war history and, to use your slogan, yes, we can thrive in isolation. Your programme looks jam packed for the next two days. I do hope that everyone here can take home some interesting and valuable information. I wholeheartedly agree with the ICPA's goal of equal access to education for everyone. Every child deserves the best education we can offer because they truly are our number one asset for the future. Welcome and thank you for being here to support and encourage children's education. Many safe returns for your trips home and enjoy the next couple of days.

Sandra Ireson, Hay Conference Convenor.

Thank you, ICPA-NSW, for entrusting the Hay Branch with hosting your conference. Thank you also to the amazing Hay Branch convening committee, some of whom are here and others

are off doing conference committee jobs, for putting this all together. A wonderful talented group and I thank you all for stepping in when I had to suddenly step out and to Claire Butler for all your help and advice. Our goal for this conference was to get people here together with time to connect in person and we have been overwhelmed with the response and we are so pleased that so many of you could make it to Hay. QR codes are out the front so please make sure you all checked in but I think you have all done a very good job with that this morning and last night. Due to COVID you must stay in the same chair throughout the whole conference and go back to your own table at lunchtime when you are having your meal. Please be mindful of social distancing at all times. No table hopping and our COVID marshals will be keeping you all in line and I believe there could be a cattle prod if anyone gets out of hand. A mobile coffee cart is available and also NBN have a display outside. Hay Public School P&C Association are providing the morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea and they also provided the meal at Shear Outback last night. Special shoutout to Jenny Dwyer, our mayor, who was also in the kitchen last night and today. They have recently produced a cookbook which they have on sale during the breaks and will be serving food from the recipes from the cookbook. The Booligal Public School P&C will be catering for meals during the conference tomorrow so, thank you to these wonderful volunteer parents. We also have a raffle for the beautiful quilt produced by Shennah Joiner who is also our treasurer and will be drawn tomorrow afternoon. Tonight, we will be entertained by Ruby Saltbush at the Hay Golf Club and meals by Fruity Friends, Hay. Thank you and have a great conference.

President's Report

Claire Butler, President ICPA-NSW

“Keep your eyes and thoughts on the children. They have no union, they cannot strike, they have no power, they deserve our thinking and our deepest reflections.” Wise words from Dr Lilian Katz – ICPA (Aust) Conference, Brisbane 1974.

This is the third State Conference to be held in Hay – with the very fitting theme of Thrive in Isolation! ICPA-NSW, over the past 24 months and since our last conference, has been working tirelessly on many issues around the 13 portfolios in State Council and we have managed to stay very active considering the challenges of COVID these past 12 months.

Last year, due to the cancelled conference, we had to find a way to work around our Constitution which restricted us from voting on conference motions via postal or electronic means. The AGM in Griffith on 6 February has now rectified those restrictions but, last year whilst many of the repeat issues were already in policy, we asked our branches to advise us, in writing, if they considered their new matter to be urgent and based on that advice, we raised it as an ‘issue’ for their area. This way, we still represented our members with the NSW Government and stakeholders during 2020.

Despite having to cancel our Conference, whilst we were in Moree, we took the opportunity to hold the AGM via teleconference. This ensured that we remained constitutional and also gave us the opportunity to present Caroline McDonald with a Certificate of Appreciation for all the hard work that she has done for State Council.

We would like to acknowledge the generosity of FRRR, who, in the spirit of ‘tackling tough times’, allowed the grant received by Moree branch to be used to pay expenses relating to the cancelled conference. That gesture ensured that local businesses such as caterers and motels were not financially burdened from the cancellation. Moree, like most of NSW in recent years, has been through a tough time with the drought and FRRR really helped out. This assistance

then allowed for all conference registrations to be reimbursed. Thanks again to the FRRR for offering to transfer left over funds from the Moree conference to Hay.

These photos were taken on our 2019 SYDNEY Deputation, and instead of deputation to Sydney last year, there have been letters written and more online meetings. In particular State Council has met with NSW Education Standards Authority on the Curriculum review, the NSW Department of Education on the Rural and Remote Survey and Transport for NSW on the school drive subsidy. It was very pleasing to see ICPA-NSW quoted and a recommendation on the need for a preschool drive subsidy in the recent NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Drought. ICPA-NSW has participated in five Parliamentary inquiries. Support for Drought affected Communities; the Inquiry into Outcomes Based Funding; the review of the NSW Curriculum; the inquiry into the Future Development of the NSW Tertiary Education Sector and the health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales. ICPA-NSW has given evidence at three of these inquiries. These inquiries are an important way for our members' voices to be heard by the resulting recommendations.

We did of course deal with the ongoing issues that COVID-19 threw at us on a daily basis. This has been particularly challenging to manage as we found ourselves catching policy on the run. NSW is a State sandwiched by three other States and last year felt the full impact of closed borders on all fronts and this has had a huge impact on the ability for children to access their education, not to mention the children who also attend boarding school within NSW.

The NSW Minister for Education was extremely quick to assist when we raised the issue of social distancing capacity in the NSW state boarding schools and they found ways to get all children back to those schools in a very timely manner.

The annual deputation to Sydney was replaced by a trip to Dubbo, whereby State Council split into groups and held back-to-back zoom meetings with Ministers, MPs, Stakeholders and Departments. We had 32 meetings over two days ensuring that the current Policy of ICPA-NSW members and also current issues that were to be raised at the cancelled Moree conference were still raised.

Some of the areas that ICPA-NSW would like to see improvements as a matter of priority are in the Early Childhood space. With each child recommended to complete 600 hrs of preschool in their first year of schooling, how do rural and remote families achieve this? For two years we have had positive discussions with Transport for NSW around a school drive subsidy for preschoolers but our members would like to see this actually being enacted. With dwindling numbers in rural and remote areas, we continue to advocate for the numbers required to start a bus run to be reduced. Teacher incentives to work in rural and remote schools continue to be important and it is pleasing to see the continuation of the Rural Experience Programme that encourages experienced teachers to leave their city post for a year to bring their experience to rural and remote schools.

With many children home schooling last year, access to better communication was highlighted. NBN SkyMuster introduced SkyMuster Plus which gave families access to more data with live streaming unmetered, meaning that data is not metered for online platforms such as zoom and Microsoft Teams. At the same time, ICPA-NSW had an increase in members concerned about mobile connectivity. ICPA-NSW continues to advocate for Distance Education children who are having connectivity interruptions. It is increasingly harder for tertiary students to live away from home to access their studies and COVID 19 also highlighted just how restrictive the Youth Allowance rules are for Independent Youth Allowance.

COVID definitely changed the way ICPA-NSW does its business. We found ourselves having to pivot quickly when matters occurred, especially when it came to the border closures as you will hear later in the conference. Instead of long media releases, we used social media to get out quick and to the point messages. Instead of letter writing or even emails it was a text to a Minister's aide or department authority. But when you think about what was achieved in terms

of ICPA's advocacy, it is testament to the good work of all those before us, many of whom are in this room today. Without your tenacity and good reputation built over many years, I do not think what was achieved last year, in terms of the #nobordersforboarders campaign, would have been achieved.

Our priority is to encourage young families to join and also keep our families whose children have completed tertiary. We see 2021 as the year of, on the back of all the publicity we received last year, building our memberships so that many can thrive in isolation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the remarkable team of Councillors on ICPA-NSW State Council. Despite their own challenges with drought, bushfires and family commitments, they continue to inspire me every day with their willingness to volunteer to help our members. The life of a State Councillor means that every single day you do something for ICPA-NSW. It might be whilst in the sheep yards hanging off one bar of phone service, in the car, late at night whilst everyone is asleep, or during family events, on the tractor, on Mother's or Father's Day. It doesn't matter what day it is. Every day there is a team of people doing something selfless for our members.

Thank you also to Alana Moller and her Federal team for being supportive mentors to us throughout what was a very challenging year. The unwavering support from ICPA (Aust) has been such an incredible strength to us in NSW.

I will leave you with a wonderful little quote from the letter written to us last year by our Patron, Her Excellency Margaret Beazley AC QC Governor of New South Wales. *"Take care of yourselves and thank you again for living the challenge of being in isolated communities with such good humour and such big hearts."*

ICPA (Aust.) Report

Alana Moller. President, ICPA (Aust).

ICPA-NSW President, Distinguished guests, Federal Life Members, State Life Members, fellow ICPA members and friends, it is with great pleasure that I present the 2021 NSW State Conference Federal update. Winston Churchill once said that kites rise higher against the wind, not with it and testament to the efforts, struggles and triumphs of ICPA, here we are today having risen above challenges and trials not only over the past twelve months but also over fifty years since that very first meeting back in 1971. On behalf of Federal Council, I commend NSW State Council on their determined endeavours this past twelve months and thank them for the opportunity to deliver the Federal Council update today. Compliments also to the Hay convening committee for what has been a wonderful conference. As we know 2020 didn't pan out in the way most of us envisaged. The role of ICPA did not diminish though and, indeed, new challenges represented to us as the COVID 19 pandemic took hold we worked through issues as they arose and were able to assist members with their concerns and issues. It was heartening that, out of the crisis, came some improvements in the area of communications as well as a recognition of the unique needs of geographically isolated children when it comes to the Assistance for Isolated Children's (AIC) scheme. Unfortunately, the pandemic also highlighted and, in many instances, magnified, some of the inequities associated with educating our children at all times, not just during a pandemic. For early childhood education and, more specifically, for remote families who access in-home care, the inception of the Relief Childcare Package was problematic. We spent many hours working with the office of the Minister for Education, The Hon Dan Tehan, and tried to alleviate some of these issues at the time.

Following on from this, motions from the 2020 Federal conference, we continued to highlight that a blanket approach to education and child care issues when applied to a rural and remote context is often inappropriate, unworkable and inequitable and we seek the establishment of specialised models and programmes that address the unique disadvantages and needs associated in caring for and educating children in geographically isolated areas. The pandemic also raised issues with tertiary gap year students, rural and remote apprentices and trainees and, of course, the issues which arose for geographically isolated boarding students especially with regards to the Australian Health Protection Committee guidelines and border restrictions. ICPA (Aust) welcomed and appreciated the opportunity to work with The Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education, The Hon Andrew Gee, MP, all State Councils and other stakeholders to address these issues. We had the opportunity to participate in a round table discussion on this and, in collaboration with all ICPA State Councils, a submission was made in November 2020 to Mr. Gee indicating the vision of a national framework to support interstate borders. This submission was forwarded by the Minister to all State Medical Officers. To date these topics are still not resolved with inconsistencies and uncertainties still being experienced across jurisdictions. We continue to advocate that it is essential that a long-term consistent approach to supporting geographically isolated boarding students is achieved.

The impacts of the pandemic on ICPA and our members culminated with the move to an online conference in August. A myriad of technical challenges had to be overcome but the solar flare taking out the SkyMuster network an hour before the conference began certainly took the cake. The universe is trying to tell us something. Despite this the conference was well attended by ICPA branch delegates and guests from all over Australia. All agenda motions were presented with healthy debate and discussion and how grateful we were for the support, understanding, patience and positivity of all those involved.

It was an honour to be re-elected as Federal President at the conference and to work with all the amazing individuals on Federal Council for another year. At Federal Conference we were sad to farewell the remarkable Jane Moreton from Federal Council and I can assure you she has been sorely missed. We were thrilled, however, to welcome two further Queensland faces to our team being Nikki Mahony from Theodore and, from Richmond, Kim Hughes who was also a former ICPA Queensland State President. While the COVID 19 pandemic has hampered our ability to come together as a Federal Council in person, it has not hindered our ability to continue our work. We have recently held two full days of hybrid Federal Council meetings with seven councillors travelling to Hobart for meetings in February while six others participated via ZOOM. We are also working towards face-to-face meetings with delegations in Canberra in the coming months.

As we all know, obstacles to accessing and obtaining education in geographically isolated areas is not just the case during a crisis and Federal Council continue to emphasise that these students are a unique disadvantaged group who need specialised, targeted assistance and support to access and attain equitable educational opportunities and outcomes and our advocacy across all education topics has continued unimpeded. While perhaps not ideal, the chance to participate virtually in meetings, consultations, forums, delegations and other activities has meant that we have continued our work despite the inability to travel and come together and, indeed, has been a great opportunity to give a small glimpse into our world with Federal Councillors participating from their home school rooms, sitting on the windowsill of their house to get internet connection, rushing into meetings after loading cattle, shearing sheep, feeding poddies or harvesting crops and generally dedicating themselves to ICPA in amongst the hustle and bustle of their daily lives. I'm sure many of you can relate to that.

To this end we've had the opportunity to raise the many issues facing our members through meeting with Minister Andrew Gee on a number of occasions as well as maintaining regular contact with his office. We have also attended virtual delegation meeting with the Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher, MP, and the Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government, the Hon Mark Coulton, MP. In virtual delegation meetings we've been able to raise issues associated with in-home care, the Regional Tech Hub and the need for portable internet equipment for geographically isolated students. We also continue to maintain contact with other politicians and their advisors and staff. I have also had the privilege of meeting face-to-face with Senator Susan McDonald in Townsville. Federal Council have continued to correspond regularly with the Department of Education, Skills and Employment and Service Australia and have welcomed the opportunity to meet virtually on several occasions with the DESE team.

As noted on this slide, Federal Council have also completed a number of submissions since February 2020. In our pre-budget submission, correspondence and delegations we have urged the government to implement the recommendations made in the report handed down from the enquiry into education in remote and complex environments, especially in relation to our long-term advocacy for AIC for three- to four-year-olds and ongoing guaranteed funding for mobile playgroups. ICPA (Aust) lodged two submissions to the enquiry along with several State Councils and we implore the government to also execute other recommendation from the report including those focused on improvements to tertiary training access, funding and enhancement. Portfolio activities have continued with thirty-five motions carried at the 2020 conference having been actioned over the past six months. Most recently we have been working on portfolio motion updates and these were recently sent to all members and are available on our website. Despite the 2020 Federal conference motions being limited to only those issues not already in policy due to the constraints with the online format, a variety of other actions and undertakings and developments have occurred across the portfolios. Communications continues to be an area where developments can occur almost daily. A number of developments have occurred in recent months and we especially wish to draw member's attention to the new Regional Tech Hub. A Federal Government initiative to offer free, independent advice to regional Australians on the best internet mobile phone connection for their needs. The Tech Hub has been initiated after requests from ICPA and other organisations for regional, rural and remote communications assistance to be made available. Federal Council is optimistic that the Hub will achieve this and we encourage members to become acquainted with this initiative and access their services using the options appearing on this slide. You can also see this on our Facebook page and they also have a Facebook page that you can go to have a look. We are working really closely with the Hub staff including being part of the regional Tech Hub stakeholder reference group. We also wish to remind members of new initiatives in communications including enhancements to the SkyMuster Plus service. More information on any of our communication details can be found on our website or feel free to make contact with Federal Council at any time.

In the area of distance Education, Federal Council have instigated a range of actions aimed at raising the profile of geographically isolated distance education families and to reinforce that our distance education teaching allowance advocacy. Along with writing to key Ministers, members of parliament and senators and raising the issue in virtual delegations and other meetings, ICPA(Aust) embarked on an awareness campaign declaring the 1st December, 2020, as our inaugural geographically isolated distance education, or GIDE day, to honour the ongoing plight of geographically isolated families who must educate their children at home at

all times and call for recognition for these families. We received positive responses and support from a range of individuals and other organisations and thank members for their involvement in this initiative. We look forward to continuing to hold GIDE day into the future. Following on from the success of the GIDE day and well documented acknowledgement of governments of the challenges parents face educating their children at home during COVID, Federal Council has, most recently, written to the Prime Minister urging him to consider recognise and acknowledge geographically isolated education families who must educate their children in that way at all times.

In the tertiary field some welcome developments have occurred off the back of some long-term advocacy as well as a result of actions during COVID. ICPA(Aust) has been calling for a tertiary access allowance to support students who have to relocate to access a tertiary education with expenses including start-up expenses, cost of living, direct costs of education or training and the cost of travelling home in semester breaks. Encouragingly, the Federal Government has recently introduced on the 1st January 2021, the tertiary access payment which is a one of, means tested payment for school leavers from outer regional, remote and very remote areas who must relocate more than ninety minutes by public transport from their family home to undertake tertiary education. In 2020 COVID also impacted rural and remote gap year student's ability to fulfil the criteria to demonstrate independence and qualify for youth Allowance and ABSTUDY under the Concessional Workforce Independence Criteria. Following on from ICPA representation on this issue legislation was passed addressing this concern meaning students in the six months period between 25th March and 24th September, 2020, are deemed to have already earned 75% of the National Training Wage Schedule weekly rate or worked 15 hours per week. Additionally, young people who are planning on taking a working gap year in 2021 or have taken a working gap year in 2021, can qualify for Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY as an independent if they fulfil the criteria of earning at least \$15,000 through agricultural work during the period the 30th November, 2020 and the 31st December, 2021. Further welcome developments include the reduction of the waiting period for the first claim of fares allowance for Youth Allowance from six months down to three months and also the reintroduction of the HEX Help Upfront payment discount and part of additional support for regional and remote students.

Federal Council have also been updating a number of our documents and processes and a full revamp of our brief and have done a full revamp of our briefing papers with the aim of making them appealing and user friendly. We encourage members to head to our portfolio section on our website to browse through these. Federal Council have also recently reviewed our Faces of ICPA campaign and have taken part in a range of podcasts and various media. ICPA have connections and collaborations with a number of other organisations specifically ABSA, NFF, NBN, Telstra, ACCAN and ACARA and a range of others. At this point I would like to draw member's attention to the immense support that ICPA receives from many sources including other organisations but also members, branches and individuals who support us. I would especially like to acknowledge and show appreciation on behalf of Federal Council to the McDonald family and the Four Seasons Co for the generous gesture of ICPA being the beneficiary of a percentage of the sales of their nutrition blocks for cattle released in honour of beef industry leader, the late Zanda McDonald. It is with great pride and humility that we are a part of this initiative as Zanda's family have been long standing supporters and volunteers for ICPA and geographically isolated children.

A massive undertaking occurring as I speak and close to completion is the development of our new enhanced ICPA website. This has been a mammoth task and I would be remiss to not

mention Nikki McQueen, Sue Shotton and all State Council webmasters who have been collaborating to bring this to fruition. We are excited to be counting down the days until the launch of the site and to share the dynamic new online experience with all our members. Whether it is the website or, perhaps more importantly, key advocacies on behalf of our members, it continues to be an absolute delight to work with our fellow councils. Jim Casey once said, "Determined people working together can do anything." Although our last face to face joint council's meeting was in February 2020, COVID 19 has given rise to opportunities and, indeed, the need to work closely and collaboratively on a number of issues which have arisen. My gratitude to all state councils and my fellow federal councillors for the amazing efforts they all maintain across Australia. I can assure NSW members that federal council and your state council are most certainly here to support you in whatever way you need and we will continue to do so through whatever should come our way. Congratulations Claire for your impeccable leadership over the past twelve months and I wish the incoming NSW State Council every success. Working together as a council or across councils is a tremendous experience as we have heard from a number of past councillors throughout this conference. I encourage members to consider joining a council. We would certainly welcome anyone on board to federal council. As I draw to a close, I wish to let all members know that ICPA(Aust) is looking forward to celebrating, hopefully with many of you, 50 years of ICPA in Longreach, Queensland in 2021. We would love to see as many members as possible attend because none of what we do would be possible without the support and faith of our members and for that we are so grateful. Between now and then let's not forget that, whether face to face, virtual or anything in between, we are all here to support each other because, as I've said before, being isolated doesn't mean you are alone.

PORTFOLIO REPORTS

Allowances

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

2020 has certainly been different for many across Australia and our rural and remote students haven't been immune. The Allowances portfolio continued their advocacy for these students with renewed vigour as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded and issues were brought to our attention. I want to thank you all for attending conference and your presence reinforces the need for us to continue all the hard work that we do as members and State Councillors. ICPA members are the policy makers of the Association. This means that branches bring their issues to our Annual State Conference for other guests to hear the passionate debates. These issues are then taken further, usually to politicians and department advisors to be acted on. ICPA advocates to ensure that ALL students throughout rural and remote areas have equity of access to an education appropriate to their needs - whatever the educational/learning institute.

Rural and remote students continue to be under-represented and this disparity adversely impacts these individuals and their communities. The myriad of issues resulting in this disparity include financial, cultural, personal, educational and social support factors and the Australian education system must strive to deliver excellence and equal opportunity for all Australian students. The rural and remote cohort is more likely to be willing to return to their rural and remote

communities ensuring viability, economic development and resilience of these communities. Despite the restrictions and uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, there have been some positive happenings for rural and remote tertiary students in the last 12 months.

COVID-19

While not only benefiting rural and remote tertiary students, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was pleasing to note that tertiary students and apprentices in receipt of a student payment through Centrelink may have been eligible for extra payments: Economic Support Payment and Coronavirus Supplement. During the pandemic, if students remained enrolled and plan to return to study even if self-isolating at home or their education provider temporarily closed or reduces their study load, they still receive their payments. As is the case at any time, students were reminded to call the Students Line (132490) if any of their circumstances change. For prospective students who are planning to apply for a Centrelink payment during the COVID-19 pandemic, provisions have been made to facilitate the application process. An applicant can use their myGov account to confirm their identity, receive a Centrelink Reference Number (CRN), create a Centrelink online account, link their Centrelink online account to myGov and make their claim online. Additionally, the personal assets test was removed for Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY and Austudy and the liquid assets test waiting period was removed for Youth Allowance and Austudy. Students working to qualify for Youth Allowance as an independent under the workforce participation criteria, was a concern that as a result of COVID-19, job losses and decreased employment opportunities particularly in hospitality, these students may be impacted in their capacity to earn the required 75% of the National Training Wage in their nominated 14-month period. Please get in touch with State Council if you or someone you know is having trouble with this so that we have examples to take to the relevant stakeholders.

National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy

Out of the seven recommendations those of particular note:

- **Tertiary Education Access Payment** of \$5000 for all school leavers who relocate for full-time higher-level tertiary education of at least one-year duration from an outer regional or remote area.
- **Independent Youth Allowance** - allowing greater flexibility in pathways to qualify for independent Youth Allowance. This recommendation enables rural and remote students who successfully undertake their first year of tertiary study externally, including at a Regional Study Hub, to access independent Youth Allowance or independent ABSTUDY.
- **Independent Youth Allowance Concessional Workforce test** - recommends reducing the earnings requirements and a review of the recent changes to the parental means test cut-offs.
- **Fares Allowance** - recommends expansion of the Fares Allowance to enable students who have relocated to return home during their first year of study

Tertiary Access Allowance

The introduction of a TAA remains a high priority. The Tertiary Access Allowance amounts are aligned with the Relocation Scholarship payments, and we continue to advocate for the Tertiary Access Allowance for rural and remote students irrespective of eligibility for Youth Allowance.

Youth Allowance

Liquid Assets Waiting Period. The Department of Families and Social Services reinforced that the Liquid Assets Waiting Period is applied if liquid assets are over \$5,500 for a single student and is tapered up to \$11,500 meaning there is a maximum 13-week waiting period

Youth Allowance Overview 2020. The Youth Allowance Overview document, created as a guide to YA eligibility and application, has been updated in consultation with Services Australia and is available in the January 2020 Pedals and on the ICPA (Aust) website. This document aims to summarise the lengthy YA website information for rural and remote students planning to study full-time and intend to apply for Youth Allowance. It is a guide only. For more information, advice, clarification and further assistance, please phone 132490 (dedicated Youth Allowance phone number) or visit www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/Centrelink/youth-allowance.

Wait time on 132490 phone line. The Minister reinforced that the Department is aiming to streamline services to provide services that allow better access to face-to-face, telephone and onlineservice and reduce the need for customers to call.

Centrelink staff and misinformation. ICPA (Aust) has been assured once again that Centrelink staff manning the 132490-phone line have extensive training, have the resources to answer all queries efficiently and where a Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY or Austudy enquiry is complex, staff have access to specialist staff. While we cannot contact Centrelink on behalf of a member because of Privacy Laws, we can contact them with the issue generally.

Call Back Service. The Department has trialled and implemented a call back service for other services, but this is not in their plans to implement for youth and student services including AIC and YA. The service overall is continuously under review with respect to efficiency and customer service.

Proof of Identity. ICPA (Aust) has been told the reason a student is required to present to a Centrelink office, access point or agent to prove their identity is to protect individuals from identity theft and other forms of identity fraud.

Relocation Scholarship. ICPA (Aust) is continues to push for the Relocation Scholarship to extend to independent Youth Allowance recipients to address the continued disparity in the level of financial assistance provided to help with relocation costs for rural students who have qualified for independent Youth Allowance compared to dependent Youth Allowance assistance. Aligning the TAA with the Relocation Scholarship amounts will benefit the youth allowance students qualifying as an independent as well as students' ineligible for Youth Allowance.

Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship Programme (RRESP)

The Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships Program (RRESP) has supported students in rural, regional and remote areas with the costs of studying at university or a vocational education and training institution. Allowances are not designed to cover all the costs associated with educating our children, but they can and do provide an opportunity of support to families that may never have been able to access these educational opportunities. The difference in educational outcomes between rural and remote students compared to those students in metropolitan areas is well documented. The Allowances that ICPA NSW advocates hard for, go a long way to bridging the educational gap in providing greater equity and access to educational institutions for rural and remote children. However, we always need to do more, especially when we still have so many rural and remote students unable to access any financial support. Sometimes we present motions for a long time before finally seeing progress.

Sometimes we need to review what we are asking for and see how we can word it differently to change the way a situation is viewed by those with the power to approve or make changes. Personal stories make great case studies to present on deputation and help to give real life experiences to our motions.

Each year both state and federal ICPA councils bring your issues to respective state and federal governments for increased financial support through various allowances to assist with educating rural and remote children. On behalf of all ICPA-NSW members, I would like to thank our Federal Council colleagues and NSW State and Federal governments in working together to increase the financial support offered to our rural and remote families. ICPA families are truly grateful. When applying for any allowances, families are encouraged not to self-assess their eligibility, but are encouraged to provide all the information that is required and allow the assessment processes to occur. ICPA-NSW continually updates and provides an annual allowance spreadsheet as a summary of what allowances are available, eligibility criteria, closing dates and contact details. It is available in editions of Top Wire, on the website, Facebook posts or by contacting the allowances convenor.

In closing I would like to thank my fellow State Councillors for all their assistance since my taking on the role of Allowances Convenor and for all the time you give voluntarily to provide assistance to our members.

Tanya Mitchell

Allowances Portfolio

Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools and Hostels Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Boarding Schools, Agricultural High School and School Term Hostels Report.

On behalf of ICPA-NSW, I would like to welcome and thank the Boarding School representatives for attending this conference - your ongoing support is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank Richard Stokes and Thomas Dunsmore from ABSA for all that you and your team have done to help us out during these trying times.

Due to COVID-19, Our annual State Conference was cancelled, Boarding School Expos were cancelled, state borders closed, and students were sent home to attend schooling online. Attending schooling online has had an impact on families, it has been a very long, emotional and financial toll on all families trying to educate their children, a basic, necessary and essential need. A big thank you again to all the schools who have worked so hard during this time to try and minimise disruption to our children's education in so many ways. ICPA-NSW has been lobbying hard on behalf of families affected by boarding interstate.

After COVID began to affect our boarding school students, ICPA-NSW formed a COVID committee to deal with the NSW student border issues because NSW is sandwiched between three states. Thank you to our committee members, Bree Wakefield, Claire Butler and Libby McPhee who spent many hours working on strategies to deal with the border restrictions. In May 2020, ICPA-NSW did a boarding school survey regarding COVID-19 to gauge what the return to boarding was actually looking like. The survey was well received, with a total of 517 responses. Out of those responses, 55% had not returned to their boarding houses and 45% of those had not returned due to social distancing restrictions in the boarding houses. 87% of students had spent the last 14 days prior on their properties anyway due to geographical

isolation. During this time, 64% had nil cases of COVID-19 in their shire. 5% of students who did return to school had to quarantine for 14 days. The survey was a very valuable tool in our advocacy for 'No borders for boarders'.

At the start of the school year 2020, ICPA-NSW followed ICPA-QLD's lead and wrote to the boarding schools thanking them for the support they give to our member's children. We highlighted the experiences children across rural and remote NSW had over the 2019 summer holidays with the catastrophic bushfires and the drought that was ravaging the state. Many thanks to the boarding schools for distributing this letter throughout your boarding houses so that staff were aware of what these students were going through. You took this information on board and embraced it in the spirit that was intended.

At the October Deputation ICPA-NSW raised the issue of a need for Girls Agricultural Boarding facility in the Northern NSW region as this has been a motion raised at numerous conferences previously. If members have any case studies on this issue, please contact me. Currently plans are in place for the Boarding Schools Expos to be held in 2021 and we look forward to seeing our members at these events.

Dates for the Boarding Schools Expos for 2021:

Dubbo Expo – 14-15 May 2021

Griffith – 3 June 2021

Wagga Wagga – 4-5 June 2021

Narrabri – 23-24 July 2021

Looking forward, we are hoping that our boarding students will not have as many disruptions as experienced during 2020, but we are prepared to deal with any issues that arise and support our members to the best of our ability.

Monique Watkin

Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools and Hostels Portfolio

Communications Report

Madam President, Distinguished Guests, Councillors and fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the 2021 Communications Report to you today.

Ramifications for Education with the Global Pandemic

Like no other year, 2020 was the year that Communication for education was a reality for many rural and remote students, as students who had never done online learning before navigated their way through this platform for their day-to-day lessons. Due to the pandemic, most boarding school students spent the whole of Term II in 2020 at home and parts thereof for the following terms. ICPA NSW is ever grateful to NBN Co who allowed so much of this online learning to happen through SkyMuster Plus because NBN Co swiftly upgraded plans to allow unmetering of many educational sites and offered affordable data plans, as well as being ready to troubleshoot any problems members were experiencing. Thank you NBN Co, we can't thank you enough.

In the space of home learning, the schools did an amazing job to ensure from their end, that portals were set up and work was accessible online. We at ICPA NSW are in awe of our boarding schools and how they tackled the complex task of allowing rural and remote students

to continue their studies from such far-flung distances. It is not surprising that the peak for data usage moved from night to all day, when considering the ramifications of people working from home and students doing online learning. It is also not surprising to learn that the attendance of pre-schoolers attending preschool increased fourfold during the pandemic, as these students embraced online learning. There is one positive from the pandemic and that is that telecommunications are moving forward in the digitalised world at a much faster pace than would have otherwise occurred.

Unmetered Educational Sites

As I write this report, Telstra is working with ICPA (Aust) to update the unmetered educational sites they offer. Telstra is open to suggestions, so if you have any suggestions, please get in touch with me.

ICPA NSW membership of the Telstra RAC

ICPA NSW continues to be a member of the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) for Telstra. This dialogue and meetings are extremely worthwhile as all industries who utilise communication have a seat at the table, and we therefore have an opportunity to discuss with the Telstra Rural and Remote Department, issues pertinent to our members.

Telstra Regional Advisory Network (RAN)

Recently, Telstra has launched the Regional Advisory Network (RAN) which is designed to help regional customers with connectivity issues be it at home, in the business or on the road. Telstra is keen to fix these problems by hopefully putting the right people on the job who understand the issue and who can find a resolution.

Telstra Call Centres

ICPA NSW is happy to hear that the Telstra off shore call centres are being moved back to Australian shores. These call centres were shut down until mid-August due to the pandemic, and all calls were rerouted back to Australia. This has demonstrated that customers being answered by an Australian Call centre is much more effective, hence the expediting of this move back to Australia. Customers were experiencing larger wait times for their calls to be answered. Staff in Australia who were redirected to answering calls from home, which generally were bound for the centres, enjoyed the experience of helping customers. From an ICPA NSW point of view these centres cannot return to Australia fast enough, as the end of 2021 is still too far away. The Namoi Branch had a motion in the Conference agenda last year asking "That ICPA-NSW continues to liaise with Telstra to ensure that there is a direct line as a point of contact within Australia for all rural and remote customers." It is hoped with the return of these call centres to Australia that the contact will be much more direct and meaningful.

Digital Literacy

Digital Literacy is a problem for many, and as we move faster towards more digitalised communication avenues, the literacy problem will be ever so prevalent. If you are unsure you need to ask your question. Rumours such as 'you will lose your landline if you switch to an NBN connection', is a myth. The other common rumour is 'I am not able to get an NBN connection'.

That is far from the truth. The only reason you would not be able to get an NBN connection is because you are with a provider that does not offer an NBN connection.

NBN Co meetings

Throughout the year, ICPA NSW has been lobbying for a structure whereby we can have

regular contact with NBN Co. This is an easy way to communicate issues, before they are bigger issues, which is very helpful to our membership. We are hopeful of a structure during 2021.

Twelve satellite schools getting fibre cable connections

In October 2020, there was much excitement amongst the membership and in particular the Balranald and Rankin Springs Branches when Minister Sarah Mitchell, Minister for Education in NSW announced that the twelve remaining regional schools connected by satellite will be connected to fibre cables over the next eighteen months. ICPA NSW has been lobbying many governments over many years to get the communication for these schools improved. The twelve schools are: Booligal Public School, Clare Public School, Colo Heights Public School, Enngonia Public School, Louth Public School, Macdonald Valley Public School, Naradhan Public School, North Star Public School, Upper Coopers Creek Public School, Wanaaring Public School, Wattle Flat Public School, Weilmoringle Public School. The whole school communities will share in the benefits of this fibre connection, as administration tasks will enjoy the reliable connection, whilst the students will be able to watch programs like 'Behind the News', which are part of the curriculum. Whilst this win is not transferring the said schools to the NBN sky muster satellite, we are certainly hopeful that communications for these schools will be much more reliable and timelier.

3G Closure

Telstra is keen to work with customers and stakeholders around any concerns they have about changing devices or technology types to be ready for the 3G closure. Telstra has already begun planning the process to upgrade areas where there is only 3G coverage to 4G. Relevant Ministers have not answered the call from the Naomi Branch in resolution A 23 in the 2020 conference agenda, "to provide a rebate for rural and remote customers who will need to upgrade equipment (aerials and boosters) to change from 3G to 4G." ICPA (Aust) is also working on this resolution. The Booligal tower is to be upgraded from a 3G to 4G tower in January 2021

Lack of Service

There have been numerous complaints that the mobile service has dropped considerably. Members report that in areas previously where they use to get service, the service is no longer available. ICPANSW has made Telstra aware of this. Telstra is keen to hear about any areas with as much specifics as possible. These specifics could be (date, time, location, device, and for how many kilometres). Please be in touch with me if you can provide such information, as it may fast-track a solution.

Clare and Tilpa Small Cells

Late in 2020 the small cell tower was installed at Clare. The Balranald branch has been vigilant in bringing this request to previous conferences. There were some land acquisition issues delaying the installation of the tower. In the later part of 2020 the Tilpa, Naradhan, Packsaddle, Pimpara Lake Road, Spring Plains, Naree Station, The Lake Tower, Enngonia and Monteagle all had small cells switched on.

Mobile Black Spot Programme

The two motions in the 2020 conference agenda; A 25 from Monaro Branch asking "That ICPA NSW assist ICPA (Aust) to continue lobbying all telecommunication companies and governments for mobile service coverage in rural and remote blackspot areas," and A 26 from Naomi Branch "That ICPA NSW continues to assist ICPA (Aust) to advocate for better mobile coverage in rural and remote areas" have been in our deputation discussion papers and raised

at these meetings and letters written. In September, Telstra was supposed to have installed 80 mobile black spot towers across Australia in 2020. Moving forward this issue will remain on our agendas.

Regional Tech Hub

The Regional Tech Hub which is under the auspices of the National Farmers Federation is up and running. Before the establishment of the Tech Hub, BIRRR provided this vital service. Congratulations to BIRRR on an extraordinary service well done. ICPA (Aust) sits on the Stakeholder Reference Group for the Regional Tech Hub which meets regularly. For independent, free advice about telecommunication services for regional, rural and remote Australians go to <https://regionaltechhub.org.au/> or call their hotline on 1300 081 029.

Texting over WIFI

During 2020 consumers who could not text on a WiFi connection gained the privilege. You can use WiFi calling and messaging any time that your phone has a steady WiFi signal. You can do so without a cellular connection, so even if your phone is not able to make regular calls, you can WiFi call/text as long as you have the internet. This allows you to bypass expensive cell phone plans.

NBN Co Donated Computers to Education

Late in 2020 the NBN Co donated 100 computers to education uses. ICPA NSW is very proud to be able to support this program and assist NBN Co with the delivery of the refurbished computers, which were only about two years old. Distance education and School of the Air families received some of the computers allocated to NSW whilst the Mungindi Community Preschool was able to get two for the students to use whilst at Preschool.

Emerging Minds Podcast on Drought

I represented ICPA-NSW and sat on the Committee with other stakeholders from South Australia and New South Wales to assist Emerging Minds develop Podcasts about drought in an effort to help people understand how young children are affected and have to cope with the effects of drought on the rural family enterprise. The eight series podcast "Talking about Drought" focussed on supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of children, with a unique lens on those aged 0-12 years. In a six-month period 3,048 people have listened to the podcasts. It was a rewarding experience. The National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health which is funded by the Australian Government provided the funds for the podcasts.

Understanding Screen Addiction and Responsible Digital Use

Screen addiction is becoming a very real problem. This problem has become ever so prevalent with Covid 19 lockdowns. However, it is more than time children and adults learn and develop healthier digital habits. There is now a useful resource called "Understanding Screen Addiction and Responsible Digital Use". This resource talks about how technology has changed over the years with 72% of adults considering a smartphone their most essential device. This addiction and devices affect our brains and behaviours. Please take some time to check the helpful tips and useful advice for tackling device addiction, at <https://www.comparethemarket.com/broadband/content/screen-usage-guide/>

Active and Creative Kids Vouchers

There is still \$1million of unspent kids vouchers in New South Wales. The Office of Sport in NSW wouldlike parents to think about how they can use these vouchers. There are two Active vouchers available per year and one Creative voucher. The vouchers can be sourced from Service NSW.

Libby McPhee

Communications Portfolio

Distance Education/ AHVISE Report

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

As my first year on State council comes to an end, it has been a privilege and a learning curve to represent like-minded parents, you our members from across NSW. Firstly, I would like to thank allof State Council for your help, patience, and support over the last year as I have learnt the rope. Secondly, thank you to our member for allowing me to represent the issues we face in DistanceEducation. Having not been a typical year for anyone, we have embraced technology to its fullest and have had many internal, department, government meetings and Federal conference over Zoom. We have facedsome issues along the way, but overall, this method has proven successful for us to continue to voiceyour motions to the relevant stakeholders during COVID-19.

Some of the things that we have been working this year include the following;

- Mark Latham’s Parliamentary review of the New South Wales School Curriculum – we wereable to use our motions to help support our suggestions, this was then taken to the next level and ICPA-NSW was invited to speak in Canberra at Parliament.
- Rural and Remote Strategy Group, NSW Department of Education – we made suggestions onhow to improve their survey to get the most out of their results.
- Advocating the importance of getting home isolated Distance Education children back into their various education centres after COVID-19.
- Meetings with Department of Education relating to Preschool Distance Education and what that would look like moving forward, we were able to give feedback and comment on some of our motions particularly on the Bourke Walgett School of Distance Education having access to in person preschool through Dubbo, and them attending school functions/classrooms.

Following the motion regarding School of the Air Broken Hill P&C unable to hold meeting via online/tele-conferencing, we wrote a letter to P&C Federation to see if changes could be made to their constitution. We were told that this was already in the pipeline due to the restrictions of COVID-19. On the 26th May 2020 the P&C Federation announced that “due to restrictions on public meetings, P&C Federation has advocated on behalf of the NSW P&C Associations to amend the Prescribed Associations (the constitution of P&C Associations that are incorporated) to allow P&C Associations to meet virtually.”¹

There are a few requirements, these can be viewed on their website.

It was also a very exciting year with the first Geographically Isolated Distance Education Day on the 1st December 2020. This is a day to celebrate those children, parents, and supervisors who educate their children at home due to their location and work hard to ensure these children get quality education.

After months of teleconferencing or Zoom meetings, State Council was finally able to get together in August. This an important meeting for us to discuss vital component of ICPA-NSW was greatly beneficial for me to get my head around the finer details and procedures of being on State Council. We were able to organise what Deputation might look like for 2020, and the outcome was Zoom meetings. I was unable to attend Deputation in person due to personal commitments (teaching my children through DE), but I was able to dial into several important meetings. These meetings were highly successful, and we were able to put forward the issues our children are facing in the Distance Education portfolio. At the end of 2020 start of 2021 we worked on a survey for our members to complete in regards to Distance Education technology resources after becoming aware many families were having issues. We have will use this information and will continue to present this to the relevant departments.

Thank you to Hay for hosting, we appreciate the time, hard work and effort all your members have put in to make this a successful conference. 2020 was such an uncertain year, and to be able to be here is a feat in its own! So, for 2021, after the whole of Australia experienced what Distance Education is like and the challenges we face daily, let's use that to continue to promote and improve Distance Education for our isolated children.

Laura Stalley
Distance Education Portfolio

Early Childhood Report

Although it was disappointing not to have held State Conference last year there has been some silver linings. 2020 showed Australia what it could achieve expediently without extensive bureaucratic discussion, when there was a dire need. During the latter part of the "Year of COVID-19 2020", ICPA-NSW Early Childhood (EC) portfolio has had opportunities to use the narratives and statistics presented with the 2020 Conference motions to explain some of the difficulties remote students have in obtaining quality EC education, as ICPA-NSW were to contribute to two research forums. It is hoped that the information gathered is used to inform policy and that, where the need is adjudged to be dire, the necessary changes are made swiftly.

Firstly, as stakeholders in the NSW Curriculum review ICPA-NSW was invited to comment on Professor Geoff Masters's findings of the current curriculum and to evaluate to what extent his recommendations addressed those findings' failures. The quote below demonstrates the opportunity ICPA-NSW took to explain that the following two issues had largely been unaddressed and were able to make that salient point.

Remote three- and four-year olds' criteria for priority access to early childhood education
 Services are required to give equal priority of access to:

- children who are at least four years old on or before the 31st July in that preschool year and not enrolled or registered at a school.

- children who are at least three years old on or before 31st July in that preschool year and from low income and/or Aboriginal families
- children with English language needs
- children with disability and additional needs
- children who are at risk of significant harm (from a child protection perspective).

There is no order of priority assigned to the list of points above. Priority must be given to the groups outlined above before any other groups, including non-equity three-year olds.

The Masters review has acknowledged the following: -.

“The early years of school are crucial in establishing foundations for future learning success. By the time they commence school, children are at widely varying points in their learning and development. They have very different levels of social and emotional maturity, language skills, cognitive development, and psychomotor development. The challenge in these early years is to ensure that everychild, especially those with developmental delays and from disadvantaged backgrounds, gets off to a good start and builds the foundations for subsequent success at school.”

ICPA-NSW lobbies for the inclusion of remote and very remote children in the above criteria.

Lack of practical access to preschool for remote families

For there to be a realistic goal of language acquisition proficiency for students to be able to participate in the curriculum of utmost importance in isolated areas is, access to quality early childhood education. Currently, in Far Western NSW some four-year-olds are unable to achieve any of their prescribed 600 hours pre-schooling. To ensure practical access in regional, remote and very remote NSW ICPA-NSW recommends the following.

- The travelling mobile resource units must be continually funded.
- Preschools must be established immediately in remote locations with a trained cohort of staff.
- The School Drive Subsidy needs to be immediately extended to pre-schoolers.

Establishment of remote preschools

In 2014 ICPA-NSW began to action a motion from the far west of NSW. It was apparent that some of our students were unable to ever achieve an equitable education. ICPA-NSW then identified remote and very remote locations where the only preschool four-year olds had access to, was via Distance Education (DE) and yet they did not necessarily have a supervisor. ICPA-NSW explained the inequity to the first NSW Minister for Early Childhood, Lindsay Williams. ICPA-NSW's location list was based on distances, roads' conditions, population socio economic make up and the fact that there was already a village school which in most cases had an empty room.

In 2017, following the launch of the Rural and Remote Education Human Resources Strategy the Early Childhood and Child Care Directorate (ECECD) developed a mechanism to establish remote preschools. The Community Safety Net Service enables Start Strong funding to be utilised to address the lack of practical access to preschool in remote and very remote NSW locations. <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/start-strong/start-strong-guidelines>, which includes a loading for outer regional, remote and very remote services.

The list below is the original list proposed by ICPA-NSW.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| • Clare | • Marra Creek |
| • Palinyewah | • Louth |

- Wanaaring
- Weilmoringle
- Carinda
- Hermidale
- White Cliffs
- Tibooburra
- Pooncarie

Some of the places listed above have been considered not remote enough as per their ARIA rating. The ECECD has collated another list. See below. At the time of writing ICPA-NSW is not aware of any of these places having been actioned for preschool implementation by the Minister. ICPA-NSW wishes to further discuss the list below. ICPA-NSW welcomes Ivanhoe being included on the department's list below.

- Bulla
- Kulwin
- Ivanhoe
- Hungerford (NSW)
- Milparinka
- Tibooburra
- Tilpa
- Noona
- White Cliffs

In 2021 Weilmoringle and Louth preschools are operational. While Community Connections Solutions Australia (CCSA) has organised the governance, site and provider for Wanaaring the final aspect of sustainable delivery; the availability of trained staff has meant it is not operating on site. ICPA-NSW asked for the governance coordinator in future to understand of the complexities in developing a two-person teaching cohort in isolated regions. Simply stated, that there needs to be a time advantage achieved through communicating effectively with local people to ensure that there are eager people studying at the minimum the mandatory Certificate III in Early Childhood Support and then the Diploma in Early Childhood. This is to ensure that when the building site is finalised to standard and the governance is able to be handed over to the chosen provider, there are trained people to deliver the preschool. The provider for Weilmoringle is the Mary McKillop Foundation whereas Louth and Wanaaring preschools' provider is to be the Cobar Shire. In discussion with Cobar Far West Family Day Care ICPA-NSW was pleased to understand that the two people on site, travel remuneration and waiving of qualifications to begin, are all issues they are endeavouring to address with their Start Strong funding.

However, their qualifications and travel logistics over such vast areas, cause concern as time is of the essence. At the time of writing these issues are still being worked on to have Wanaaring Preschool operating on site. ICPA-NSW was able to reiterate the above points during a zoom meeting with Dr Lynda Pinnington-Wilson, Rural and Remote Education Program Coordinator. Rural and Pathways. ICPA-NSW advocates for practical preschool access in remote and very remote communities and believes that the reality of establishing preschools was taking too long to organize providers, site and staff. This meeting also afforded an opportunity to action another early childhood motion.

Access to Preschool via Bourke Walgett School Of Distance Education

To overcome Bourke and Walgett students enrolling in other centres and to provide a more accessible preschooling, ICPA-NSW recommends Dubbo School Of Distance Education preschool teachers attend all school gatherings conducted at either Bourke or Walgett by

Bourke Walgett School of Distance Education to ensure local students attend their local Distance Education centre.

ICPA-NSW has, in a September 2020 teleconference with Mike Tom, Rural and Distance Education Bathurst, understood then the above motion will be actioned in 2021. Lack of salary parity between four year trained early childhood teachers and four year trained primary and high school teachers. It is necessary for early childhood teachers to be offered the same salary package as their four-year trained colleagues who are working in primary and high schools. A poignant example of this inequity is that of an early childhood educator travelling over 200 kilometres a day at her expense to deliver the preschool program at Louth. Currently, the pay gap is so significant it is virtually impossible to recruit and retain teachers in early childhood centres and new recruits often use early childhood jobs as a steppingstone into the better paid positions in the primary school sector. Attracting and retaining teaching staff is particularly unsustainable in the remote and very remote context because the early childhood salary packages are without comparable incentives such as holiday pay, provision for housing, access to professional support and travel to attend professional development.

As mentioned, silver linings for 2020 are evident. City and bush people are relishing in being able to communicate so effortlessly via online forums and urban folk appreciate isolated families' practical approach to 'doing school at home', a skill set honed over generations. Practical and sustainable solutions to problems are being rediscovered or invented. All levels of government are generally being applauded for showing examples of those capabilities through various ways in 2020. ICPA-NSW hopes fervently that those lessons in immediate strategizing could be adopted for NSW isolated students.

ICPA-NSW values continued open communication with the various departments who control the 'levers' to allow sustainable access to quality education in regional, remote and very remote NSW. ICPA-NSW appreciates the positive rhetoric from the current NSW government however several of the understood and agreed to issues have now been tabled for too long.

Deborah Nielsen
Early Childhood Portfolio

Health and Wellbeing COVID-19 Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Health and Wellbeing – COVID-19 Report.

2020 brought many new challenges to boarding, particularly for those kids attending school interstate. The beginning of the pandemic in Australia saw some states close their borders to avoid the transfer of COVID-19. This proceeded to have a huge effect on NSW families, whose children boarded in SA, QLD and Victoria. It became quickly apparent that ICPA-NSW would need to advocate for these families, as state governments were fiercely protecting their states and were not seeing the importance of interstate students having access to their education. This personally affected our family, as my son Angus began his boarding journey in Adelaide last year. He completed two 14-day quarantines, missing four weeks of the school year which had a huge effect on his schooling. When ICPA-NSW decided to form a COVID Committee to assist their many members battling cross border issues, I was asked to join as the South

Australian Parent representative and was also co-opted onto state council.

From the ICPA-NSW surveys, there were 24 NSW families whose children boarded in South Australia, 229 in Queensland and 68 in Victoria. ICPA-NSW also established that there were a number of rural Victorian children boarding in NSW. Each group were affected by border closures throughout 2020.

South Australia

South Australia closed its border to all other states on the 21st March, 2020. Interstate boarders were sent home and commenced remote learning for the remainder of Term 1. Like the rest of Australia, this was a disjointed process as most schools clambered to completely change their delivery of learning. When face to face learning resumed in Term 2, those students that returned to South Australia had to complete 14 days of quarantine before they were able to commence school. Some families chose to complete this at private residences in SA, while other students were able to quarantine at their boarding houses. My son Angus quarantined in his room at Prince Alfred College. He had his meals delivered and was only able to spend two 10 minutes sessions outside each day, wearing a mask and gloves. I liken it to solitary confinement and although he coped fine mentally, we decided that we would not put him in that situation again.

Other schools were unable to welcome students back to boarding at all, as their facilities did not meet the strict criteria under the AHPPC guidelines and were not deemed “COVID safe”. This was a confusing time for families, with such difficulties arising from something as simple as accessing education, just because they lived in a different state. In these early days, many letters were written to relevant state and federal ministers to convey their plight and hoping that the SA government and SA Health would see sense and categorise these children as essential travellers. Frustration was felt when industries such as mining were deemed more important than the education of the next generation. There was also great concern that with long term border closures, parents would not have access to their children and that this uncertainty would pose significant risk to their mental health. It was around this time that ICPA (Aust) and other state councils, including ICPA-NSW, came on board. The disproportionate hardship of interstate boarders accessing their education had become a national issue and particularly for NSW families. They began advocating for recognition of essential traveller status for interstate boarders and for quarantine restrictions to be lifted. Contact was made with politicians at a state and federal level and media releases written to get more attention brought to the issue. Media interest was generated quickly, and parents and state councillors conducted many radio interviews and spoke to various journalists for newspaper and tv stories. ICPA-NSW would like to thank these media outlets for their time and coverage of this important issue. In the meantime, students boarding in SA schools were adhering to strict guidelines. Staggered mealtimes, social distancing and restricted leave to name a few. My son’s school was only allowing leave with immediate family, which was another blow for interstate parents as we couldn’t even cross the border to get to our children. Some students were suffering from anxiety caused by the unknown of when they would be able to return home to see their loved ones and the worry of having to quarantine for a second or third time which left them vulnerable and scared.

At the commencement of Term 3, the SA/NSW border was not opened as promised, due to a rise in COVID-19 cases. ICPA-NSW worked quickly to urge the SA government to take into consideration that a majority of their affected members, were able to self-isolate on their geographically isolated properties and posed no risk of bringing COVID-19 into SA. ICPA-NSW received information from the SA Premier’s office that an exemption from quarantine would need to be provided by SA Health and that this would be considered on a case-by-case basis by the transition team. Some families were able to receive an exemption due to the rural

and remote locality of their properties, which was a big win for ICPA-NSW.

Throughout the months of dealing with SA Government, SA Health and SAPOL it was clear that there were many inconsistencies. Directives were constantly changing and there was misinformation given at border crossings. One family were denied a rural and remote exemption despite living on a geographically isolated property and having self-isolated for the school holidays. At the SA border they were granted an exemption for their son to return to boarding in Adelaide. This was revoked three days later after their child had already returned to school, as the policemen, who were only trying to make a sensible decision, did not have the authority to give exemptions. However, a week before they had. The inconsistencies were frustrating to say the least. Another family were not allowed to have their son's car picked up by friend from the SA border and delivered to him in Adelaide, as it had been in Victoria and may contain COVID-19. They were only denied at the border, after they had driven 120kms from Mildura. There are so many more stories like these that I could share.

With all the inconsistencies and no real solution for interstate boarders, ICPA-NSW and ICPA NT developed a survey to gather data on the exact number of students affected and if they were able to self-isolate. The results really showcased the dire situation that NSW families were facing.

Minister for Regional Education Andrew Gee and Senator for NSW Perin Davey took particular interest in our plight and became very vocal on the unfair situation. Their passion, understanding and common-sense approach were voiced loud and clear, with Minister Gee presenting our survey results on Sky News. This was after the survey had in fact been tabled at National Cabinet. He also organised a round table discussion with government officials and relevant stakeholders. It became clear that these families needed a consistent and clear nationwide framework moving forward. With the Term III holidays looming and the possibility of a third quarantine for some students, ICPA-NSW made good use of their contacts at SAPOL and SA Health and worked with families to get nearly all the NSW children, who boarded in SA, exemptions from quarantine. The families applied to SA Health with the package of documents and templates that were developed by ICPA-NSW. The border was opened before Term IV began, but it was a huge relief for families to know that their children could come home for holidays and return to finish the school year without quarantining. The final school term of 2020 was not without drama. When SA announced their five day lockdown at 2:00pm on the 20th November, families scrambled to get their children out of the state by midnight. 2021 began with a border closure and previous exemption arrangements with SA Health were revoked. Thankfully the borders opened before the school year commenced, but this highlights the need for a permanent coordinated and consistent approach moving forward.

Queensland

Boarding schools ended a few days early in Term I because of the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Term II was spent at home, schooling from all the various distances, using Microsoft Teams effectively to communicate with teachers. Some children, and all year 12 students were encouraged to return to school for the last four weeks of Term II. The restrictions made boarding very different and some of the younger students found the restrictions hard to handle, especially feeling lonely in dormitories because of the social distancing rules. The QLD Chief Health Officer issued a statement allowing children to return without quarantining, saying that it would be disproportionate to a rural/remote child's education to make them quarantine, however at the end of Term II things took a dramatic turn for the worse and it became apparent that if children returned home to NSW for school holidays, they would have to quarantine in QLD on return. Considering the children were returning to rural and remote properties, ICPA-NSW pivoted quickly into a vigorous campaign.

Term III saw the Queensland Government established a border bubble on postcodes on both sides of the border to allow free movement for these families living in the bubble to travel into their towns across the border. Those living on the border also access school in the other state on a day-to-day basis. The bubble was fine for some, but the families who were left out because of the cut off of the postcode area. This was as simple as across the road. Anxiety, mental stress and emotional unrest set in for parents and students as the hard close on the border and the inequitable situation with the postcodes took its toll. It was frightening to think parents and students were not seeing each other for a whole term.

In conjunction with ICPA(Aust) and ICPA Qld Inc, much advocacy took place to try and get the Queensland Premier and Chief Health officer to understand the plight. This advocacy included an online rally, meetings, numerous letters, constant media coverage being print, radio and TV. ICPA-NSW put together a very heartfelt and to the point video on Facebook sharing stories from students and parents many kilometres apart telling their sad and emotional stories. The video shared succinct photos of pets missing students, and younger siblings traumatised by not seeing sisters and brothers for the September holidays. Mayors of shires, school principals and ABSA joined the constant lobbying, which most of the time seemed to be falling on deaf ears by State Government Officials. In August at the Federal conference of ICPA (Aust), ICPA-NSW successfully moved a motion “That ICPA(Aust) urge the Minister for Regional Education to establish an Isolated Children’s Pandemic Advisory Group made up of State and Federal Education Ministers and Relevant Authorities, ABSA and ICPA representatives to ensure consistent decisions are made specific to the needs of geographically isolated children who must cross the state borders in order to access education.” This motion was carried.

Right at the end of Term III, education was given an exemption to travel to Queensland and collect students and return without quarantining in Term IV, as long as the whole family stayed on their own property or in their house yard and did not have visitors. Families were to arrive at the Queensland border with a signed Statutory Declaration declaring this was the case. Throughout the holidays constant changes from the Government continued. All the while there was no COVID-19 cases anywhere in the northern part of New South Wales. On return to school parents were not allowed into boarding houses to settle their children. To assist parents, ICPA-NSW provided members with a pack which consisted of a Statutory Declaration Template, a travel diary and property risk management plans. Many important school functions such as formals, graduation and valedictory dinners were cancelled or changed to meet the rules of the restrictions. These milestones are important for the students involved, so we can imagine the disappointment that followed such changes.

2021 has seen a return of all students without hiccups. Border passes were required to cross the border to ensure people had not been in one of the 35 Local Government areas around Sydney where COVID-19 had been. Parents were allowed into boarding houses if they used the QR code or signed in. As from 1st February, 2021, there will be no Queensland border check point, and no border pass required. It is crazy to think that since March 2020 until now New South Wales residents have only had 3 weeks of crossing the border without a pass.

Victoria

With the ongoing outbreaks in Victoria, boarding students spent the better part of six months remote learning. On the 7th July, when the NSW Government closed the border, ICPA-NSW at least had the benefit of knowing who to contact within Parliament to advocate for the Public Health Order to specifically recognise school students, who must travel interstate to access an education. We did wonder if our initial requests to “not repeat what happened in SA” had in fact backfired when there was indeed a rule made for boarding children, however it stated that

a child boarding in Victoria must return home to NSW via flying through the Sydney airport. ICPA-NSW vigorously advocated against this condition because it was completely unacceptable to fly minors through international airports and then have parents pick them up from Sydney airport and potentially spread COVID-19 into the regions when all the while a child could travel the most direct sterile corridor home to isolate on their farm. There were case by case issues whereby exemptions were granted, during this brief time, however, it needs to be noted that ICPA-NSW did in fact have members who had children who did have to fly into Sydney airport and then drive 900kms home. It was of course a huge relief when eventually an 8B permit was issued for the movement of children and their parents across the NSW/Vic border. There was also the reverse situation with children who lived in Victoria and went to school in NSW, and of course the recent Victorian border closure which caused a few headaches along the way. However, a large border bubble has protected many members from angst. School is now back but the snap shutdown recently and brief return to remote learning is a reminder that this can change at any moment.

ICPA-NSW would particularly like to thank Superintendent Scott Denny, SA Police Border Commander and the Cross Border Commissioners from both NSW and Victoria (Luke Wilson and Emma Watts especially), Senator for NSW Perin Davey, NSW Minister for Education Sarah Mitchell and her advisor Sally Taylor, Roy Butler MP, Kate Warby, Secretary of Moree Branch, Alana Moller, President ICPA(Aust) and Minister for Regional Education, Andrew Gee and all the ICPA State Presidents for being available to answer our queries and for quickly responding to some urgent situations that arose. To the public servants especially who made themselves available outside normal business hours, even during the highest moments of deep frustration, ICPA-NSW holds the deepest respect for the commitment these people had to resolving situations as they arose. There are some truly professional people out there who genuinely care and that is attested by their willingness to trust us with their direct mobile phone numbers and speak to us after hours so that we could get outcomes as quickly as possible.

To my fellow NSW boarding parents, the way you have all conducted yourself throughout this ordeal just goes to show how resilient, versatile and adaptable you all are. We spent the year flying blind and dealing with each blow as it came. We stood our ground and will continue to do whatever we need to, to ensure our kids can have access to their education and be able to return home for holidays and recharge. As a parent I cannot thank ICPA-NSW enough for their commitment and continuous support in what has been the rollercoaster ride of the COVID-19 pandemic. So very grateful for your persistence when we weren't given the answers we were looking for and the time invested in helping our kids is just incredible. It has been an absolute pleasure to work closely with Claire, Libby and Mon on the cross-border issues. We had some great achievements in 2020 for families and although it is clear that we will be facing the same issues heading into 2021, we will continue to advocate for our members to ensure that their interstate boarders have access to their vital education.

Looking forward, ICPA-NSW are committed to seeing the development of clear and sensible directives from relevant state governments and will continue to advocate for equity in access to education for affected families.

Bree Wakefield

Health and Wellbeing Portfolio

Rural Schools Report

Mr President, distinguished guests, fellow ICPA members, ladies and gentlemen. It gives me great pleasure to present the Rural Schools report.

I can only start by saying what a different year 2020 was, not only for ICPA but everyone worldwide. March saw the state conference cancelled in Moree in the early days of the pandemic but as the year progressed nearly all gatherings were cancelled. Our mini deputation in June and our main deputation in October were also cancelled. We decided that we would have the main deputation in Dubbo in October and have ZOOM meetings with the relevant politicians and other stakeholders. Although a great alternative not quite the same as face-to-face meetings. Since my last report ICPA-NSW was invited to participate via ZOOM in the “Rural and Remote Consultation Process” these were in the form of forums and meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders across NSW to help shape the future of rural and remote education. Primarily it was to complete an online survey, but ICPA-NSW was able to submit a paper using the four key areas that were identified.

- Investing in and valuing our people
- Strengthening quality teaching and learning
- Enabling learning environments
- Building productive partnerships

With these key areas identified ICPA-NSW submitted a paper using many of our motions, giving ideas, solutions and suggestions that we believe could improve educational outcomes in regional and remote areas.

In August 2020 ICPA-NSW sent a submission to the Parliamentary Review of the New South Wales School Curriculum NSW Portfolio Committee No. 3. Education.

The first part of the inquiry was based mostly on the “Masters Curriculum Review”. ICPA-NSW supports many of Professor Geoff Masters findings especially the overcrowded curriculum and the need to provide every child with solid foundations in the basics, especially oral language development, early reading, writing skills, early mathematics knowledge and skills. Once again ICPA-NSW was able to include many motions in answering the “Terms of Reference” including the importance of the 600 hours for pre-schoolers, remote and very remote children be eligible for the School Drive Subsidy and the need to be included in the priority group for three-year-olds which would allow rural and remote students access to their 600 hours of preschool over two years. In question 4 of the terms of reference it was asked “any other related matters”, in this question we were able to put many other motions that we felt relevant to education such as better internet connection for remote schools, expansion of mobile coverage, second computers for School of the Air (SOTA) students, multiple visits by directors to remote schools, the importance of keeping the RAR positions, the Rural Experience programs, and the handover between principals.

On the 4th of November, Deborah Nielsen and myself gave evidence at a hearing for the Inquiry into the Review of NSW School Curriculum via videoconference. The committee we met with included The Hon. Mark Latham who was the chair, The Hon. Anthony D’Adam, The Hon. Wes Fang, The Hon. Scott Farlow, Mr David Shoebridge and present by videoconference was The Hon. Courtney Houssos and The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox (Deputy Chair). This once again gave us the opportunity to discuss several of our motions and believe that it is another great platform to share as much information as we can with current politicians.

ICPA-NSW was asked to be a representative on the community consultation group by NSW Centre for Effective Reading. The Centre for Effective Reading is drafting their strategic

direction for the next four years. As Rural Schools' Portfolio holder, I attended the first initial meeting to outline the draft strategic improvement plan. There will be ongoing meetings to focus on implementation and progress monitoring of the plan and annual reflection. The Centre for Effective Reading gives direct support for rural and remote primary school aged students with complex reading difficulties and their teachers. The centre's functions include assessment and diagnosis, intervention, professional learning and support, research and development. Their hubs are in Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Manly and Westmead and are incredibly supportive of our rural and remote children.

Our deputation in October 2020 was held at Dubbo, once again giving us the opportunity to meet with politicians via ZOOM and although it was vastly different to our Sydney deputation proved to be incredibly positive. We met with not only politicians but Department of Education personnel and other educational stakeholders some of which were face-to-face. NSW-ICPA was able to meet with The Hon. Sarah Mitchell via ZOOM this is greatly beneficial for rural schools' motions as most would be directed to the Minister for Education. Many motions were put forward and it was great to have some discussion and feedback.

While at deputation a Media Release was issued stating that "New South Wales public school students including those in the state's most remote areas, will soon have access to high-speed connectivity under a new partnership between Telstra and the New South Wales Department of Education." Students could experience a more than ten-fold increase in data speeds via a massive bandwidth boost as well as fibre optic connectivity. This new \$328 million project will connect the state's 12 remaining schools to the high-speed solution. These include the remaining satellite schools which ICPA have been lobbying for better connectivity for some time.

The following schools are included in this roll out:

- Louth
- Wanaaring
- Clare
- Naradhan
- Booligal
- Enngonia
- North Star
- Weilmoringle

The project will be progressively rolled out over the next 18 months. ICPA-NSW thanks the NSW Department of Education and Telstra as this will make a huge difference to our rural and remote satellite schools.

As I conclude, I would like to say to ICPA members please do not be disillusioned that a motion that has been taken to the relevant department and despite the minister agreeing with the motion and circumstances still appears not to be actioned. Your State Council takes each motion, whether it is a new motion or a recurring motion that has been presented for many years, to the applicable department with detailed information and enthusiasm every time. Although disappointing for council that, despite a positive meeting and the Department or Minister siding with ICPA and understanding the issue, progress moves so very slowly. We will continue to advocate on behalf of our members and look forward to more of our issues being solved.

I believe in this wonderful saying that *nothing can take the place of persistence and*

perseverance. The slogan, “press on,” has solved and always will solve many problems that we face. Once again, I would like to thank all my fellow State Councillors for their support. This was a challenging year for all and brought new issues to our ICPA with boarder closures and COVID requirements. Well done to all those State Councillors who put so much work and effort into this area.

Annabel Strachan

Rural Schools Portfolio

Special Education Report

Distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Special Education Portfolio Report for 2021.

It does feel like we have lost a year with 2020 being so disruptive, however the NSW Department of Education has been able to continue facilitating the Disability Strategy Reference Group via online meetings. ICPA-NSW was very pleased to be included as a stakeholder in this group, the positions were much sought after with over 100 applicants.

In October 2019, whilst attending the Sydney Deputation, ICPA-NSW State Councillors visited the Royal Far West headquarters in Many. Royal Far West has scaled up services to support country children with a disability and this will be of great benefit due to lack of access to paediatricians, allied health and mental health professionals. Royal Far West are also working very closely in the Telehealth sphere which includes speech therapy.

The Centre for Effective Reading enrolments and use of professional literacy services are being well utilised, as in the past ICPA-NSW has received feedback that many schools did not know about CER and the referral process. ICPA-NSW will continue to ensure that members are aware of this vital service and more importantly that rural and remote schools utilise it.

In both 2019 and 2020, State Council has met with NESA and the NSW Department of Health and the Minister for Education and Early Childhood and Learning to discuss the special needs of rural and remote children with disabilities and those requiring specialist help.

It is interesting to note the increase in motions this year requesting access to allied health services. These services are vital for young children to access should the need arise for early intervention. Usually, it is an early childhood educator who alerts the rural/remote parent to the need for speech therapy, occupational therapy or other specialised service, the struggle then begins to access that service.

On the back of the Tertiary Motion at Buronga asking for an assurance that universities provide teachertraining to include a mandatory stand-alone unit on Autistic Spectrum Disorders, ICPA-NSW will continue to advocate for this with NESA and relevant Ministers.

ICPA-NSW sits on the NSW Department of Education’s Disability Strategy Reference Group and will continue to advocate for our most vulnerable rural and remote children.

Kellie Turnbull

Special Education Portfolio

Tertiary Report

Madam President, Distinguished Guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It gives me great pleasure to present the Tertiary Portfolio Report for 2021.

The past year was certainly disputed, and tertiary education was in the thick of it. At university level there were campus closures, loss of international students and their fees, moving course content online and cuts to teaching and support staff. I do not know the deferment rate of students but suspect it was greatly increased due to a number of factors, not least the loss of the campus lifestyle and the knock-on effect of the loss of student employment opportunities in hospitality and retail.

Federal Government:

In the last budget the Australian Government announced funding for 100,000 new apprenticeships through wage support (\$7000 per quarter). At the university level, \$157 million is to be invested in new research plan, as well as \$900 million for more university places and support for student (12,000 new places for Australian students and an extra 50,000 short course places. The push for women to pursue STEM careers will receive \$25 million as part of industry-sponsored training.

New South Wales Government:

We made a submission to the NSW Parliament's Portfolio Committee No.3 – Education report into the Future Development of the NSW Tertiary Education Sector. The report has been released and some motions at this conference will take recommendations forward to the NSW Government.

The NSW Auditor-General's report into failure to meet predicted savings for TAFE.

Country University Centres:

The right fit for the times I would suggest. The expansion of centres in NSW and the increased enrolments during the past year are very welcome.

Micro-credentials:

On-the-job training and short courses are growing as employers target specific skill sets for their staff.

Thank you to my fellow councillors and especially Claire Butler for her leadership of ICPA.

Tim Fletcher

Tertiary Portfolio.

Travel Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Travel Portfolio Report for 2021.

2020 was an unusual year for everyone. Because of the Covid restrictions, State Council was not able to go to Sydney for their annual Deputation, but we were able to hold ZOOM meetings in October with Ministers and other stake holders from a few rooms at the Cattlemen's Motel in Dubbo. Those with whom we had meetings regarding travel issues were:

The Hon. Paul Toole – Minister for Regional Transport and Roads

Lewis Clark – A/Executive, Customer Services Division, Transport for NSW (TfNSW) Gail Le Bransky PSM - Director, Transport Social Policy, Transport for NSW (TfNSW) Anna Andrews - Director Operations, Transport for NSW (TfNSW)

Matt Threlkeld – Executive Director, Bus NSW

Mick Veitch - Shadow Minister for Industry and Trade, Rural Roads and Western NSW.

For many years now ICPA-NSW have been requesting the Minister for Transport to include preschoolaged children in the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) and the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS). We are still concerned that some preschool aged children in rural and remote areas still do not access a preschool at all due to the cost of travel and bus services are also a very important tool for preschoolaged children in rural and remote areas to receive the universally recommended 600 hours prior to starting school. In 2019 The Department of Education provided Transport for NSW (TfNSW) with a list of preschools in remote and very remote areas, this includes some long day care centres that provide accredited preschool programs. TfNSW are using this list to do a costing model to include preschool children in the SDS in these areas. ICPA-NSW applaud this but would like centres in outer regional areas that provide accredited preschool programs included in the list, because those centres such as Hay and Balranald are providing preschool programs to children who live in a remote or very remote area and travel to them.

According to the Interim report into support for drought affected communities in NSW June 2020. Chapter Four – Training and Education (support for education costs)

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Transport amend the eligibility requirements for the School Drive Subsidy to include preschool children who live in an area that is classified as outer regional, remote or very remote.

The SDS is administered by TfNSW and is available to NSW residents. The subsidy is for driving school students to school or to the nearest transport pick up point and is only intended to partly offset the cost of using a private vehicle.

Students from Kindergarten-Year 6 are eligible if:

- they are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education
- aged 4 Years 6 months, or older
- from their home address
- The distance to school exceeds 1.6 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.3 km walking distance, **and** the distance to the nearest transport pick up point (where available) exceeds 1.6 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.3 km walking distance.

Secondary school students from Years 7-12 are eligible if:

- they are a resident of NSW or an overseas student who is eligible for free government education
- from their home address:
- The distance to school exceeds 2 km (straight line distance) or 2.9 km walking distance,
- **and**
- The distance to the nearest transport pick-up point (where available) exceeds 2 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.9 km walking distance.

TAFE students are eligible if:

- they are a resident of NSW or an overseas student eligible for free government education
- they are under 18 years of age at 1st January of the year of application
- they are enrolled in a full-time TAFE course for a minimum of 16 hours per week
- they are not employed

From their home address:

- The walking distance from home to TAFE exceeds 3.2 km, **and**
- The distance to the nearest transport pick up point (where available) exceeds 2 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.9 km walking distance.
- they attend the closest TAFE where enrolment is available.

Boarding school students and weekday boarders attending day school: Students who board away from home to attend school may be eligible for the SDS.

If no public transport is available, boarding school students are eligible for subsidised travel between the family home and school at weekends and school holidays.

- Students that are weekly boarders are entitled up to 22 trips per semester
- Students that are term boarders are entitled up to nine trips per year

Students who board in town and attend a day school during term may also be eligible for subsidised travel between the family home and the place of boarding at weekends and school holidays.

There is no subsidy cap on the distance travelled.

Distance Education students attending mini-schools:

The NSW Department of Education (DoE) operates a number of face-to-face mini-schools to compliment the distance education program. Distance Education students who are full-time and geographically isolated are eligible for the SDS.

To be considered for the SDS, students are required to be enrolled in accordance with section 2.2 of the Distance Education Enrolment Procedures set out by the NSW DoE. There is no limit to the number of trips that can be claimed to attend mini-schools during term time (subject to school attendance records being checked).

University students are not eligible for the SDS. ICPA-NSW have and will continue to ask the Minister to provide them with some sort of travel subsidy. At present, they may be eligible for Fares Allowance which covers the cost of the least expensive and most available form of public transport in Australia between your permanent home and your place of tertiary study. Where it is not practical to use public transport, you can travel by private transport if you need to move belongings that exceed strict luggage limits or are difficult to move around.

To get Fares Allowance you must be a tertiary student living away from home to study and you must also receive one of these payments:

- Youth Allowance as a full-time student,
- Austudy as a full time or part time student or
- Pensioner Education Supplement as a full time or part time student **and** you must also be one of these:
 - dependent and get a higher rate of Youth Allowance when living away from home,
 - independent and living away from your partner to study,

- a parent living away from your dependent children to study,
- were dependent and living away from home in the last study year and you are now independent due to:
- turning 22 or
- supporting yourself through work, or
- are studying a distance or online course and need to do compulsory travel to your institution.

Secondary students and Australian Apprentices cannot get Fares Allowance.

The School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) provides eligible school students with free or subsidised travel from home to school.

The scheme includes:

- Free travel to and from home and school on approved train, bus, ferry and light rail services during school term.
- Discounted travel on buses between home and school with a School Term Bus Pass.
- Free travel on NSW TrainLink Regional services and long-distance coach services for boarding school students

Students from Kindergarten-Year 2 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- Aged 4 Years 6 months, or older.

No minimum walking distance criteria applies to these students.

Primary school students from Years 3-6 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- The straight-line distance from their home address to school is more than 1.6 km.
- The walking distance from home to school is 2.3 km or further.

Primary school students who live too close to the school to be eligible for free travel may qualify for a School Term Bus Pass which provides bus travel at a discounted price for the whole school term.

Secondary school students from Years 7-12 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW or an overseas student who is eligible for free government education,
- The straight-line distance from their home address to school is more than 2 km, or
- The walking distance from home to school is 2.9 km or further.

Secondary school students who live too close to the school to be eligible for free travel may qualify for a School Term Bus Pass which provides bus travel at a discounted price for the whole school term.

TAFE students are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- They are under 18 years of age at 1st January of the year of application.
- They are enrolled in a full-time TAFE course for a minimum of 16 hours per week.
- They are not employed.
- The walking distance from home to TAFE is 3.2 km or further.
- They attend the closest TAFE where enrolment is available.

Tertiary students studying at TAFE may be eligible for concession travel on public transport.

Boarding school students:

Eligible boarding school students can apply for a free school travel pass for either:

- daily travel to and from school if they reside away from home but do not reside at the school, or
- weekend/vacation travel on NSW TrainLink train and coach services.

Students are not able to apply for both.

The Department of Education Assisted School Travel Program:

This program provides specialised transport assistance for eligible students with disability to travel to and from school. The Program provides travel support services primarily between a student's permanent place of residence and school. The program is targeted towards supporting eligible students who are unable to travel independently and need transport assistance in order to attend school.

Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS):

This is a NSW Government initiative providing financial assistance towards travel and accommodation cost when a patient needs to travel long distances to specialised allied health clinics. Speech Pathology is an example.

Number of students needed to start a bus run:

Consideration may only be given to establishing a new non-commercial school bus service where at least 15 school age students reside 3.2 kilometres or more by the shortest most practical route to their school or the local route bus service and the majority live beyond eight kilometres from the school. The number of students is to be calculated on the basis that all children use the bus each morning and afternoon. ICPA-NSW will continue to ask TfNSW to lower the requisite number of students required to start a bus run from 15 to 12, (the seating capacity of a category 1 bus). Once again if preschool aged children were included in the SSTS many bus runs would continue to run or we could see new ones commence.

Seat belts on school buses:

The installation of seat belts on school buses in rural and remote areas commenced in 2013. In 2017 the program was fast tracked and to be completed by December 2019. At present about 198 have been fitted and the 847 new buses replacing old ones have seatbelts. With retrofitting at six places should see the program finished at the end of 2021.

Thank you to my fellow Councillors for their support during the past year.

David Butler

Travel Portfolio

Guest Speakers

The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC. NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning.

Good morning everybody and it is such a pleasure to be here with you all in Hay. I'd like to begin just by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land pay my respects to elders, past, present and emerging and thank you to the ICPA for all your incredible work and putting together such a fabulous conference. I will say to the ladies from Hay that I love your hats and I think I might have to do a bit of shopping before I leave as they match my outfit so you will have to hook me up later on. For those of you who I don't know, and there are many familiar faces around the room, but my name is Sarah Mitchell and I'm the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning. I've been in Parliament for ten years in about two weeks' time which seems both like a lifetime and five minutes depending on which day of the week you get me on. I'm from Gunnedah where I live, was born and raised and live there with my family. My husband and our two girls. Annabel, our eldest, is in Year Two at Gunnedah South Public School, my former school, and Matilda, our three-year-old is a couple of days at preschool and a couple of days at day care. I guess, for me, it is about being a regional mum, a Minister and trying to address some of the issues we have in regional education that we have from that perspective. I have been really fortunate since I've been in Parliament as, pretty much from the beginning, and think one of my first meetings was with ICPA, and there has been a really good opportunity to work with you all over the last decade, but particularly, in the last four years since I've been in the Ministry. I've been Minister for Early Childhood for almost four years and minister for Education and Early Childhood for almost two years.

There are a few things I want to talk to you about today. I am here for most of the day and leaving at about 1.30 pm but I'll be here for morning tea and lunch time and I was going to say not to be shy in coming up to chat but I know you all will and that's great so I'm looking forward, in a COVID safe way of course so we don't get into trouble with the COVID Marshalls, but a good opportunity to come and say hello and have a chat about any issues that you want to raise. I will acknowledge that it has been a really tough year and I know when the Moree conference was cancelled, it was almost at the start of everything COVID and it was a shame and Claire and I had been speaking about that it may be rescheduled, maybe this pandemic thing won't be that bad and here we are twelve months later but I think we are lucky in Australia, particularly in regional Australia, with how well we have been able to manage it. But it is nice to be back in a room full of people and looking at people and talking to you as opposed to doing everything via digital.

So, for me, I've always been quite open about my priority for rural and regional education largely, I guess, because of my background and where I'm from but also because a lot of the evidence and statistics that do show, when we talk about an equity gap in education in NSW, the biggest one is still between rural and metro and I know, in this room, I don't have to tell you all about that. One of the statistics I saw recently was that, by Year Nine the gap between rural public school students and metro students is more than 14% when it comes to reading and numeracy and 20% when it comes to writing. I think that's a fairly stark reminder of why we need to do what we do and why we need to be focussing on regional education and why organisations like the ICPA are so important for your continued advocacy across a range of issues and why you are so valued, certainly by government and members of parliament alike. We have plenty of funding going into our schools as we know. We have got record infrastructure upgrades. We've got billions of dollars through our Gonski funding so we are in a good place when it comes to having all the ingredients that we need to make some real and lasting change but there is obviously more that we need to do to help bridge that gap. You

would have noticed, I hope, over the last couple of months and certainly into this year, there has been a range of policy issues of new things that we have announced that are exclusively centred on children from rural, regional and remote NSW and that is not by accident. It's because we know, and I know, that this needs to be a real priority area for us as a government. One of the areas we are looking at particularly, and I think, in light of the last two years between bushfire and drought and the COVID pandemic, it has been a really tough year in terms of education delivery. There has still been a lot that we have been able to do and I do just want to acknowledge that the collaboration we were able to have with the ICPA around some of the issues Claire raised about those of you who have children at boarding school and dealing with some of those state border issues, and I'll put it kindly because I should be polite when I'm speaking in front of a lot of people, but I did joke with Sally who works with me. I think that she and Claire pretty much had each other on speed-dial for a while there working through some of those issues and we were really happy to assist because it was very challenging for many of you, we know. But there has been a lot that we have been able to do in the last year despite some of the challengers. Obviously, the work we are doing to overhaul the curriculum and ICPA have been a really important part of the consultation on that. Some of the renewed focus we have had on mental health and wellbeing and I do just want to mention the rollout of an extra 100 WIN nurses and give a shoutout to my colleague, Bronnie Taylor, who I know is known by many of you. She has really pushed that as Minister for Mental Health and Regional Youth and that will make a massive difference to have an extra 100 of those positions rolling out across our school communities. We are also looking at what we can do around the early childhood space and making its accessibility easier for families and also upgrading technology and I want to come to that in more detail in a minute. I also think it is important for me, as Education Minister, to look at what our options are around tertiary opportunities for our kids and, again, give a shoutout to the amazing work of the Country Universities Centres and I know Duncan Taylor is here. What they do and what they provide for our young people particularly, is just a game changer for the bush and I think, for us, the Government, and particularly as Nationals, we look at what are some of the greatest achievements we have been able to deliver, the CUC's have to be at the top of the list. So, I just want to acknowledge Duncan and the work he has done in that space as well.

There are a few other things that I just want to bring to your attention. Many of you would have been aware that we have released recently a new Rural and Remote Education Strategy. We launched that a few weeks ago and it is all about how do we realise our vision to make sure that children in regional NSW have the same opportunities as kids who live in the city? We are looking at a range of things under that strategy. Staff recruitment and retention. What professional learning we can offer our staff who live and work in our rural and remote schools. More curriculum choices and opportunity for greater learning for all of our kids, particularly those in our regional and remote schools. State of the art technology to the regions and also better partnerships with industry looking at vocational education opportunities, other higher end providers and rework how we do things in Years 11 and 12 to give our kids the best opportunities for when they leave school. One of the best things about that strategy, and I say this with respect to all our department staff who are here, it is lovely to see you, but it wasn't just department staff who put that together. It was drawn up after huge consultation with education experts, teachers, parents, community members and I think that's what makes it such a quality document because it has got feedback from the people who these issues affect the most. Everything we want to do in the education space moving forward will be somehow linked to that strategy. It's our guiding principle that we want our schools to live by and we want to refer back to that when we make important decisions in relation to regional education. As part of that, I've also made the decision to set up a new regional, rural and remote education policy unit. We have not had that in this configuration ever in my understanding from

conversations with the secretary, Mark Scott. It's basically a stand-alone regional policy unit with a focus on regional schools and regional kids. So, we are going out for recruitment for those positions at the moment. Those staff will need to be based in regional NSW as that is a requirement because I don't want bureaucrats in the city making decisions for those of us who live in the country and I think it is a really good initiative. It will give us an opportunity to not only really dive into some of our issues and our challenges, but also our opportunities in rural and regional communities with very senior departmental staff focused wholly and solely on that and it is certainly not my expectation that, when it comes to key stakeholders for that unit, the ICPA will be at the top of the list.

A few other issues that I wanted to raise relate to staffing. The attraction and retention of staff. Again, I know that this is something that is very high on the list for your organisation. There are a couple of initiatives that we are rolling out and we recently announced the new Fast Stream programme which will start from next year picking fifty of our best and brightest. Twenty graduates and thirty existing teachers to fast track them to become a principal. We know that strong leadership in a school makes a really big difference. A highly effective principal can raise the achievement rate of a student between two and seven months of learning in a single school year so it is a really big indicator in terms of lifting outcomes and support in students. As part of that Fast Stream programme there will be a teaching phase, a middle leadership phase where those participants will be an assistant principal or deputy principal and then can move onto a principalship but as part of all of the phases there will be a dedicated time in a rural, regional or remote school. We are actively making sure that we look at our harder to staff schools. We look at our schools where we need to see the biggest lift and make sure we are getting our best and brightest teachers to spend a decent amount of time as part of that programme in those schools.

We are also, as Claire has mentioned, doing a complete overhaul and relook at all our incentive programmes. In NSW we've had some form of rural and remote incentives for teachers since 1904 and, of course, it has been added to over the years, but we've never really had a full scale look at what works or what it is we actually need to do? What are some of the successful incentives that we have had that we should keep and what are the ones that we might have done for years but maybe it is time to look at different things. We have really valued the involvement with ICPA in that consultation and that will continue as we look to a new suite of incentives. I want to be quite bold in what we do and I have said that quite openly because I think that some of the things that work well, we should keep but we should be looking a little bit more across government. We look at rental subsidies but we should be looking at support for people to buy their own homes when they come and live and work in regional areas. Get them to put their roots there and make them want to stay in our communities rather than just come and go. I think we need to look at what we can do to support people's partners children if they choose to come out to our communities because often that is a real problem as well particularly when we have got government agencies, if we can align things a bit better behind the scenes. I heard a story the other day of someone who was a teacher at one of our schools. Her husband was a local policeman and they were really happy but he got transferred so they had to leave so we lost a policeman and a teacher. I think government should work together better so we don't end up with those sorts of situations which do happen more often. And also looking at the opportunity to grow our own. If we have great people who already live and work in regional NSW but who might want a mid-career change into teaching, we want for them to do that and supporting them to do that. These are all of the things that we want to look at as part of that incentive review.

Just a couple more things. Obviously, we have had a really tough year with COVID so we have had our COVID tuition programme which has been rolling out. \$330 million to all our schools to help to provide extra staff to help students catch up and that has been really

successful so far. I think about 80% of our schools have already taken that up and they have got the rest of the year to do that. We are also doing new checking assessments. Phonics trials and really looking at data and how we can use that to track how schools are going but also make sure that resources are going where they are most needed and, again, that will have a real impact on our regional schools which is incredibly important. We are also providing extra support for our preschool programme which we ran from April last year and will run for all of this year as well. I think that 90% of our community and mobile preschools have opted into that making it free for families for two days. There have been a lot of financial challenges recently and, again, that has been a good initiative that we have had a lot of support for. The last thing I just want to mention is what we call our RAG. Terrible acronym and I do apologise for that profusely. We probably should have picked that up earlier. But it is called the Rural Access Gap and in really simple terms it is about how can we upgrade digital connectivity to the thousand and two rural, remote and regional schools that we have? So, we started with a proof of concept in Dubbo and, effectively, we are looking at upgrading digital connectivity and that is in addition to our partnership with Telstra which is \$328 million to upgrade to the best and most reliable internet than any public school system in the country. State of the art digital teaching and learning, better professional development for our schools. Part of that \$360 million programme there is \$35.7 million to modernise distance education infrastructure and support making it more responsive. Making it more reliable. I know we are going to do an audit for all our school of the air kids to look at connectivity there. To look at devices again as that is something that many of you raised with me in terms of access with the devices and how modern they are for those of you whose families use school of the air. There is going to be a lot happening in that space. We've never invested in digital infrastructure like this for country kids to this rate ever and it's all being rolled out between now and the end of 2022 and I think this is about making sure that we are using technology to the best of our ability to give our kids the options they deserve. I'm really excited about this and I think that there will be an opportunity to talk to you about it in a bit more detail as it progresses. I'm not a tech-head but I know that some of our department staff who are here will be well across how it will all work in a digital sense but I just think it will be a real game changer for those of us who live in regional NSW and in particular, our more remote rural schools and the families who need to use distance education. So, I'll stop there. Thank you so much for the opportunity to address you and it is lovely to be here and I'm looking forward to listening to some of the motions and, as I said, at morning tea and lunch time please come up and say hello and have a chat as I'm really looking forward to spending some time with you all.

Helen Dalton MP. Member for Murray. Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party.

Thank you and it is wonderful to be back in Hay and I actually taught here for a little while and my big claim to fame is being in the grand finals and losing them all in a matter of about nine months. I still haven't got over that but anyway I will soldier on. The theme for today is "Thriving in Isolation" and I think that is a very pertinent theme to have. Thank you for asking me to speak and it is an absolute honour and pleasure to be here in Hay with you today. The topic, "Thriving in Isolation" certainly took me back to my own upbringing. Unless you get about and have a few mod-cons like acceptable digital connectivity, good roads, great schools, established social networks and adequate health services, you will, indeed, not thrive in isolation and many of us are not at the moment. Growing up on a wheat and sheep property at Rankins Springs certainly toughened me up for life's ups and downs. I attended Griffith High

School spending a couple of years at the Griffith War Memorial Hostel, a number of years enduring a three to four hour daily round bus trip from home and my final year ended with private boarding in Griffith. Needless to say, I didn't thrive in this situation. My folks thought that they thrived in isolation as one of dad's biggest claims to fame was not having a holiday for nine months and he was very proud of that. It was like a badge of honour. He and his brother worked together so it was mostly a competition on who could tough it out the longest. Dad, unfortunately for us, always won so Uncle Jordie went and had a holiday. The competition was off then and that was great. My memories of the summer holidays were hot and lacking social contact with others. The years went by. Mum would venture into Griffith on a monthly basis and purchase the necessary supplies to last a month. Back then the roads were bad, the telephone exchange not always open or reliable and often mum met our health requirements and, at times, only just. We were always well cared for and loved but I do reflect on the missed opportunities. Childhood is short and the experiences and learning during that time are important and lifelong. My adult life included a Diploma in Education, a Diploma in Horticulture and an Advanced Diploma in Agriculture, marrying a farmer and producing four fine Australians. What I want to do today is to impart ten points to allow you to thrive in isolation, raise your children and live life to the fullest. This is all according to me. You may not agree with what I've got to say and so you can take it or leave it.

First of all, I want to say that you are incredibly lucky and privileged. Lucky to be in rural Australia particularly now we have this awful pandemic roaming around. Just think how your life would be different if you were living in the UK, the States or the slums of Mumbai. In contrast most of us here are off the land and we are in the midst of a fantastic season so, it's all good. You are the most amazing group of people so don't take it for granted. Never do. There is nothing ordinary about you. You have produced the cleverest most resilient children who will, hopefully, come back to the bush. Those that lose their children permanently to the bright lights, these kids will be integral to the standing of rural NSW and they'll help in other ways along the track. They'll be around. They'll be helping and advocating for you. One of the best things you can do for your children is to give them a good education. It doesn't matter how low you get in your life you can't take education away from them. So, invest in them. They really only get one crack at it. In the day-to-day grind you can sometimes lose perspective as the challenges of educating your children, dealing with natural events such as drought, floods, bushfires and COVID 19, they may wear you down. It doesn't sound like you are fortunate but you are so, be happy and grab life with both hands.

Number two. This is a long one so brace yourselves. Always get involved with community organisations such as schools, hospitals, CWA, Lions, Rotary and you are involved with ICPA which is wonderful, and aim to do your best. Don't leave it to somebody else. Always stand up and advocate strongly for the needs of your community. What you give you will get back in spades. A sense of self-worth. You meet wonderful and interesting people and it will take you to places you would never have dreamt of and there is a lot to do. Right now, we are falling behind our city cousins in health and education. Our average life expectancy in the bush is five years less than our city cousins. Many of our health services have been stripped away. Doctors are in short supply and hospitals are being downgraded to band aid centres. There is a lot to do also in the education space. Our schools are in urgent need of upgrading and I know a lot of money is being spent but we have been way behind. A point in case is Yanco Agricultural High School. For twenty-seven years Yanco Ag High have been promised new girls' dormitories. The years get by. Delay. Deflect. Defer. The years get by. It's just amazing how the time

has run past. I think the best way to fix rural education issues is to talk to students, parents and teachers themselves. They have excellent ideas. Sadly, the government seems to want to shut you out of decision making. Just last week the students at Yanco Ag High were told they were not allowed to talk to the media or talk to me as their local member. Also, the Principal of Murrumbidgee High School in Griffith told the students the same thing. I mean, are we in North Korea or are we in NSW. Students are completely shut out of decision making. Now I believe that silencing children never helps. The government has neglected rural public health, education for decades and as a result the gap between Sydney and regional NSW keeps widening. Students from Yanco Ag High wrote to me last year wanting some action. We made a lot of noise about it. We posted photos of the derelict dorms on social media and the media did several stories. It was great. All of a sudden, after no progress for twenty-seven years, the government announced that they would build new dorms at Yanco. One thing I have learnt that, in the bush, if you don't jump up and down and make a lot of noise, you will get absolutely nothing. It really helped when students, teachers and parents are willing to tell their stories and expose the neglect. Patient, behind the scenes diplomacy doesn't work. We have had an education minister as our local member for several years. This is before the present Minister for Education, of course. But under his watch education standards kept declining. No new dorms were built at Yanco in his eighteen years of neglect of reign. He didn't advocate for his region. Now Yanco students have contacted me again this week telling me that the NSW Government won't even give them an update of the progress of the building of the new female dorms and in response the Department of Education says that they are not allowed to talk to media or to politicians. But, full credit to the students. They have told me they won't be silenced and neither will I. In schools there is a lot to be done. We are way behind and I have been always pushing for dedicated PE teachers in primary schools. I think this is an absolute no brainer. It is so necessary. I also believe that boarders are not well catered for on schools. They can often be left behind so more work needs to be done in this space. Perhaps it's the PE teachers that can bridge that gap with them. I think they have a big place in that. Not everyone that teaches in primary schools are interested in PE but I know that, probably 95% of the kids love it and they need more of it. I'm also concerned about the abolition of the incentives and the overuse of them. There is a discussion paper on that and a lot of talk about it so I'm not sure what is going on yet but if they abolish incentives or take away the transfer points from teachers coming out west, we are in a lot more trouble. I am very concerned about that and so are a lot of the teachers. We've already had teachers walking out Coomealla High School and Gol Gol Primary School just last week. The discussion paper is now out. Sally over here has it and if you want it, I'm sure she will send it to you because we all need to be involved. There is also the issue of placement of qualified teachers for Kara Professionals for a six weeks crash course and what that means is that, if you are an accountant and you are sick of being an accountant, you can do a six weeks crash course and then become a teacher. I don't know how you feel about that but I'm just very concerned about that. And that is the direction we are going. We are also looking at tele lessons to replace teachers. There is a place but if it becomes mainstream and becomes the norm it is no good. There is nothing that will ever replace a face-to-face teacher. It is so important. So, neglect isn't just in the schools. You can see it every day in my electorate. Hospitals and police stations crumbling and they really are. We have a 150-year-old Tocumwal police station where you really have to wear a hard hat to go in there so don't get arrested because you will probably get killed if a brick falls on you. Also, the 150-year-old Wentworth hospital which is well past its use by date and I have to shoot over to

Wentworth tomorrow because, hopefully, there will be an announcement about that. Let's hope because that hospital is really very degraded.

Now, if you are still unsure and confused about the power of people or what you can do let me give you another example of people power and communities taking action. This occurred with the Gladys Berejiklian NSW July 2020 border closures or the lock downs. There are fifty-five border crossings over the Murray River and only the main bridges were left open and when the Premier basically gave the directive to padlock, it was chain and padlock, most of them. You can imagine the people living and working in that area were absolutely enraged. Even their local town was over the border, their schools, their jobs, their health services. It created havoc. I had over 3,000 contacts with my office and all of them we had to deal with. The closing of the bridges meant that the return trip across the river, a five-minute trip normally, would be an hour and a half. So, the phone in my office ran hot. I visited many of the crossings and at one particular bridge a hundred odd people turned up either side of the river on one chilly, crisp 6.00am morning. The old, the young, everyone turned up. It was amazing. This impractical decision was quickly reversed as people spoke out and the media took hold of the story. They spoke out. The media were there. People were standing up and saying what needed to be said. We cannot rest when issues arise. We cannot be treated as third class citizens and we cannot shrink into oblivion when threatened. You need to stand up and you need to have your say.

Number three. It gets shorter. Being a PE teacher. Exercise. Play sport. Do Yoga. Walk. Whatever it is it doesn't matter. Just do something. You will improve your mind and body. You have a responsibility to be a healthy role model for your children and grandchildren. You will live a long life so you need to look after yourselves. If you smoke. Give it up. That is what you must do because, eventually, you'll have too anyway. So, why not start today. So, have your last fag at lunch time. That's it. Right? Done. Why would you want to pay for bad health? As a past PE teacher that lifelong habit of exercise will hold you in good stead. If you have your health, you have a fortune.

Number four. Don't live your life through your children and I know, probably at the moment, you are and as a parent you do but there is a time when you need to have your own. So, you are you. You have your interests and friends and when your children are gone you will probably suffer less from the empty nest syndrome that they talk about, as you embark on different roles. It won't cure you but it will help. You are unique and have a lot to offer so don't drift into the shadows and isolate yourselves. It's only just the beginning for you in your role in the community.

Number five. Don't put one gender ahead of the other. Too often boys are put on a pedestal never to come down and I see that a lot with boarding school boys and all the city others all fuss over them and say they are great and they are. But, you know, we just have to be a bit level headed about this. I see a lot of farming families only valuing boys returning to the farm. You are limiting your brains truss by 50%. Girls have a lot to give so give them a go because they are wonderful.

Number six. Always take time to talk to each other. Everyone can do that. For children this is the most memorable thing as they grow older and have their own children and they will continually draw on their experiences as youngsters set the moral codes and boundaries. That included you as a grandparent to because I know I always go back in my mind to what my grandparents said to me or how their attitudes were. Eat meals together. Discuss the news and what happened in their daily life. Always challenge your own opinions. Be open to others and respectfully discuss theirs. If you are wanting to have a heart to heart with your sons make sure

you're working on a project alongside him because he won't talk to you otherwise. You stand there, have that conversation. Well, they won't. They will just say that they don't want to be there. But if they are cooking pass them the rolling pin. If they're looking at an engine or tinkering with an old motorbike, pass them the spanner and, you know what, those difficult conversations will be had and they will open up to you.

Number seven. Define yourself about what you love and give. You're clever. After all you have produced the cleverest kids on the planet. Fill your life with life-long learning and take pride in what you do. It is very important.

Number eight. Respect everyone from all walks of life and instil this in your children. Remember I said your privileged. So, you've come from a privileged background but there are people who aren't as privileged as them so we need to respect those people.

Number nine. Be consistent and persistent. Change is never easy. Look at what Erin Brockovich did. It takes time and if you think that there are not the important life-threatening issues where you live you are wrong. Absolutely wrong. Look at the recent announcement of exploration licences for the proposed coal seam gas which is up in the Hillston area and Carrathool Shire and takes in Balranald Shire and up into the north of the state. From the very beginning the government has begun to shut consultation and announce restrictive time lines. Already. They have begun to shut you out of the conversation. Do not stand for it. I'm also outraged about the MND. Motor Neuron Disease

Rates which are skyrocketing in the bush and yet the government is doing nothing about it. They don't want to know. We believe that the rates of MND are linked to blue-green algae outbreaks. Presently we have a number of amber and red alerts throughout this electorate. We really need to know what is causing these spikes. Macquarie University commenced a study in 2012 to find out why Griffith has seven times the rate of MND as the national average. Seven times. The researchers have applied for several grants to continue this research and have been knocked back. This study stalled due to a lack of funding but I believe now it is slowly beginning again and we need to support that. We need to push the NSW government to put in the two million dollars we require to complete this study. It is only two million dollars. I believe that the high incidents of MND rates have a lot to do with the management of the rivers and the creeks. The river system is not in balance. Right now, there is a red alert on the Murray River at Fort Courage and I believe this is extremely serious and there is an alert out at Pooncarie, there is one here at Hay in a weir. An amber alert. It is around everywhere. Just check it out on the Water NSW site. It also amazes me how our forefathers went to war in a foreign country, got shot at and yet stood up for their beliefs. So, stand up for the issues. You won't get killed. Well, I don't think you will. Be bold and speak out.

Number ten. Lastly, be balanced. When you take on an issue don't let it totally consume you. You still have a farm and a family and all those other things. I know I have encouraged you to speak out and hold them to account but don't forget to be you and to treasure the simple things in life like the moment you spend with your family. These times are short and precious. Easier said than done. If you can manage all of these things you will not only personally thrive in isolation but your communities will flourish and prosper. Thank you.

Senator Perin Davey. Nationals Whip in the Senate. Parliament of Australia.

Thank you and I should open with Senator Perin Davey, Lone Member, Observer. First and foremost, I want to thank all of you and I'm going to get a bit teary now, sorry. I want to thank

all of you for your membership of the ICPA and ICPA is really hard work on a whole range of issues, many of which we are hearing about today. ICPA was formed in 1971 and they have gone from strength to strength and that is because of all of you sitting in this room and your forebears. I cannot state how important associations such as the ICPA are in advocating for their purpose but also, they provide us, as politicians, a conduit to the grass roots. I know when I have an issue that impacts on isolated children and their families, I have someone I can call. I can reach out. I can call Alana or I can call Claire and I know that they are speaking with authority on the issue and I know they are speaking as representatives of all of you and it makes my job much easier than trying to ring two hundred odd people individually. So, I thank the ICPA. I thank you for the work you did last year in particular. Who would have thought that in a nation like Australia we would have internal border closures and we would have children stranded miles from their families at the behest of a range of politicians of all colours? We were all guilty of it. The #No Borders for Boarders campaign, I think, started at the end of Term Two and was ongoing for Term Three. We thought we had dealt with it by Term Four and in the lead up to Term One, 2021, I was there bashing on doors again because it is ridiculous. I asked the chief medical officer of the country what medical basis there was to shut borders, particularly when, at the end of Terms Three and Four, we were talking about COVID numbers less than a hundred and yet we were seeing borders closed. Dan Andrews actually admitted that it was easier to close the border between NSW and Victoria than it was to ring fence Melbourne. Meanwhile his counterpart, Gladys Berejiklian, had ring fenced Avalon and the Northern Beaches of Sydney. She'd learnt how not to shut borders and how to let the rest of the state go about their lives. But, other states, South Australia, Victoria, Queensland, found it easier to put the barbed wire up at the border and it is just not good enough. Yesterday I was questioning the head of the new National Task Force on the COVID Response. One of their terms of reference is to look at a consistent response to the COVID 19 pandemic in the face of new and upcoming risks and I asked him if that meant that we will soon see a consistent definition of hotspots, a consistent definition of when it is appropriate to shut a border and he admitted that was not the role of the Commonwealth. So, effectively, the answer I took from that was, don't hold your breath. I will continue to watch this issue because I will continue to fight for border communities and students who have to cross the borders to go to school and keep their interests at heart. I know and I thank the ICPA for also taking part in this role while also trying to deal with the myriad other issues that we have when we live in isolated communities. I heard Claire on the radio this morning on ABC Riverina, and she was speaking about school buses and it reminded me of when I lived in a little town, or rather outside a little town, called Comet in Queensland and we were losing our school bus route because the driver was retiring. We still had, I think in Queensland at the time, we still had ten students living on our road. My children weren't at school at that stage as they were still tiny, but I had a medium rigid driver's licence thanks to my time in the army reserves and so I and a couple of other mothers got together and we took over the bus run. So, I would get up every morning and I'm not a morning person I can tell you that, those poor students would get on that bus and it was like, "Sit down!" I would take my youngest and actually strap my youngest in her car capsule behind the driver's seat so, I don't know how legal that was but the bus run continued. Because if our students couldn't go to school, it meant that the school would close and if that school closed every other student in the district would lose their access to a public school and education. I do understand how important the work of the ICPA is to ensure things like school bus runs continue and access to early childhood continues. And, importantly, access to tertiary education which is somewhere

where the commonwealth is very involved and I and my colleagues in the National Party fight very hard for recognition and equitable and quality tertiary education for our students. One of the policy areas that I am very proud of and I think that my colleague, Sarah Mitchell, spoke about this morning, was establishing Country University Centres. Now that is the state terminology because we are in different jurisdictions, far be it for us all to speak the same language but I'll translate for you. Federally we call them Regional University Centres because we are so original, we came up with a whole new brand. Credit to the State Government. The State Government first saw the benefit in Country University Centres and they threw the first \$15 million into a few pilot sites and it proved the case where the biggest impediment to our children living in regional areas, going on to university, is access. We are telling a lot of these kids that you have to move to Sydney or Melbourne, miles from family, miles from support networks, miles from their friends and their comfort zones. For some kids that's great. It's exciting and it's the challenge of a lifetime and they will learn from that and have fruitful careers. But, for other kids it's really daunting and for old farts like me who decided to at a much later stage that they wanted to go and get a university education, it's impossible. I couldn't leave my family and travel to Brisbane when I first went to university so I needed access to something online or something like a Country University Centre. So, I congratulate the State Government for first identifying it but also then, at a federal level, we've come in behind and since 2018 we've put \$92 million into the Regional University Centres. We now have 25 centres around Australia and, specifically in NSW, the success is phenomenal. Broken Hill has seen 400 students go through its Country University Centre. In Griffith the original estimate was the first year would see 40 students and the first year saw 140 students. Narrabri, Moree and across the state the success of these centres is fantastic. Federally, we also support our tertiary education and we have a range of rural and regional scholarships and rural and regional access provisions. One of the keys is that we know that students who learn in regional areas are more likely to earn in regional areas and that is why we pushed very hard for the new medical school based out of CSU in Wagga. The Murray Darling Medical School. We have a range of professional development programmes for doctors as well which requires them to do tie in the regions because we want to keep them in the regions. Early childhood is another key issue and I agree with a lot of your motions that you have had and we have scholarships that are specifically there to support people doing a range of tertiary qualifications right from Certificate Four which is early childhood, all the way through to PHD. We have the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship which allows for up to \$18,000 to support people doing any course. We have also got the Destination Australia Scholarships which is a new round very similar to study Cert Four to PHD up to \$15,000 but the catch is you have to study in one of the 36 regional campuses. So, they can be a city-based student but they have got to come to the regions to learn. As I said, if they learn in the regions, they are more likely to earn in the regions. That is a really new, exciting initiative because the more people we can attract out into the bush then the more services we can attract out into the bush, the more professionals we can keep in the bush and it will improve all our way of lives. So, one of the things that I am focused on and with my party colleagues, earlier in the year we announced a policy which is designed to support our manufacturing sector but we know you can't just come up with one industry or one area and say that we are going to pick that up and plonk it in the bush and everything is going to be great. Without the support services, without the right policy scenarios in place we are not going to attract the people. We are not going to attract the private enterprise because private enterprise is where the real money is. Just putting a Government Department into

Griffith or Orange or Deniliquin isn't good enough if the associated services and connectivity isn't there. We are investing more money into the NBN. We've got regional business zones that we are setting up in some of our key regional areas. This makes places more attractive for businesses to move to. The State Government has their regional economic zones which is really exciting and we're looking at how we can partner with them so that we can really make the most of these initiatives and incentives because then we won't be having the conversations about not being able to get an early childhood centre up and running because we are going to have so many kids it will be a no brainer that we have to have an early childhood centre up and running. Now it is not a one size fits all and every community is different and every community has different needs and we will continue to work together to find the right solutions for the right communities but we have to start by making sure our regions are a great place to live. The ICPA certainly does that and if it wasn't for the ICPA I wouldn't have known what assistance was available for me and my family and my children who, at their age, I'm quite ready to become an empty nester any time soon. Apparently, I'll start loving them again shortly but it takes time. So, again, thank you to all of you for putting your time and your effort into this organisation and to your families and to regional NSW and regional Australia because without people like you there is actually not point in me doing what I'm doing. So, I thank you all. I thank you for your ongoing support of the regions and I hope we can continue to work together and have a very strong and fruitful relationship and I really hope that I will not have to get up in Parliament again this year and talk about borders and no borders for boarders. So, fingers crossed the vaccine works. Thank you.

Lewis Clark. Executive Director, Customer Systems and Operations. Transport for NSW.

Thank you for the invitation today. I just wanted to begin by acknowledging the Wiradjuri and Nari Nari people traditional custodians of the land on which we gather today and pay my respects to their elders, past and present and I extend that respect to aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are here today. Transport has been going through a bit of an evolution over the last couple of years with Roads and Maritime Service coming together with Transport for NSW and I just wanted to play a short video that shows some of the things we have been up to over the last couple of years and some of the things that are coming up in the future. *Video presentation.* Hopefully, the video gives you an idea of the fairly large and diverse task Transport has in supporting a lot of customer journeys across public transport. Every day we are supporting about 202 million tonnes of imports and exports to NSW for the freight network and moving around 2.3 million containers through Port Botany every year. We are also managing a significant number of vehicles on the road and licencing along with about 3,000 kilometres of regional local roads and about 18,000 kilometres of state roads. On top of that we have got around 10,000 kilometres of rail tracks and a fairly significant fleet of vehicles to move big customers around and also maintaining the public road and transport network. Under the point-to-point commissioner we are helping to deliver about 65 million point-to-point trips every year which is code for taxis, uber and other ride share and indirectly employ about 30,000 people to help us do that every day. So, it is a fairly significant challenge we have across the state and I know that some of our challenges are things that you, as customers, feel every day. We have set ourselves a fairly bold and ambitious task which we call Future Transport 2056 which really is about changing how we do business and how we deliver services over the next thirty years or so and it has a few key pillars to it. One is continuing to remain customer focused.

Secondly, we really want to help build successful places. We want to work across state, local and federal governments as well as with communities to make sure we are making investments that will improve places where we live and work. We are really conscious that we need to support a strong economy especially coming off the back of COVID and that's a lot about freight for NSW but also making sure we are able to move people around efficiently whether it is for work or whether it is for tourism or whether it is for any other reason. A continued focus on safety and performance. Safety for you as customers and communities and also safety for our own people and really focusing on trying to get that consistent and reliable services whether that is road or public transport because we know, for customers, that consistency and reliability is important. A focus on accessible services is, for some of us smaller customers segments like the disabled community but also accessible across the state and I know accessibility of transport options is often a struggle for people in regional NSW. Lastly, sustainability both from an environmental perspective, for example, but also from a financial perspective in terms of the tax payer money that is entrusted to us. 2056 is quite a long time away. We have kind of shortened that into a slightly shorter-term strategy over the next four years and there is a bit of replication here so I will just run through quickly. One of the things that is really important for us is connecting our customers lives so part of bringing RMS and Transport together was really to allow us to focus on customer journeys. How people get from A to B rather than thinking about road separately and rail separately and bus separately because, if we weren't thinking about how we deliver those services and customer journeys then, ultimately, we are making your life more difficult as customers. *Slide.* You'll see the focus along the top of the slide for successful places for communities again, enabling economic activity really focusing on trying to make transport a great place to work for our staff. In the middle of the slide, we have got a couple of key priorities to focus on. Firstly, we have got transport as holding a tremendous amount of day trips as you can imagine. We are not using that to the best of our ability and we are investing in smart analytics really to help us operate the network every day and to also deliver great customer experiences and also to help with recovery where there is disruption on the network for any reason. Also embracing new technology, and technology in the very broad sense of the work, to make use of new, modern computing power all the way through to electric vehicles and autonomous vehicles. Then working in partnership with local government, better with state governments and better with federal government and engage better with communities and customers including our aboriginal communities. Along the bottom of the slide, we have set some performance indicators so we know how we are tracking and can adjust the approach as necessary. One of the things that bringing Roads and Maritime Services and Transport together did was to allow us to focus on our structure and as part of that we have created a Regional and Outer Metropolitan Division that is focused entirely on delivering transport services to our customers out in the region. That got quite a few priorities but that varies where, hopefully, you are already starting to see a difference and if not, you will in the future, is around those integrated transport services and trying to design those differently to reflect people travelling from A to B rather than transport thinking about roads separately from bus and others. Customer and stake holder community engagement so we really want to get out there and talk to customers and communities. More obviously we are here today and it has been a real pleasure to be involved with you for the last couple of years but really focusing on how we can improve engagement. There is obviously a fairly significant task to run the transport network every day and also to deliver a number of projects in regional NSW and then you'll see at the

bottom of the slide, again, the theme on safety and wellbeing for both the customers and also our staff. That division is there entirely to focus on customers in regional NSW.

There is a fairly large infrastructure services programme that is underway and hopefully you'll start to see the benefit of that with programmes like the upgrade to the Great Western Highway and the Princes Highway and the completion of the Pacific Highway duplication. For customers in our metro area, which I know it isn't quite as relevant for this group but they will start to see new intercity trains in the near future and 2023 the new regional fleet will start to be seen across NSW and connecting into other states as well. Also, an investment into the Tamworth Intermodal rail line to help move freight between northern NSW directly into Port Botany. One of the programmes that is underway in regional NSW is the Transport Connected Bus programme and that is really trying to use some of that technology and data we have got to provide better information to people who are using bus services and move away from the current state where you all turn u at a bus stop and look at a paper timetable to delivering real time data via websites, apps and some other different channels so that you know exactly where the bus is and exactly when the bus will turn up at a particular stop to help you plan your journey. So, there is quite a lot going on there in terms of what we think success will look like for you as customers and communities in 2024, NSW will have one of the safest transport ecosystems in the world. Customers are delighted with mobility choices across everywhere in NSW. The investment we will make in transport solutions is helping to make places more liveable and sustainable. Customers are starting to see the benefit of the smart analytic technology investments that we are making. We would like to see an increase in road share for public transport and bike riding on the back of delivering those services. Making the transport services more accessible and also having you as customer communities feel that we are engaging better with you. So that is just a broad summary of the journey Transport NSW been going through. I did want to quickly talk about some of the improvements we have made in concessions. Myself and my team have enjoyed getting the feedback from these conferences over the last couple of years and, As David said, he is not shy about calling us in between to give us more advice on how we can improve. There is a list on the screen that I won't read through some of the stuff we have done. Hopefully, though, you are noticing the payments are coming through quicker under the School Drive Subsidy scheme. We are certainly making them quicker. We have reintroduced some of the payment statements for PVC and School Drive Subsidy again at your request so when we drop money in your bank account you can work out exactly what it is for and a whole raft of other improvements on the website through the application process which, hopefully, will make a difference. Lastly, there are a couple of new things up and coming. We are replacing some of the old cardboard and paper passes with what we call a Transport Concession Entitlement card and you can see an example on the screen. That will replace those cards for some of the distance education students and home-schooled students for example. We are also making some more changes to the parent portal to allow customers to add additional journeys and provide supporting information for their trips. Lastly, to continue investing in calls to the 131500 number that the contact centre has so that if you do phone up and have queries, they will be able to answer those on the phone and the next improvement there will be the contact centre being able to provide password resets if you need it. That is all from me today so enjoy your lunch and if you have any questions, we are around for the rest of the day and happy to talk to you. Thank you.

Sandra Ireson. Hay Inc.

I'm just going to take my ICPA hat off because I do have another hat I'm wearing today and that is being part of the Hay Inc. programme. Hay Incorporated is a not-for-profit organisation that was formed in 2013 and run by community volunteers. In 2014 we launched a rural education programme as an opportunity for young people aged 18 to 25 years to gain agriculture education and experience on rural properties throughout the Hay district. Training is delivered by volunteer trainers and training assessors from TOCAL and TAFE. The unique programme is a 15-day course run in February, March and June and it provided hands-on training covering all the necessary skills in stockmanship in both sheep and cattle and farming skills. We also assist with work placement opportunities. Since our first intake we have had 83 students graduate from the programme who now form the Hay Inc. Illumine. This year we have another 16 students and this week they are on their second training block and today are taking part in a shearing school down at Steam Plains near Conargo. Of these 16 we now have 12 employed on properties in the Hay district which is a great achievement. I would now like you all to enjoy the world premiere of the Hay Inc. story on video. *Video presentation.* This video will soon be available on the new Hay Inc. website and social media platforms where you can find out more information on our programme and we would love to see many more young people involved and replicate the programme throughout the country as well. Thank you.

Kate Woodbridge. National Drought and Flood Agency.

Hi everybody. I'm Kate Woodbridge and I'm from the Drought and Flood Agency which is led by The Hon Shane Stone who is our Coordinator General. The agency was set up in March 2019 following the catastrophic monsoon flood event in far North Queensland. The region experienced 12 days of continuous heavy rain, constant winds and a body of water over 15,000 square kilometres in size. 11.4 million hectares were affected by the flood. 457,000 head of cattle perished. 22,000 kilometres of fencing was damaged and \$807 million in public infrastructure was damaged. The Prime Minister set up our agency to provide national leadership and a coordinated whole of government response. Our agency sits in Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. We support farmers and regional communities as they respond to and recover from drought and the North Queensland flood event. We like to do things a little differently in our agency. We have a regionally based staff and to work with us you need to be prepared to spend time on the road, talking and listening to people. We want to hear about conditions on the ground and we link people with government assistance that suits their individual needs. We want to hear about whether the Australian Government assistance has worked for you and also what hasn't. Last year we set up our Regional Recovery Office network and we currently have 19 RRO's and are in the process of adding more across Australia. We are very lucky to have Claire on our team. She and I have crossed paths over the years and I was very pleased to lure her over into the team because I want people in Canberra to have a good understanding of the challenges faced by regional families and have a resident expert for matters such as education and telecommunication challenges. As Senator Davey said earlier, there is a go-to person who is a trusted source of information. I have Lana Young here today. Lana is from Shepparton and her background is in water and irrigation and I poached her from Murray Water. She also turned out to be quite an IT specialist and Lana will run you through a special project she is working on shortly. I wanted this team to be made up of people

from the regions with existing networks who understand the local issues as they are so different right across Australia. They live locally and are available to assist communities as and when they are needed. I also employ a lot of non-public servants and people with a diverse range of skills to ensure that the feedback being sent to the highest levels of government it is not your usual cookie cutter department type of information that they all usually receive. The next slide is one that our co-ordinator general is very proud of. When I said that the co-ordinator general insists on staff being on the road, he actually tracts us. We have collectively travelled over 440,000 kilometres across Australia in the last twelve months and, of course, I was the first person to put a dent in the agency's car. The other important work our team does is community events in the regions. So, I am trying really hard to change the way our partners in Canberra engage with people in the regions. I like to take the policy makers who make decisions that affect your lives, many of whom have not actually left the cities, out to talk to communities about what they do and don't need. Our team works closely with federal and state government partners, charities, health professionals and local councils to bring one stop shop type of events to the regions. It is a bit like speed dating where we want to have as many people to talk to as we can have at an event in our new world of COVID restrictions, to make the trip into town really worthwhile for you all. We are partnered with Rotary to run these events favouring the Bar-B-Que where people can have a chat with friends and neighbours while chatting with providers. Rotary also distribute \$500 vouchers at these events so when we leave town people can use that money in their local shops and businesses. We have a table up the back so you can come and say hello and we'll be at the dinner tonight. If you want to follow us on social media you can receive information about the work of our agency there and now, I'm going to pass you over to Lana so she can run you through her special data project app and thank you for having us today.

Lana Young. National Drought and Flood Agency

Thank you and my name is Lana Young as Kate has already mentioned. A little bit about my background. I am actually born and bred from NSW and now have called home on a farm in Victoria. Thank you for all your work here today, it's been great to sit and listen to your conversations. I was fifteen when I remember, in NSW, I was referred to as a very remote athlete and if I wanted to make it any further in sport I had to relocate to Sydney. You probably think I came from a farm. I actually grew up on the east coast in Newcastle and was considered remote and that is something that stuck with me for a long time. Moving into my role, I predominately did work in water over in the Golden Murray Irrigation district and understand first hand when decisions are made and the impact that that has on people when they are left out of that decision making and/or are even informed of what's going to be coming. Water is quite complex and it is something that I am very proud of and I work closely with regional communities on that side of the Murray also with farmers with education. A key role that I also had was linking back into the policy makers on a state level as well about the impact with water. So, I also wear another hat which I am a co-chair of the Collaborative Leadership Table in the Lighthouse Project which is based in Shepparton. Something that is very close to me heart and I am very passionate about leading change under place-based initiatives through what our community needs. I'm looking at the education and wellbeing for our young people over there. As I mentioned, I am project-gap. What is that? I have an ethos that, and I've learnt this along the way, people closest to the problem have the solutions. We just need to know how to enable

these ideas and solutions. I saw a real opportunity in the role and network of my fellow colleagues all around Australia that we had to bring something to life. Thanks to Kate and her leadership. I would call her, being in lockdown in Victoria, I would call her and did work a lot with her. It kept me occupied during not being able to leave and I came up with a design which would enable us to use a vehicle to catch conversations with people like yourselves and turn it into a data that goes into the core of the government to inform policy. What does that mean? It both sitting and deep listening to people. It's not a consultation programme that is ticking a box for the sake of doing that. It's sitting at your kitchen table or, like what I will be doing at the weekend where I have farmers groups that I sit with and I just deeply listen. I listen to your concerns. I listen to your ideas, your frustrations, what can be done better and what we could also bring to the table into the core of the government. It is by these conversations that I am getting the data that is being collected back into Canberra to inform the policy and programmes but to also, the biggest piece of this puzzle, is to give you a voice from the regions. So, how do you get involved? As we have said, we have got teams all around Australia to listen. Give us the details and we will be able to get in contact with you. Thank you.

Lana Masterson. Down the Track. 2020 Youth Service of the Year. 2021 Australia Day Ambassador. 2021 Lachlan Shire Citizen of the Year. NSW Local Hero Finalist – Australian of the Year Awards 2021.

I was raised on grit and guts and I've come to learn how important grit and guts are when living in a small, remote community. Five and a half years ago my life changed completely. It was a Wednesday night and we were sitting on our balcony listening to the ocean when my partner made the suggestion to transfer to Lake Cargelligo. I had to ask the correct spelling a dozen times just to Google where that was. Now, like all life changing decisions we decided, over a lovely bottle of red wine, that we would set off on the adventure of a life time. Within six short weeks we had left the sunny beaches of Foster on the mid north coast and started our journey to the sunburnt, red, dusty plains of Lake Cargelligo. Just up the road from here. We haven't looked back. Our remote home exceeded our expectations and it was there where I found my passion and my purpose. Have you ever had a moment in your life where you knew in your gut it was your duty and responsibility to do more than just talk about how bad an issue is or what should be done by others to fix it? You know you should roll up your own sleeves and have a go yourself. It didn't take long before I started noticing a revolving door of young people getting locked up. Now, we are an extremely small community. The numbers just didn't make sense and they didn't sit right with me. Living directly across the road from the police station I had a front seat view seeing between five and seven young people being locked up every single week. My partner is a local copper. Don't hold that against her. I would receive regular phone calls that she was going to be late home because she had to do a prisoner run to Wagga Wagga. Now Wagga Wagga is 350 kilometres away. That's a 700 kilometre round trip and Lake Cargelligo is not a 24 hour police station. The cost to incarcerate a young person is over \$1,300 a day. At this stage nothing was being spent on early intervention. Just wasn't good enough. Finally, after well founded community outrage of high crime rates, funding was secured to trial a pilot programme targeting early intervention and youth engagement. The pilot was based on the award-winning youth organisation called Back Track located in Armidale. I jumped at the opportunity to be a part of it. Now I was completely aware that I was starting on the back foot. Being new to town. I'm in a same sex relationship and my partner is the local

copper. The only thing I had in my favour was understanding. Growing up I was one of these kids. From that Down the Track was born. Now this is the part that I find it hard to contain my enthusiasm when speaking about Down the Track. This is the part where my passion for the cause really shines. There comes a time when we need to stop pulling people from the river and we need to walk upstream and find out why they keep falling in. My job? It's simple. Provide young people with an opportunity and support to ensure our kids stay alive, out of jail and thriving. Now Down the Track programme is all about young people. We mentor our young people back into education after being completely disengaged from school. We break the cycle of generations of unemployment to raise these young people up to take control of their own futures. We do this with limited outreach services and one of the highest rates of domestic violence per capita in NSW. These are the kids that are under constant police attention, they don't fit into a regular classroom environment or they are just doing it tough with wherever they are. These kids are my passion. This is what it is all about. This is the guts of what we do. Now the grit. The grit is in the practical stuff and that's where this programme really shines. It's in a shearing shed on a 50% day with red dust as far as the eye can see. It's about our youth doing things they never thought they could do. It's about pride and identity and seeing their own potential and opportunity. It's about them believing in themselves. Our team gives them competent skills in a tool kit to take it head on and kick it out of the park. I want to give you an insight into a day at Down the Track. Let's do a fence line. It's five AM and our team commences pick up. We start door knocking which often turns into searching because there are no guarantees as to where these young people rest their heads each night. The red sun is rising and she's starting to burn. We head out on unsealed roads onto remote properties to start our work for the day. Before the tunes get too loud, we do some circle work and I don't mean doughies. This gives us a good gauge on how each one of us is feeling. We arrive onsite. There is nothing for miles. We are literally in the middle of nowhere. Morning muster commences. The jobs are designated and the work starts. Now this is the part where a young person who can't read or write, calculates distance and materials without even realising that they are doing some serious maths. This is real life skills and it is not just about a fence line. It's about coming together. We yarn about the hard issues while doing the hard work. It physically tests us and mentally exhausts us. This is where we see the real heart in these kids. This is where the real change happens. It's the end of the day and we are absolutely stuffed. We all jump back into the truck and drive back along the fence line looking over our handywork for the day. You hear one of the boys say, "Look fellas. We did it."

Their eyes widen and the whole vibe will shift from exhaustion to a feeling of pride and accomplishment and for us, it's about creating that belief and supporting them on that journey. We do it with them not for them. Now, Cory Booker once said, "If you want to travel fast you travel alone. If you want to travel far you travel together." I'm proud and thankful to say that I'm not alone in providing support and opportunity for our most vulnerable young people. I'm part of a collective of likeminded people lending a hand so that no young person is left behind and no young person falls between the cracks. This collective is call Backtrack Everywhere. Backtrack Everywhere is helping communities all over the country to create their own style of life saving youth programme. With the success that Backtrack Everywhere is having it is no surprise they receive over 130 enquiries from all over the country of people wanting to get involved. The time to act is now. With one in four young people not going to school and one in four young people living with a mental health disorder I think we can all agree these stats are not good enough and we have to do better. I want to share with you a story. It is a story about

keeping a kid alive, out of jail and thriving. It's about this kid who is sixteen but he looks twenty-four, and he talks like he is about sixty. He's dropped out of school; he is couch surfing between three towns and every second day he is legging it from the local coppers. He uses drugs, drives unlicensed and his illegal hunting has brought this kid to notice. He's looking down the barrel of lockup. Unexpectedly, one afternoon, this young fellow strolls into my office. He had a fist full of tickets, a court attendance notice and a truck load of attitude. This young fellow says to me, "I hear you help kids who get into trouble and I'm in a bit myself." I had no idea the impact on my life this kid would have. It is a special thing to watch someone turn their life around and know that you had some influence. I knew we had to do something drastic and quickly to keep this kid out of lockup. We got straight to work. The very next day we headed out for two full on weeks of mustering and lamb marking. Now, you learn a lot about yourself when you are mustering. First you learn how patient you are. Second, you learn what levels of tolerance you have and third, you learn that your actions influence the direction and the behaviour of the sheep. Now, the same rules apply in real life not just in the paddock. By the end of the third day this young fellow had completely changed his approach and we penned up around twenty minutes quicker. Without even realising it this young bloke had just added to his self-regulating tool kit. This was a moment of impact. Changing the approach to change the outcome. We'd pen the sheep, draft the lambs from the wethers and ewes, and then it was smoko. Now I don't think anything compares to a hot cup of coffee while sitting on your esky in the middle of a paddock. It truly is something special. After smoko we'd get straight into it. I was on throwing and needling duties. The young person was on tagging and marking. The lambs were bloody massive and it was physical work. Every mob seemed bigger than the last. We'd yarn about the tough issues and always find time for a laugh. By the end of the two weeks, we had learnt so much, not only about marking lambs, but also about ourselves. We were both pushed outside our comfort zones. This is the beauty of this work. It challenges you to find that extra something you have deep down. On Friday afternoon we were driving back home and the young person turned down his Johnny Cash song on the radio, completely unexpected song selection for a sixteen-year-old, he turned to me and he said, "That was awesome, huh?" The look on his face was priceless. As smelly, dirty, tired and sore as I was sitting next to him, it was one of those moments where you wouldn't change a thing. I'll never forget that moment. There were days driving back in that I was so sore that it hurt to change gears but that same soreness put everything into perspective. Creating opportunities for our young people isn't easy. If it was Down the Track wouldn't exist. Over the next four years this young fellow fully immersed himself in Down the Track. He re-enrolled in school, he stayed out of trouble, he obtained his licence, he even completed a police leadership programme. This kid is now a role model to our younger kids. He is currently working as a jackaroo in far North Queensland. This is just one story. Unfortunately, the kids that I work with mostly have similar stories. I'll say it again. We need to continue to do better. Currently Down the Track is at capacity. We have got 36 young people engaged in our life saving programme and we have around 20 on the waiting list. Last year was one of the most challenging years Down the Track has faced so far but it was also one of our most successful. We won Youth Service of the Year 2020. I was nominated for Australia of the Year in the Local Hero category and I was fortunate to make it to the final four in NSW. We even secured funding for the next twelve months. This was massive for us at Down the Track. It means that our youth workers can breathe easier for, at least, the next year. Although these are all incredible achievements this isn't how we measure success. Last year I made it to a tree just in

time. Now, I wasn't at this tree to pick apples. I climbed up and I was given an opportunity to talk with a kid. This kid had a bright red rope tightly knotted around her neck. This kid was ready to jump. That day, fortunately, we were able to avoid a catastrophic result. Once down from the tree I cut that red rope into a million bloody pieces. The next forty-eight hours I didn't leave her side. We developed a plan to ensure this young person would never find themselves in this situation again. I'm proud to say, twelve months on, this young person is thriving. The best part about it all is that she has had no more attempts at taking her own life. This is what success looks like for Down the Track. Today, I've shared with you, my story. I've taken a chance, lending a hand and working bloody hard for a better tomorrow for our youth. Down the Track and more broadly, Backtrack Everywhere, need all the support we can get. We can only do what we do if we get support from our communities from the local farmers giving our young people a chance, to the movers and shakers at the top end of town. It takes a village to raise a child. With support of each and every one of you, together, we can create a better future for our young people. Thank you.

David Cameron. Past President ICPA-NSW

Madam President, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I know you are starving because you had such a light lunch (laughter) so I'll be as quick as I can. I'm sorry I don't have a thumb drive. I did actually have a 16 millimetre, black and white movie but the girls devastated me this morning when I told them they said that the projector is in the museum so, you'll just have to put up with me. I'm passionate about ICPA. I was there for probably too long but I didn't dislike a day. They were all good. Some days you were down a bit because you had to change the plan and come back the next day and try again. There are two things I've been asked to talk to you about. I need somebody to be inspired, and I'm not a great speaker, but next year when State Council needs someone to go onto the council, I want you to think, "I can do that." That's the first thing I'm going to talk about. The second one is ICPA needs to continue to evolve. So, let's do them quickly so we can have afternoon tea. I went to my first state conference in Armidale a long time ago and a lady from Lord Howe Island got up and had a transport issue. She was articulate. She was a great speaker and she laid the problem out like you wouldn't believe. Someone from the other side of the room got up and this lady had a foolscap page of notes. She couldn't read them because she was shaking. She was sweating. She was nervous and she couldn't put two words together. Eventually she just threw the paper on the ground and spoke from the heart and that worked a little bit. I suddenly realised, as the day went on, this is a wonderful organisation because, although we might think that there is a different way of solving the problem, although we might do it a little bit differently that another branch, the goal that we have got is a better deal for our kids and I've never been to a conference in a lot of years where you have had factions fighting with each other from one side of the room to the other because we are all united and I think that's what makes this organisation so great. Don't think that you can't come onto council and make a difference and if I could just tell you a couple of little things. My first conference, as I said, was in Armidale and I thought that I could never join state council because I'm not a great speaker and I don't write that well, but we have had people on state council that, after they were elected, said that they were not a good writer or a good speaker but they are good at something and there are ten or twelve people that cover the weakness in their argument. We have written lots of reports for people who have difficulty. We have great proof readers, Ellen Walker. It's one of the things that you become a family so

don't think that you are not the greatest at something. You are and the reason you are is because you have got kids and it's your kids that you are fighting for a better deal for and that is why it's so important to step forward. This lady that couldn't write was brilliant in a meeting because she was an ideas girl. She came up with ideas just like that. Other people have gone down to Sydney on annual deputation and I remember one lady was there the night we arrived and the next morning at breakfast Barbara Luelf said, "I'm sorry but she had to go home. She is missing her kids." So, we all had to do another meeting but that was OK. Most importantly, and there are not a lot of us here, some of you girls go home and tell your husbands that they would be welcome. We need fellows. Really and honestly, blokes on council make a lot of difference. The second and last point. ICPA has to stay relevant. The Mailbox to Megabytes era must have been dreadful. It must have been so hard on party lines and with no faxes, no emails, no ZOOM. I don't know how they did it. They must have worked twice as hard as we do these days. I remember going to see Dr. Refshauge. I went with Barbara Luelf and often with Mary Butler, and Barbara said to me, "David, you are here to learn. Just sit down and shut up and say nothing." Refshauge came in and out of the meeting at least six times while we were trying to get some points across because, in the early days, you had to spend half the time saying who ICPA was. We didn't because everyone knows who we are now and that is really important. Eventually it got too much for me because Refshauge was just going out pretending to do stuff. He just really didn't want to listen to us and I just had to say something and I did. It was short. He spun around and he sat down. I don't know what I said because I can't remember and when we came out, I said I was sorry to Barbara. She said that it was good and I was allowed, after that, to say things. These days, and I have a few politicians that I'm going to name hers because I have met some wonderful politicians. My favourite is Gladys Berejiklian. She always was happy to see ICPA. I could send her, as President, an email without even having to clear it with all her staff. It would go straight to her and she would answer me and long after I left, when she became Premier, she was the Minister for Transport in my era, but long after than I actually sent her an email congratulating her when she became Premier and she sent me a reply and she really is my favourite politician. But there have been some beauties. Carmel Tebbutt. She was a dynamo and we saw her very late on our last day and after the meeting we went down and into the foyer and got a coffee from the coffee cart in Macquarie Street, and I saw her on the end of the line and I said, "Minister, I think you are with us." She jumped about twenty places and I asked her what would she like. She said she would have a latte with a sugar and a green cupcake would be lovely. Righto, so we ordered that for her and she asked what did we do now? I said that we go back to the hotel and we write a press release that has to be out before midnight, with the hope that some of the papers pick it up. She asked what we would say in the press release? And I said, "Minister pigs out on green cupcakes." After that day she was always happy to see us and she told me years later that every time she went to have a green cupcake all she could think about was ICPA. So, you have to earn respect from those people. You don't tie them up for too long because they are very busy people. Verity Firth walked into a cupboard when she said goodbye instead of the corridor. That was funny. The other thing that has changed in my time was that we used to come to conferences and the poor old Department of Education and the Department of Transport would be hammered with motion after motion. Now, no issue is to be thought of as a minor issue. If they come to state council, they are all major. A lady called Kate English who probably did Mike's job, started, and she said to me, "David, you get up early in the morning because you are a farmer. Could I ring you about seven o'clock?" "Sure." So, we used to talk. She'd sound me out and I would sound her out. One year we got to conference and had thirty less motions because it had been fixed before conference. Mike followed on, and I presume he still does. He didn't start at seven o'clock but by lunch time he was pretty good. So, ICPA needs to continue to evolve. Do the

ground work. Make sure of your facts and it's lovely to be here. Have a great rest of the conference.

Claire Butler, President ICPA-NSW

Thank you very much David. To myself personally you have been a wonderful role model. We have had many conversations leading up to the Moree conference last year and after Moree was cancelled, we had quite a few conversations as well. So, I've learnt a lot from you David and I really appreciate personally, our conversations. Thank you.

David Cameron. Life Membership of ICPA-NSW Presentation

Ellen Walker, ICPA-NSW Past Treasurer.

We have waited twelve months to do this so, here goes. David Cameron first joined the Burren Junction Branch of ICPA in the late 90's soon taking on branch secretary. He attended his first conference in Narrabri in 2000 but as the conference was convened by Burren Junction Branch, he was kept busy transporting delegates and didn't see much of conference. He then attended Armidale in 2001 and Bourke in 2003 as a branch delegate. It was at the conference in Hay in 2004 that David was elected to State Council together with his partners in crime and good times, Michael Davis and Ann Milliken. During David's eleven years on State Council, he held the following positions. Committee 2004 to 2005; Vice President 2005 to 2008; President 2008 to 2012; and Immediate Past President 2012 to 2015. The portfolios which he held during this time were Allowances and Travel as well as serving as second for Tertiary and Travel. David was also the Country Areas Programme, or CAP Convenor, and served on the CAP Advisory Board from 2011 to 2013 when changes to government policy saw the disappointing phasing out of this initiative. Being President of ICPA-NSW meant that David had to have a working knowledge across all issues concerning ICPA which was always apparent. He always gave 100% and was a skilful lobbyist. David also attended many federal conferences both as a branch delegate and as an ICPA-NSW representative often making the trip into a holiday with Joc. David has always been passionate about obtaining access to an appropriate and equitable education for bush kids and spent many hours working on ICPA issues, occasionally ending with a win but, more often, ending in frustration. He was always mindful of being true to the motions passed at conference when lobbying politicians and organisations on behalf of ICPA-NSW members. One issue that followed David through most of his time on State Council was that of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC), Statement of Support known as bypassing. Many of David's conference reports, as both Allowance Convenor and President, focused on this issue. Fortunately, expanded criteria and an improved application form were implemented before David retired from Council in 2015. The challenging process that led to the establishment of the NSW Centre for Effective Reading in 2010 also occurred under David's watch. When David took over the Travel Portfolio from Michael Davis at the Bourke conference in 2012 the big issue was seat belts on buses. Even though Michael retired from State Council he continued to represent ICPA-NSW during the advisory process. David was pleased to announce at the 2014 Narrabri conference that, following twelve years of motions from Rankins Springs and other branches, seat belts were to be phased in on dedicated regional and rural bus routes. The other issue that followed David through his time on State Council was the outdated Private Vehicle Conveyance Scheme (PVC). The introduction of the new School Drive Subsidy (SDS) which replaced the PVC took place after his retirement in 2016.

Over the many years of his involvement in ICPA David has been an invaluable source of knowledge for both his branch and for state Council. His dedication and commitment were well known and acknowledged by all who knew and served on State Council with him. Ministers of Education and other politicians respected him and knew that the information he presented to them was well researched and pertinent. A good team always has a good leader and David was definitely one of these gems. I would like to commend David Cameron for Life Membership of ICPA-NSW.

David Cameron. Past President ICPA-NSW

I must have stayed too long. I'm sorry. I am absolutely honoured to be presented with this but there were forty-eight people that were on State Councils while I was on State Council and so is for them too. I didn't find one person that didn't try their very best and so thank you so much. I just didn't realise what was happening here.

Kate Treweeke, ICPA-NSW Past President

I second that commendation but everything that David has said just before that and what Ellen has said, you can't add to that as Ellen has told them all, or we told them all together, and there are a lot of past state councillors here, we don't say old councillors we say past councillors, but we all have got stories for David. We all share similar things but he was a great mentor to me when I came on. He's a great mentor and he took me out of my comfort zone along with his partner in crime, Michael. As we do with most recruiters, we grab them, twist them, take them for a drink, convince them that they would be great at this. It still happens doesn't it Claire? Yes. So, over those times you learn so much. You become a family but taking a person out of their comfort zone, discovering their knowledge, their passions and, basically discovering that person. So, I thank you David because there was no way I would have ended up where I did without you and the rest of my family while I was on State Council and that goes for everybody and the new councillors as well. There are a lot more photos to happen tonight so, enjoy your time, catch up with David and other past councillors. Thank you, David.

Michelle Michael. Department of Education. Rural and Remote Education Strategy. Rural Access Strategy

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Michelle Michael and I am the Director of the Rural and Remote Education and my title is actually Education Support for Rural Initiatives for the Department of Education and Mark is going to join us in a moment and he is actually one of the Executive Directors who is involved in the technology provision from the Department of Education. I really want to thank you and the organisers. It has been an amazing conference already and you should be really proud on how it's been run. Just a little bit about me and I always start with this. I'm sure there are people here wondering about that lot from Sydney. I'm actually a Hill End girl and my parents still own and run our 10,500 hectare cattle farm on the bridle track and my family and my brothers and sisters lived and went to regional schools and so the issues that I hear here are, kind of, my life and my parents. I started growing up in Narromine and so I have vivid memories of some of these experiences that I hear here around locust plagues, around drought, around the bindies, so it isn't a case of the fact that I haven't experienced these things or feel the pain of some of the things that you actually speak about at this conference. Before I start, I actually want to acknowledge the team very quickly. Please

put your hands up. So, here is the Rural and Remote and Distance Education team. We have Gaye, Martin, Dave and, many of you know Mike. Extraordinary educators and I feel very privileged to be leading them. I really, particularly would like to call out Mike and if I didn't already realise how well and how competent he was in his role he is also very well respected and loved by many people in this room and I feel very lucky that we have him as an advocate for all of you. The Rural and Remote Strategy was developed over twelve months, a little bit longer than twelve months actually, and many of you were involved in the consultation and, again, I thank the executive for being involved in the consultation before I came into the role. That was done by the team and done by Laurie who was my predecessor. We had about 3,500 pieces of consultation. Whether it be the Country Women's Association, the Farmers' Federation, many, many people advised on what is currently here. I mulled over whether I needed to change this presentation because you are about to see some images here that you would actually recognise but I wanted to show you that this is what I show when I'm at the Minister's office or when we are in Sydney and the most geographically isolated schools in the state, but those little people and people that you have deserve the same, in terms of educational quality and equity, that every other child in this state has whether they are in Mossman, Sydney, Newcastle, Armidale or wherever they are. That is the conversation that we actually have in detail when we take this strategy to senior officers and executives. *Slide.* This was taken in Coonabarabran and here they are doing languages with an aboriginal elder and a photograph taken by a Stage Four teacher. I don't need to tell you the statistics that sit behind this photograph. The students in regional and remote schools have a lower attendance and it actually depends, if you are in a regional school it goes from about 89% and then starts to dip the further that you go out and the smaller the school might get in a regional high school. Attendance is a really big indicator as the success at school. If you are a high school student doing your HSC you are less likely to attain your HSC if you are in a regional or remote school. Now there are lots of reasons for that. There are many reasons but the statistics tell a story about the work that still needs to be done. We talk a little bit about teachers and teacher retention. *Slide.* This photo was taken at Wilcannia. I take great pride in the fact that I do a lot of travelling and I really enjoy being with people from regional and remote NSW and the regional and remote schools. This teacher actually left her school in Sydney and went out as a trial under one of the programmes we will show you in a moment. She really enjoyed it out there and ended up staying and has now been there for two years. But again, there are things that, as the Department of Education, we need to actually address. When she went out there, she left a permanent job in Sydney and became a temporary person in a regional school and she wasn't originally able to access some of the incentives. She potentially may have been on less money than the teacher beside her because she still had a permanent job in Sydney. So, there are things we need to do that actually are a low-level risk that we address reasonably quickly. Many of you would be familiar with the Rural and Remote Blueprint and that Blueprint was well before my time when I was a deputy and then a relieving principal in a school and the Blueprint was in 2013 and that finished in 2019 and the evaluation of that came out in 2019 and 2020. So, this strategy actually replaced that Blueprint. There are many, many good things that are happening in NSW Government and in the Education Department. *Slide.* This is about harnessing the biggest organisation in the southern hemisphere to actually have a list for students who attend regional and remote schools in NSW. The good things that we already do need to be amplified and scaled for your people and your schools. Rather than getting an isolated team to actually work on staffing or on professional learning or on the other aspects that came out of the regional and

remote consultation that has informed this strategy, we are actually harnessing all of the business. It becomes everyone's job. Not just my job. Not Sarah's job. Everyone owns this. People that know me and I've been around the Department for twenty-seven years and I just feel like this is a watershed moment for rural, remote and regional NSW and I wouldn't say that lightly if I didn't believe it. *Slide.* What came out of the consultation? Everything that you could think of in terms of what needed to be addressed. But the team did an extraordinary job synergizing it down to people, practice, participation and partnerships. What we need to do now is actually map all of the work that is already happening and Mark is going to tell you about one of those really big pieces of work worth around \$365 million only for regional and remote students and we need to hang that off this strategy so that people can actually see and access what is available. *Slide.* There are many programmes and here are just four of them so I could explain to you some of the things that are already happening. These are not the only four. So, we have a look at the Regional and Rural Experience Programme where we want teachers from metropolitan Sydney to actually come out and experience the lovely life that you have and the lovely life your children lead and we know what it actually is. We want other people to actually experience that and to enable metropolitan teachers to do that. We have a bespoke leadership programme now just for middle to upper area of leadership in schools that is only for regional and remote schools. If you have any intention of going into one of those schools it is a nine-month programme plus further months which is the generic leadership programme for all schools. Leadership in a school is a really important aspect to the delivery of outcomes for students. So, a nine-month programme is a really important caveat before they can actually become a leader in a school. It is a really great thing to have leadership as it brings down to the granular level some of requirements of being in a regional or remote school. *Slide.* The Rural Access Gap. You will actually hear this from Mark so I not going to spend too much time on the digital transformation but it is a really exciting piece of work and I know Mark, who I used to work for, will really articulate this. Digital will not replace a high-quality teacher but it is really going to and has provided things to us that we have never could have afforded before and we will continue to see the transformation through digital at speed in the next few years. *Slide.* We have a research programme that is working with the University of NSW with the Gonski Institute and in conjunction with Canberra University. The team from Canberra are here and seated up the back so if you would like to go and speak to them about that programme, I very much encourage you to do so. Some of Australia's, if not the world's, most well-known and recognised academics in regional and remote schools and they are putting a piece of research for possible solutions for some of the things that you are actually presenting here today and they may actually be painful solutions for governments and people like me to actually think about doing and they might even be blue-sky solutions, because we don't want another report about all of the things we need to address. We want answers and solutions and that is what that piece of research is doing in schools and in clusters of schools and in rural and very remote schools in some cases. Minister Mitchell actually mentioned this earlier today, the strategy was released about four weeks ago by the Deputy Premier and the Minister. There is my email address down the bottom and you are welcome to contact me, myself and the team any time. I look forward to working with you and your organisation moving forward and I actually might ask Mark if he would like to come up to the front as we are pretty good at this type of tandem show and if you have a question, we are going to try to have a few questions or comments at the end but if you have any questions, I guess, you get onto a microphone if you would like to ask. Hold your questions for now and we will try to do some question time at the end. I would

like to thank Mark for coming with me and he is the delegate of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) today. The CIO apologises and has sent his Executive Director to come. Mark actually said to the Minister in the car that this has been one of the most profound opportunities that he has had in recent times so, thank you for having us.

Mark Greentree. Executive Director, Department of Education.

Before I commence, I would like to recognise that I stand on the land of the aboriginal people and pay my respects to elders, past, present and emerging and extend to you today. Michelle never worked for me. She always worked with me and I probably worked for her for a substantial part of that time anyway and, as always, she stole my thunder a little bit in the fact that, yes, I did actually say to Minister Mitchell in the car going to Hay Memorial about an hour ago, that I see and hear, and I'm in a very privileged position to be here, because what I hear is actually opportunity. I know that there has been a long and inconsistent struggle with the challenges associated with rural and remote and isolation and I certainly can't empathise with you deeply enough because I don't live it. I can't even pretend that, as Claire mentioned, that COVID may have given me an insight but I didn't have to deal with the fact that I was still geographically isolated. Putting up with services that were substandard to the services that are delivered in the metropolitan area and having to change and alter my lifestyle in order to build a life. But I also rally at people who tell me that it is a choice living in rural and remote areas and I like to come back to them and say that if they didn't make that choice we'd all be stuffed because, honestly, we ride off the back of what you deliver and there is no other way around it and we just have to improve the way in which we deliver and we cater to the needs of not only our students but also their communities and their families to build a strong and prosperous, not only state, but also country as well. My background is that I have been in education just as long as Michelle and I was a former principal for about twelve years down in South West Sydney dealing significantly with low socioeconomic schools. I guess some of the issues that were mentioned with regards to Walgett, I certainly have experienced those as well in the schools I led and a number of times was threatened and perhaps assaulted by a big boy and I handled myself OK. Moving into this role I see a very great opportunity for us to be able to harness technology to really try and, not solve the problem, but draw in the opportunity to assist in some way to address and mitigate some of the issues and the problems. It is my privilege to present to you the Rural Access Gap and I don't refer to it acronym because I can't stand the fact that it is has got an acronym like RAG but I promised Minister Mitchell that I would try and come up with a selection of potential other acronyms that we could change it to and just refer to this one as formally known as the Rural Access Gap. Nevertheless, this is all about addressing the inequities that currently exists in rural and remote areas. I'm not someone who actually talks to slides so much, so, whilst the information might be there, I'm actually going to have a conversation with you and talk about the content that is in that slide and move forward if my iPad would actually move on and work would be great. I don't need to talk to you about all the issues, the challengers that face people in remote areas as you are all well aware of that. I had a conversation with Ben Caughey from Hay Memorial High who spoke to you this morning. That is an amazing school but also, he is an amazing young man. In the conversation we had as we walked out to the ag plot, we were talking about the fact that his career path is, hopefully, exploring entrepreneurial avenues and then he spoke to us later and spoke about a pitch that he pitched in Canberra to the Federal Minister of Education about ways in which we could support.

His alignment with what we are actually about to deliver from the Information Technology Directorate (ITD) and what we are about to deliver as part of this Rural Access Gap initiative is exactly the sort of things that he was naming and identifying which is that capacity for us to be able to support students remotely with experts because we know that we can't literally create humans out of thin air but what we can do is potentially harness technology as a stop-gap measure in this point in time, to bring some of that expertise out to rural and remote areas. The remote isolation, the economic hardships, the drought, the flood, if that wasn't enough, we bring along pestilence. I know that some areas are now dealing with mice plagues and locusts and all other manner of malady that constantly impact daily life and yet the thing we take for granted in town and in the metro areas is the fact that we just go to school. We just get it done. I'm a parent of three boys. My eldest finished Year Twelve last year and I've got a Year Eleven and a Year Six still at home doing public education because I believe in what I deliver as well and that's what I stand for. But I want what I get for them in public education in the area I live to be something that everyone has access to on a daily basis. So, this \$360 million dollars' worth of direct intervention is not the answer. It is part of the answer and part of the solution so as we move through it, we've got another partnership programme with Telstra called Telstra Uplift and that will run in conjunction. We also have the COVID Response which was also another \$300 million to try to support students that have obviously had deficits in their education as a result of the COVID impact. What does this look like in terms of its delivery? It's devices for teachers so that teachers can actually have the devices to use to teach the education they need to teach. It's an uplift of devices to students increasing the ratios so that we can actually have more devices there for students to use. Devices aren't always the be-all and end-all in education. Sometimes we do have to put them away and move on to other things but they certainly are the tools of the future that we need to prepare and engage the students in order to get them ready. We also have to uplift classrooms, putting in digital displays so that students can interact with themselves, with each other and with experts abroad as part of the digital landscape we now have created. We are also looking at improving digital processes for administration time so we can reduce administration time and increase teaching and learning time. We are also looking at improving the digital network inside schools so that we have anywhere, anytime learning available and all of this is wrapped up in something I am particularly passionate about and Michelle to, is professional learning for teachers. Good teachers do good teaching. So, part of this programme is about releasing a teacher in every school so that they have a day a week that they can have professional learning delivered from a team of specialists that I've recruited across the state who were outstanding teachers first and great technical people secondly, to actually bring those qualities and those skills right to the forefront and uplift their school so, when programmes like this finish, they'll be able to continue that standard in those schools. From an impact perspective we've got thirteen distance education schools that are going to be impacted. 6,500 staff with more time thanks to these processes. 210,000 students impacted as part of this spread across 1,002 schools. We have got 20,000 teachers that will be uplifted with the processes. Professional learning and, hopefully, a higher quality level of teaching to be delivered to students both inside the school environment and outside the school environment. 20,000 learning spaces to be transformed to bring us into the next level of teaching and learning and, potentially, another 35,000 plus teachers who aren't in rural and remote areas, uplifted through the quality of teaching and learning programmes we will deliver. The way that the schools have been determined in this particular programme is obviously through the inner regional and outer regional, remote and very remote index. What

does that look like in terms of numbers? It is 763 primary schools; 137 secondary schools; 61 centrals; two infants' schools; 25 schools for specific purposes and fourteen EEC's. Last week I was in Wagga and we are about transforming those schools and those learning spaces. *Slide.* This is a very busy slide which is ridiculous in terms of trying to see it from the back of the room, is all about how our teaching and learning spaces might be transformed and I guess it is a bit of "edu-speak" as well in terms of explicit learning; dependant; group guided; remote learning; external experts. The type of learning we are going to be putting in place is, again, not only rural and remote students to the equal but also, they are going to push them into the front. We had this computer Connected Classrooms programme and the Connecting Country Schools programme. There are still schools in metropolitan Sydney that are still wired up from the digital revolution days when Rudd gave out those devices to Years Seven to Twelve. Their WiFi is inadequate and ineffective but we can't say that about schools that are in rural and remote NSW because they have been all lifted up above the base level standard and that standard is going to go up another level again through this programme. We are moving on from a six-to-one device ratio to a one-to-four ratio for students and, as I mentioned, every teacher will end up with their device, finally. I also ran, prior to this programme, a Device for Teachers pilot in which I specifically targeted small schools which the majority of those schools actually exist in rural and remote NSW. The reason for it is it is that my first career appointment as a principal was in a small school and I was a teaching principal. I know there is not a lot of time to work and dedicate yourself. You feel a heck of a lot of guilt, very much akin to parent guilt, when you aren't spending time with your students but having a device enables you to achieve exactly that. I am also very proud to say that the STEM programme which I had the privilege of leading and standing up with Michelle before she went on to bigger and better things, where we loaned robotics equipment and virtual reality equipment and three D printing equipment and all of that to schools to uplift their abilities to utilise STEM. STEM teaching and learning practices will also be expanded under this programme with a direct target towards rural and remote areas. So, with that in mind those are all the areas. You can read the slide as I know you will and I'll be texting everyone to see that they have. Are there any questions you'd like to throw from the floor? I'm happy to take them on board and potentially defer them to Michelle if I can't answer them.

Helen Daulton, the Member for Murray

Thank you for your presentation both of you. I have got a question about Yanco Ag high School. I've received a very angry letter from a student of the prefect body at Yanco Ag. Eight months ago, the Department of Education promised new dorms for the female students who have been living in rundown demountable dorms for twenty-seven years. They simply say that they asked the Department for an update and for eight months you, the Department of Education, refused to give them one. They quoted the Department policy which states, "students will participate in decisions about their own learning." So, why have you not updated them for eight months?

Mark Greentree, Executive Director, Department of Education.

It is definitely something I need to take back to either the or potentially the DepSec (Department Secretary) and, potentially the Secretary, to find out where that is standing. I probably need to identify the fact that my responsibility in role and my fairly secluded position is within the Information Technology Directorate so if there was a question pertaining to the ICT or those types of things, I could probably give you a very good answer. Unfortunately, I can't answer this so I will have to take that on notice I'm sorry.

Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch

A question regarding your exchange programme where the metropolitan teachers come out. I've seen some fantastic benefits in some of the small schools in our direct area but wondering if you ever considered that, as a potential, to swap the other way and put some of our remote teachers back into some of the larger, mainstream schools and provide the same conditions and guarantees back the other way so that they can then bring those skills back to that area?

Michelle Michael. Department of Education. Rural and Remote Education Strategy. Rural Access Strategy

That is a great question and absolutely take those ideas on board. I think what you saw on the screen there with Mark in the presentation of the classrooms, very soon the classrooms are going to be able to dial into potentially any other class room in the state and so the idea that we would need to travel, yes, it is going to be great and it still will remain a face-to-face component, but the idea that we will be able to tap into the collective brain that is almost 92,000 teachers across the whole state is really going to be quite significant for regional and rural and remote schools and we have granular data now on, particularly around HSC, so we can actually see or look at a school in a particular subject. This particular teacher has got a really big number of students that have one well in environmental science, I'm going to go and tap you on the shoulder to find out what's going on in that school. That's what we are already doing and the teachers are often surprised and say, "it's just the daily practice." But they are doing really high-quality work. We then offer the options to those teachers to actually support other teachers across the state to actually show them what they are doing to get those great results, setting those really high expectations for students. So, answering your question that is one component but, absolutely, I think that is something our team can build upon from the actual Joining the Dots programme and the Teacher Exchange programme.

Ali Alison, Broken Hill Branch

Thank you for your presentation. I've just got a question and I have been looking at the SDS website and one of the comments was that the first task of the SDS is to ensure that rural schools are brought up to the digital equivalent of their metropolitan counterparts and I was looking at the point proof of concept schools that have been selected to initiate this programme and I'm just wondering why, if it was considered at all, that a school which is relying of digital education, such as distance education where our children do not have a face-to-face teacher and they rely solely on digital technologies, which as it was pointed out in your presentation is aging, why those schools weren't selected as a proof of concept setting?

Michelle Michael. Department of Education. Rural and Remote Education Strategy. Rural Access Strategy

So, the twenty-nine schools that we have selected as part of the Dubbo pod and those are based on the fact that there was a personal proof of concept before we could get full element of funding to push forward with the entire programme. It was in a location that we could access with technology and get the technology in there fairly quickly to see the logistic side of things and to actually right out and draw out a strong enough business plan to push the business case forward for a larger expansion of the programme. We are now about to release phase two and that expands into areas such as Wagga and a variety of other areas as well which are more rural and remote as you said. We are about to test the logistics of that. I know Wagga is not but I can't remember the list of 81 schools on the list and I can't pull those off the top of my head. But I just remember Wagga because I was there last week with the Juvenile Justice Centre which is part of this next phase so I knew that one was included. Based on that we start with

81 schools and then it ramps up to a very substantial, I think another 200 schools from that and it rapidly rolls up because there are 1,002 schools to be done before the end of December 2022. With a large roll-out particularly of the devices first, moving forward. And I agree with you, absolutely we should be targeting the schools that definitely rely on technology as a mainstay and that is where we want to head to as well. I think, perhaps, the SDS needs to be updated from that website because I truly believe that the technology, we are putting in place is actually superior to the standard that will be in metropolitan schools. Not to the standard, and yes there are schools that are well and truly below the standard of some metropolitan schools at this current state but we also found that during COVID that there is quite a significant metro access gap as well in some other areas in low socioeconomic areas in the metropolitan space but this is something we are definitely passionate about in terms of bringing a qualified and guaranteed service.

Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch.

You said that it ramps up and by 2022 and Mike told us yesterday that he was hoping that we would have some technology improvements by 2021 and I guess for all of us who are 100% reliant on this digital technology, we are really wondering actually when are our kids going to be able to access an effective satellite lesson. Is it going to be by the end of 2022 or is it going to be 2021?

Mark Greentree, Executive Director, Department of Education.

So, the funding for it is to all done and dusted by 2022. Everything else gets ramped up so at this point in time we're tracking to try and expend about \$150 million between now and June 30th of this year. That's a rapid ramp up. In terms of how we initiate, engage and sustain that, we are currently doing some very long nights to try and make sure that we have got that. We've got vendors from around the country trying to make sure that we can execute on that plan and we also have to go through a number of governmental procurement protocols that ensure that we follow all of those due diligence type of processes but we are very passionate about trying to get it out there ASAP because, as far as I am concerned, one day wasted for a kid is not acceptable as it is and I still wear my bleeding heart teachers hat every day and I have been kicked out of a bunch of meetings for making that bleeding heart stand out. Anyone who knows me and has worked with me knows that what I say I mean and if I say I'm going to do something I'll do it as well.

Mike Tom, Department of Education.

Just to quickly add to that. So, there are two components here. There is the RAG that we have just talked about and there is also additional funding which is about expanding out the network. What we are doing here is working with ITD, which is Mark's area, to make sure that the distance education technologies are fair and square in that process and, wherever possible, we are putting those at the forefront so we are actually working on those to move those through faster. Giving you the timeline hasn't changes from what I said last night and that is that, basically, in terms of the satellite upgrades or the processes we have in place, we are aiming for the end of the year. We like to do that sooner but as Mark said, there are processes to work through. The second thing is, in terms of choosing the distance ed schools as a cohort to start with and why didn't we choose Broken Hill? Quite frankly, when you are doing beginnings of a trial and you scoping things out, the last thing you want to do is muck up the process and make it more complex for you. So, in a lot of ways we wouldn't choose the Broken Hill site which relies totally on that technology to go in and make quite severe changes when we are really doing test cases at that stage to build their business case.

Sue Gordon, NSW/Vic lone Member

Thank you for that presentation it sounds like a very exciting time ahead and I'm sure State Council are really looking forward to getting involved with you and getting their teeth onto something. My question is. Does the Department of Education have a special area for recruitment or for students wanting to study teaching? I'm convening a school careers expo early next term and, certainly the universities and everyone comes but there are many universities and many institutions and whether the Department has a specific area that I could contact.

Michelle Michael. Department of Education. Rural and Remote Education Strategy. Rural Access Strategy

I'm happy to put you into contact with the HR people and the person, actually the Director, who is in charge of the universities and graduates so the answer to that is, yes, we do and they would, I'm sure, be happy to support whatever you are doing. Again, Minister Mitchell actually spoke about recruiting from within. You are statistically more likely go back to regional, remote and rural NSW if you have lived there and then you go and do teaching or another profession and go back there. Do we have work to do on that? Absolutely and the reason I know that is because my own nephew is studying teaching and is in his final year. He did very well in is HR and is a really competent violinist and has gone to a metropolitan university. Do we know as a government organisation that he is actually studying to be a teacher? I'm not sure. Or does the uni know that he is from a regional part of NSW? No, because I asked them and has he been offered a job in an exclusive private school in Sydney already even though he still had twelve months to do? Yes, he has. So, we need to actually put the mechanisms around those students to ensure that they are getting back to you and again, they are the very heavy conversations that I am certainly having at the table with the elephant in the room around some of the things that I know will be sitting behind some of the work you are doing. I absolutely know that. We are both going to the dinner tonight so hopefully you will be able to come up and share some of your experiences with us and I have really enjoyed the conversations today. The opening statements by Jenny Sheaffe and I just loved hearing your stories with your husband. It was really quite fantastic and when you are talking about being bailed up with the snake and with the dog, that's my life as well. I just turned to Mike and said that I was with my people. Just love it because you can't share those things with city people because they just wouldn't do that. So, again, thank you for allowing us to come and I hope we can come back again to future conferences and if there are things that you actually want from us or the department or senior officers, I would encourage you to talk to your senior executive you actually have and we can put those requests in and we look forward to working with you in the future. Thank you.

Katrina Worrall. Department of Education, Leader, Psychological Practice***ZOOM Presentation.***

I would just like to acknowledge to the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting pay my respects to elders' past, present and emerging and any aboriginal people present in the room today. *Slide.* I hope you can see the slide and greetings from Lord Howe Island school where I am actually kicking off the service, I am providing to this school I was talking to Mike about the problems with connectivity so I am experiencing, firsthand the challenges that you would be experiencing in your isolated locations as well. But enough about that. What I want to talk to you today is this brand new service that has been established by the Department in response to the government's election commitment to improve the mental health and wellbeing for students in our schools. This commitment is really in recognition of the fact that

it is quite hard to get people to actually go into very remote areas and to keep them so, it is also in recognition of the fact that telepsychology is a bit of a new way forward in order to get services to people. So, why did we decide to set up a telepsychology service? Primarily because it has been shown through research to be quite effective and we know that this last twelve months has actually given us a lot of opportunity to learn and to try delivering services and working remotely and in many instances, it hasn't been a problem at all. It hasn't skipped a beat and there has been quite a lot of research and it is not new research either, it started back in the 1960's but definitely in the last five to ten years a lot of research has shown that the beneficial effects of therapy can be gained and maintained through a remote delivery as well as face-to-face. We have also trailed it in our own schools and after the bush fires we deployed a lot of counselling staff throughout the bush fire effected areas and then the pandemic hit and they all had to come back. So, in a few cases we have maintained that through telepsychology to great effect. We have also implemented it in Broken Hill in supplement to face-to-face services there and we had a trial with eleven schools in remote NSW. We feel that we are quite well set up to start this service and we are excited to be doing it. What we wanted to do, because this is a brand-new service, is that we wanted to engage as many stakeholders as possible and undertake an extensive stakeholder consultation period. In my previous role as Principal Psychologist, I was really lucky to be leading this so I've been with this project since its inception. We contracted KPMG to manage those stakeholder consultations and with the stakeholders, co-design this service. *Slide.* This is just an overview of the stakeholders who actually attended the consultations and we did three large areas in the state and we had a mixture of people from the State Office Department, people from education, our counselling staff, school staff, service providers, and also parents. So, KPMG contacted the P & C and ICPA and I was informed that People were not actually able to attend any of those workshops but we certainly reached out and I'm very pleased to say that Bree Wakefield, one of your State Councillors, has been extremely helpful to me in the recruiting process so, we are really keen to engage everyone. We also wanted to ask students what they felt about and whether they would engage with a telepsychology service so we developed a survey that went to a number of remote high schools and there were 100 people here in this one in the slide, but we also did a separate one in Moree. In the results of this one, and these are only two of the questions that we asked, but we wanted to find out what the students would feel would be important. And as you can see from these, the fact that they could engage with somebody in a confidential and private space and that it was comfortable and secure, it was overwhelming what they wanted. We are able to set that up with telepsychology and we have the platform to be able to have a really interactive session with them. Interestingly, we wanted to canvas what the appetite was for after school service and most of the kids wanted to do wanted to see a councillor in school time. So, we have got some learnings there potentially to set up something that might be extended to after school but we haven't gone down that road at this stage. *Slide.* So, what did we end up with this? We ended up with our new service which is called School Counselling and Telepsychology Rural and Remote Schools which is quite a mouthful particularly if you have to put people's position titles in front of that. So, what we have decided to call it is Scatters (SCTRRS) and mole role is now LPP Scatters. *Slide.* What is Scatters? What came out of the co-designing process was a 78 page report from KPMG so, this is just a very brief distillation of what came out of it. But the actual service will provide personalised intervention which will focus on students. That is one-to-one. Also, the potential to capacity building and a focus on staff and communities for example, I'm planning to remotely, when I get back to Sydney, to prepare some sessions on anxiety to run with parents in your town. It is also very much about building relationships with services and with community and the other to this was the potential need if there has been an emergency in a community, for this service to come in and support local services to manage that risk and to support community. It is basically for students in rural

and remote NSW public schools and what we want is for the students to have access to help in a timely way and to increase their opportunity to engage with education and their community and also want to, in conjunction with local counselling services, built the capacity of schools and enhance general wellbeing with whatever we can offer in that regard. *Slide.* Out of the stakeholder consultations there was a consistent theme about what principals should drive this new service. The thing that came out really strongly was about the relationships and because relationships are so important it is really hard to build relationships without actually having some face-to-face contact so the model of this service is that there is also direct face-to-face contact with schools. So, all of the people I have working for me at the moment have spent time in schools ranging from three weeks in one stint to a few days at a time and that will be an ongoing feature of the service and then the backup will be from a remote site using the platforms that we have for counselling. If you look at the bottom right hand of the slide the other thing that is really important which came out is the continuity of personnel so, one of the advantages of this service is that we will have a team who will get to know their schools and, hopefully, will be the same people so it is not like every time you pick up the phone you talk to a different person and having to reiterate the stories again. Within that as well it is very much about communication and planning and being flexible and adaptable, cultural responsiveness, which came out very strongly, and every person who is employed into my team will be undergoing cultural competence training for psychologists and also integrating as much as possible with what is available at the school and on the ground. *Slide.* Where are we up to now? At the moment we are in Phase I and this will be rolled out over three years. Now the Phase I recruitment allows for four Senior Psychologists Education and one Leader Psychologists Practice. We have one substantive SPE now and myself as the LPP and three casual staff have been working to take up the additional three positions. The remaining three positions are currently short listed and we will be interviewing those next week and I am very hopeful that we will complete Phase I in readiness for Phase II which will be our next round of recruiting in about three months which will give us time to get set up for next term. That will be an extra eight positions. So far, from the beginning of this year twenty rural and remote schools are currently being supported in that combination of face-to-face and telepsychology so we are off to a great start and the next three people who come on will take over from the casual staff and in the next round we will be building up the relationship with many more schools. That is where we are up to now. I'm not sure whether we have time for questions? We do have time for questions. Thank you.

Mike Tom. Department of Education

What we'll try to do is, because Katrina is on a very short time frame and she actually has to jump back into some work she has to do there, we will take questions on notice and we will try and capture those and bring them back to people. So, the quality of the service was not too bad this morning. That is on an NBN connection but it was dodgy yesterday. Very dodgy actually so that did work out quite well today. Are there any questions at all that we can take on notice?

Gillian Bale, Relieving Principal, Palm Avenue School, Centre for Effective Reading

I was wondering. You notice that the trial was via telephone counselling verses face-to-face and it was comparable. Is this service by telephone or is via video links?

Mike Tom. Department of Education

Thank you Gillian and I am going to have to take that one on notice. We'll get that back to you thank you.

Kate Treweeke. Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch

There were twenty rural and remote schools that are already accessing this service. Are there going to be more?

Mike Tom, Department of Education

Yes, I think the answer was yes. You also have a member on the reference group for this which I think is Bree Wakefield but we can certainly find out if there is a prioritised list as in where the next steps are and what the expansion is. We'll get that back to you.

Presentation of Certificate of Appreciation to Mike Tom, Department of Education**Jesse Donoghoe, NSW/Vic Lone Members on behalf of Caroline McDonald, NSW/Vic Lone Member**

Mike, my mum would have really liked to be here to say this to you in person but since she couldn't be I'm going to read it out from her.

"Mike has been, for many years, a staunch supporter of ICPA in their endeavours to help ensure equity in education for rural and remote students. At every meeting with the State Council deputation during my time, Mike has been there to lead his Education Department team. We always feel that Mike listens to both sides of the issue with an open mind and that his goal, too, is to find the best solution to the many challenges associated with educating our students. At conference Mike is always there in the front row with his team to inform and comment on the motions presented. Sometimes the questions from the floor are hard ones but Mike always answers with knowledge and empathy. As a distance education supervisor and state councillor I know Mike for many of those years. Meetings and workshops, deputations ICPA-NSW conferences and employment selection panels. Recently I had the privilege of working with Mike on the advisory group for the Finigan School of Distance Education. I greatly respect his knowledge of and commitment to rural and distance education in NSW. Working with Mike is always a positive and enriching experience and I also value Mike highly as a friend. Thank you, Mike, for all your years working with ICPA-NSW. Your efforts are greatly appreciated."

Claire Butler, President ICPA-NSW

Mike could you please come forward as State Council would like to present you with a Certificate of Appreciation.

Duncan Taylor, CEO, Managing Director, Country Universities Centre (CUC)

Thanks very much everyone for having me here and it is great to be back at an ICPA conference and particularly delighted to be here yesterday to see David presented with the Life Membership. I think there are three things that really stood out to me about David Cameron in his time with ICPA. The first one was his very, very deep understanding of this organisation. I don't think there is anyone else in the room that has David's understanding of how ICPA works and the culture behind it. The second thing was his empathy towards the issues that underline all the motions that you hear. He understands the parents. He understands the children and those who are impacted by the issues and always had a deepfelt empathy towards what they were feeling and what they were having to handle. I think the third thing was his mentoring and I think everyone who was on State Council would agree with me about the way he mentored everyone on State Council and I had the very anxious experience of following on after David as President and it was a nerve wrecking experience to try and fill those shoes but with his mentoring, I felt we'd be able to muddle our way through it and thank him very much

for what he's done. So, really, very well deserved to see that award given yesterday. I was very much like many people, an accidental State Councillor. I thought I was giving my wife a lift up to Lightning Ridge for a conference and came back on State Council and that's because of the tail twisting abilities of people like Micheal Davis and Sue Gordon and I know others share that experience. I dropped into the Tertiary Portfolio and working with State Council, at that stage, they knew a lot more about tertiary matters than I did. There were a couple of things which I quickly learnt. The first thing was there is a lot of talk about aspiration and higher education. Aspiration is not a problem for country kids. Country kids aspire to be everything that kids who live anywhere else aspire to be but the problem is expectation. The tragedy is that sometimes country kids aspire to be something but they don't expect it to ever happen and it's organisations like this that free up the way for them to be able to meet their goals. The second thing was that, because the problem is access to opportunity, the opportunities in higher education are either to relocate and go to a university campus and that's a great option for a lot of university students but it is not possible for everyone. Whether it is financial reasons, work reasons, family reasons because people simply don't want to leave their communities and they don't want to go away to a university campus. Then the only other option left is to stay at home and do online university education and the sad fact is that more than half of the people that embark on online education at home don't succeed. They don't get through it and that actually impacts their confidence and their outlook on life that they haven't been able to get through a university degree. So, it seemed to State Council that there was a gap there. There is an ability to put something in the middle of those two options and be able to have people stay in their communities if that is what they want to do or have to do, but still be supported to be successful in higher education. I remember State Council, we had many white board sessions trying to work out what that model might look like and develop a model. Now, you've got to have a little bit of luck in life and very luckily for me, at the same time back in Cooma, which is our regional centre, the CEO of Snowy Hydro was saying that he couldn't recruit people at Snowy Hydro. There was schooling in Cooma but people didn't want to move away for university opportunities for their families so he had unfilled jobs and the mayor was finding the same. At that stage my wife was Deputy Mayor of the local shire and she was talking to the mayor and she said if you want to look at this problem and solve it you need to go and talk to ICPA-NSW because they are thinking about this very problem. So, the Mayor did come and talk to ICPA-NSW and after some discussions the council said that they would give a building if we have a model that is going to work and that sits between online education at home and moving away to a campus. The CEO of Snowy Hydro said that they would fit out the centre and put technology in it and give \$200,000 a year for three years and we have to prove ourselves in that time that our model will work. So, more whiteboard sessions with State Council and a real scramble and I really want to pay credit here to Caroline McDonald and Jesse Donoghoe for their contribution at that stage. I didn't come out of a distance education context and they did and they taught me a lot about distance education and online education and what needs to happen at the recipient end for online education to be successful. So, we put together a model and in 2013 the Cooma University's Centre was born. Now, in the vision of ICPA-NSW the centre had terminal rooms, had fibre connectivity, it had break out spaces, it had tutorial rooms and it had video conferencing ability. All that was great but the real secret behind this model was that it had staff. I'm a big believer that some students can do online education all the time and all students can do online education some of the time but not all students can do online education all the time. They need to have staffing support, academic support, wellbeing

support, to get them through. So, that's what we created with this centre and we only had \$200,000 a year at the beginning and to do all those things made us a lean and hungry machine. I'm glad it did because that sets you up well for the future when you are like that. In 2013 we kicked off and we knew that the missing piece in this was universities. So, we had to prove ourselves with Snowy Hydro and the community was behind us but we needed universities for the long run to be in this and be providing revenues to make it sustainable. In 2015 we got our first university on board and that was the Central Queensland University and if any of you know it, it's a very online dispersed campus type model and we aligned in with their sort of vision. At that point I was still President of this organisation but I knew I couldn't juggle both things and had Kate, who was waiting in the wings and more than ready to take up the job. I remember a very bleary-eyed conversation with Kate really early in the morning at McDonalds somewhere and Kate said that she's got this. She'll take the ICPA and I will concentrate on this because I thought that knew we have got a university on board we've really got a shot at this model and we then started to work on government. You heard both Perin Davey and Sarah Mitchell talk about the Country University Centre yesterday. They weren't there for the first five years and one of the ironies is, I think about a government, is the best way to get money from a government is to prove to them that you don't actually need it because they don't want you to be a noose around their neck. They want to know that you can survive without them and the fact that we had five years before governments came on board with it served us well. So, then the state government came on board as you heard yesterday, and then the federal government came on board and they helped us expand the model because we knew that if we were only one town in South Eastern NSW, we wouldn't be an important player in higher education. Universities and governments wouldn't actually emmesh us into their policies and our abilities to get revenues from them would be diminished. So, we thought, let's expand out this model, keep it community driven as it is very important that every community owns and drives its own centre and we'll expand it out and we were fortunate enough to do that. That takes us up to the present story. In 2013, as I say, we developed in Cooma and we proved it for five years without any government assistance but then government came on and in 2018 we opened up our second centre in Broken Hill and third in Goulbourn. For us it was about getting students under the umbrella so that then we could have a bit of traction with universities. The following year we opened up in Grafton, Moree, Narrabri, Griffith and Leeton and that gave us eight locations throughout NSW and we started to feel like we could get the student numbers and the base under the model to be taken seriously. Last year we were fortunate to open up in Parkes and this year we are opening up in Ulladulla, Kempsey, Rome, St. George, Dirranbandi and down in Wonthaggi in Victoria. So, that gives us fifteen locations across NSW, up into Queensland and down into Victoria. I feel now, for us, it was about expansion, getting student numbers, been taken seriously, and we are starting to feel like we have got that foothold now amongst our centres. I know a number of you are probably thinking that that is great. You go into regional centres but not everyone lives near a regional centre. Importantly for this organisation is that the federal government has backed us to go into St. George and Dirranbandi. Now, St. George, as many of you would know, is a town of three thousand people, it's about the size of Hay and we are really looking forward to how we can tweak this model to work in a town of three thousand and what that might mean to a number of other towns around Australia of two to three thousand people. We can get sustainable, higher education infrastructure and supports in for local students and, importantly, staff, to provide academic and wellbeing support in locations of two to three thousand then we have got a model that becomes important for rural

and remote Australia. To push that even a little bit further, Dirranbandi, as many of you would know, is a town of six hundred, geographically classified as very remote and we have taken a lease of part of the Rural Transaction Centre in Dirranbandi and working with the Balonne Shire Council to try and get a sustainable model in Dirranbandi. Now that is a pilot and if we can make that pilot work and, as I say, appreciate the federal government support in doing that, then, once again, what that will mean to people in organisations like this, it will mean that we can take this model out to very remote areas. Now I'm not pre-empting success in places like Dirranbandi or even St. George, but I'm optimistic about it and we are going to give it our very best shot to make it work there and make it sustainable and see if we can get this model as something that becomes more important to people who live in the more dispersed population areas. In terms of student numbers, the state government wanted us to achieve between forty-five and sixty students in our centres and I lay awake at night for a long while worrying about that and now I sleep very soundly because the need for this model far outstrips that and none of our centres have under a hundred fifteen students and their numbers are building over the time. I really think there is a need for this model and, last year across those six centres, we had over eight hundred students. Now that we have got the extra move to fifteen locations, we are hoping for about fifteen hundred students this year. As you can see in our student numbers, we bumbled along in Cooma and it wasn't about student numbers, it was about proving the model to everyone but then once we got the government's support behind us, we could escalate student numbers and this year I am expecting about double of what we were last year. That is starting to bring the universities on board because they are interested, obviously, in numbers and what they can get out of our model. The real important thing for us was that this be a community driven model because we have gone now to a number of places where universities have gone and then failed and then left. Thinking of places like Parkes, like Griffith and Broken Hill that had universities come in and now they've gone again and that is because the universities went there for the university's own interests. If you set up as a community thing, and ICPA is a ground-based community organisation, you are there for the community's interest and I think that provides way to sustainability. The universities that we have on board are corner-stone universities and are there for all students studying at any university but we want corner-stone relationships with regional facing highly online universities that will sustain us with their revenues. Now we have brought on board the three largest online universities in Australia and that is Charles Sturt, UNE and the University of Southern Queensland also Federation and CQ Universities our original partner and we hope to increase those university numbers. Last year we had students studying four hundred different courses at thirty-five different universities and we are not going to have thirty-five corner-stone partners. We are going to have five or six corner-stone partners but still retain that diversity. In that student base I think we had about one hundred and seventy nursing students that are living in outer regional areas and who are going to work in those areas and about a hundred thirty education students. I saw Michelle from the Department of Education yesterday evening and she was talking about hard it is for them to know where students are studying education. I was able to tell her that we had one hundred and thirty students studying in outer regional areas that are going to work where they are studying and become the teachers of the next generation. I think about eighty social work and psychology students are out in these areas as well which will be a part of the future workforce. I'll finish on this. Since the CUC started in 2018, other areas have also joined into this model. In 2017 it was only Cooma and Geraldton that had community driven models. Geraldton looked quite different to us because they are forty thousand people and in Cooma,

we were seven thousand, and as I say, we ran a pilot model to work in populations much less than that. But in the meantime, a number of models have popped up with federal government support. It's a growing thing and you can see that there are models up in the Pilbara in Western Australia, up in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, around the Gulf in South Australia and down in Western Tasmania. As far as the community driven university centres in Australia the Country University Centre has about half of it and the other half is a number of individual models and we get together every year and we have a conference like this and we talk about how we can get better higher education opportunities for regional areas and we are really looking forward to this model growing and proliferating whether or not they are Country University Centres doesn't matter as long as communities get better opportunities for higher education. So that's it from me but I do just want to emphasise how grateful I am to this organisation because the original thinking came in from people in ICPA-NSW who understood distance education, who were prepared to sit in front of whiteboard sessions for hours at a time and then pound the footpath and talk to politicians about it and there was a great community driven place for it to start and I hope, but we never know what is around the corner, but I hope it will become part of the fabric of higher education opportunity for regional, rural and remote areas. Thank you.

Chris Taylor. General Manager, Southern NSW Telstra.

Before I begin, I first would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we meet on today. The Nari Nari and Wiradjuri people and I pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. I want to thank the ICPA-NSW for inviting me here to speak on behalf of Telstra at the annual conference. We value our longstanding partnership with the ICPA at both the state and national level and this relationship keeps us close to our customers and communities in rural and remote Australia and it certainly helps us shape our strategy in regional Australia. This is the first state conference that I've been able to attend since Griffith in 2016. I spent a short period out of my role as Regional Manager in another part of Telstra back in 2018 and early 2019 and we were supporting Services Australia as a key Telstra customer and that was to help them implement improvements in their connectivity and their presence across regional Australia. I've been back in this role since about mid 2019 and it is certainly great to be able to get out on the road and be able to meet face to face again. This morning, what I would like to be able to do is give you an update on a few things which I hope are relevant to you, particularly around our customer experience and about our infrastructure investment and what we are doing to continually improve the connectivity and technology we bring into regional and remote areas. Just a little bit around the customer experience and I think it is appropriate to acknowledge that our customers have certainly had a very mixed experience in engaging and transacting with us across our channel since the COVID pandemic began. The timing with COVID also overlapped with a major part of our digitisation programme within Telstra where we were migrating a lot of our customers onto our new and simplified product stack. So, while we've seen more customers choosing to interact with us digitally, the significant changes within our business resulting in customers at the moment needing to contact us reactively more than usual and they are obviously seeing delays and frustrations in getting our assistance. Things will improve as we get through these customer migrations into the back half of the year, I can assure you of that. The MyTelstra digital app has proven to be extremely popular and simple for self-service in managing your account, for service-related activities and also for online shopping for technology. It will continue to evolve to meet our customer needs and we want to continue to

evolve this and make it the best experience as possible. We want this app, at some point, to be the one stop shop for our customers to have a great interaction and seamless experience with it. Now, on to our contact centres and our retail presence. Telstra has recently made two significant announcements on how we will service our customers through our contact centres and also our branded retail stores in the future. Last November our CEO announced that by mid 2022 all Telstra consumer and small business customers who call us for enquiries and assistance will come through an agent in Australia. So, all of those calls will land onshore by mid-2022. We already have a large domestic call centre workforce in Australia so this is really just a change of customer service model rather than a big on-shore initiative. We are going to continue to maintain an international workforce but for consumer and small business customers, they'll transition to supporting our digital engagements through messaging and those sorts of things. The onshoring approach is less about building big new call centres and more about enabling our agents to work flexibly and to work from home in a lot of instances. In fact, we are already moving across our business since COVID to a COVID agnostic approach for all office and contact centre-based roles and that has been accelerated by COVID. As we stand now, 80% of our contact centre consultants in Australia are choosing to work from home on any given day. In fact, all of them have the capability to do so if they desire. We think this is going to be positive from a regional employment perspective because applicants and our employees no longer need to be geographically tied to one of our traditional office hubs. We see, as things move into the future, that there will be a shift in the proportion of our employees that are living in regional areas to in the city. Only last week we did launch a small, specialised call centre in Darwin and this is to manage all enquiries from remote indigenous communities across Australia. The staff are specifically trained in rural product solutions, cultural awareness and their potential to be able to respond some calls in language to support our indigenous customers in those remote areas.

Onto the retail side of things. Last month we announced our intention to transition full ownership for all our bricks and mortar branded retail stores across Australia. In doing this we are going to better align our customers experience across our digital and retail offering as people are moving more to online but it is getting that integration into our face-to-face retail offering and we have got to keep pace with the growing digital economy but we want to provide greater flexibility for our people to be able to respond consistently to customer needs because things are changing so quickly. It is also going to help us to further responsible business practices through direct employment relationships with our store staff. We are going to be able to have more customer service issues resolved in store into the future. This is a particularly significant announcement for regional NSW because the majority of stores currently operating in regional NSW are under our licence programme. In the future we will take back full ownership of those stores.

Video Presentation. This story has driven our decision to introduce a new service model into regional areas called our Regional Advisory Network or RAN. The Regional Advisory Network is a new programme to help our rural, regional and remote customers to get connected wherever they are and in particular in complex locations and difficult environments. The programme offers individual solutions provided by local Telstra experts like John who is one of our five engineering experts located around regional Australia, so that no matter where you live, hopefully, you can have access or maximise your connectivity experience. We certainly recognise mobile coverage doesn't extend to all geographic parts of the land and signal strength can vary depending on where you are and other factors so, when you couple this with the fact

that we actually operate three mobile voice and data networks, and then you have got devices that vary in their compatibility depending on the age of the device, it is understandable that it can be extremely complex for customers to understand how to get the best out of their connectivity experience. The RANs currently got five regional network advisors and we have got more than four hundred local communications advisors out there amongst our skill technician teams across regional Australia. As the transition from Telstra network to the NBN infrastructure on the fixed side of things moves ahead we are transitioning the skills of our workforce to provide more support for customers with mobility because that is our core infrastructure as far as Telstra is concerned moving forward. The three customer main points that we are trying to resolve here are helping people with mobile coverage issues at your home or at your premise and that can be inside the home on or in and around your property. There is helping people with mobile coverage issues on the road like how to get set up best in your vehicle to be able to maximise your coverage experience. At a community level, being able to give communities access for skill technicians to come and speak at a community event or even to be able to investigate wider community mobile coverage issues. That is how we are trying to move to provide you with better access on the ground to our expertise, to be able to support you.

We want to be able to help customers troubleshoot their connectivity challenges and to provide more options to optimise the experience and, whether it is device type or device settings and simple things like that or using functionality or WiFi calling, or using the network extension devices like the Telstra Go repeater. The introduction of WiFi calling on handsets particularly over the last twelve to eighteen months, has been a bit of a game changer particularly for people who live in areas with absolutely no coverage and you can now make and receive mobile calls and SMS on compatible WiFi calling handsets through your WiFi connection on your home fixed broadband modem and that is certainly, I think, there are a lot of people here already aware of that and doing that and that awareness is increasing but we still find that we are able to resolve some issues very simply with that particular feature as an example. *Slide.* This is an example of the available mobile coverage maps and it is looking at our 3G and 4G coverage broadly and you can see the white areas where there is no coverage but on the left-hand side it's hand held and on the right-hand side you can see the significant difference that a network extension device can make. It is not going to work in all cases but a significant number of people can benefit from that and the awareness is pretty strong in this room having spoken to a lot of people over the last couple of days. We now have a web form on our Telstra.com site where customers and communities can connect with a local network expert to explore your concerns or you can invite a Telstra representative to an event and we have got brochures at the table there that have all the details on where you go to actually to be able to request that type of service.

Last week we announced a new initiative to support small businesses and this is our Telstra Business Go Digital Consult and it is designed to help your business to be its best on line, to help customer increases and to help with efficiencies. Up until the end of this year we are offering a free consult to all small businesses. This is normally valued at \$149. What will happen is that a Telstra small business expert will do an over the phone review of how digital your business is and it will provide a tailored report and a bit of a road map for you to go digital and it covers the following areas: Connectivity or getting the best tools to actually get connected; engaging online, things like advising how to engage with customers online; digital marketing to boost your online presence; and tracking and managing existing customer

relationships. There is a security aspect advising you how to have the right tools to reduce the threat of viruses and malware to your business and then there is business software which looks at some of the other tools like accounting software, security software, etc. and have the best tools to suit your business. We have also developed an interactive online Go Digital tool and that can help businesses self-assess their digital readiness and receive recommendations as well. We encourage you to have a look at that and take the opportunity for someone to actually have a look at how, maybe, we can optimise how you set up.

Now on to a little bit about infrastructure and over the last day you have heard that Telstra is working with the NSW Government to deliver a \$328 million internet upgrade to more than 2,200 public schools and this will include the twelve remote schools currently operating on satellite services. By the end of 2021 we will provide more than ten times the current available internet bandwidth to many students throughout NSW which includes those regional areas. The twelve remote schools that work from an infrastructure point of view, we have set ourselves a target to that completed by the end of this calendar year and we are on track to do that and, in fact, if things keep tracking well, we should come in earlier than the end of the year to complete those twelve schools. I think we have already done Enngonia. I think Weilmoringle is finished and Booligal is imminent and I think that we should go close to completing our work on the majority of that this week. We will continue to work through that. Initially what it also does is make more fibre infrastructure available into these regional locations for potential use by other agencies and communities in the future as well.

On the mobile investment update, I said earlier that we run three voice and data networks at the moment and, in total, we run five mobile networks. We have our 3G, 4G and 5G networks for voice and data and we have two narrow band IOT networks for sensors and things like that. Some time ago we announced our intention to shut down the 3G network by the end of June 2024. Our investment at the moment currently goes into five main areas and you would have heard that we have accelerated our build of the 5G network and our target there is to reach 75% of the population by the middle of this year and we are already starting to go into regional towns and centres with that rollout. We are investing in increasing the capacity of our 4G network as traffic and demand increases on the 4G network. Importantly for this group we have to increase our 4G coverage to match the 3G network as we get closer to 2024 and as examples, we have completed the 4G upgrade to Tibboburra late last year, Darnick will be completed sometime this week and Booligal at the moment is due for completing in late April. So, we are going to continue to work on some of these sites in remote areas that are 3G only and just to clarify, when we upgrade a tower to 4G we are not turning 3G off at that time. 3G network will be done in one hit in the middle of 2024. 3G remains on all sites until that time but what we'll continue to do is built the 4G network onto those sites currently that don't have it. The other things that we are looking at doing is expanding our coverage footprint where possible and we are doing that through co-investment programmes like the Federal Government's Mobile Black Spot Programme or any other co-investment opportunities and we are going to continue to develop these network extension devices because the reality is getting 100% coverage is a long way off if it ever happens, so we have to continue to support our customers by providing other means of actually maximising what you have got at the moment and that is through network extension devices. By the way that coverage map just shows the difference between 3G and 4G at the moment and the work we have got ahead of us over the next four years to continue to increase the 4G footprint.

We had some questions in prior to the conference around explaining small cell versus large base stations and why we use small cells. I thought I would just touch on that. So, small cells can be delivered via either fibre, terrestrial means or satellite as a back haul depending on the availability of our infrastructure and network and we use small cells primarily where our coverage objective might be to get into a small village or other smaller footprints. Satellite back haul we use in areas where it would be cost prohibitive to get fibre or other means there and we are finding those to be really effective and we are finding station and property owners particularly in Queensland at the moment and the Northern Territory where it has been popular, station property owners investing in satellite small cells to provide workers accommodation with connectivity and coverage. We are finding councils and even private operators looking at getting them into recreation and camping grounds where it is appropriate. Road houses on roads that don't have coverage along them and even getting them into schools like Clare and Naradhan and deployed them into some of the remote schools to provide coverage. That is what they are designed to do and some people ask the question that why would you put a small cell there instead of a large base station that is going to get broader coverage? A lot of it does, in the end, come down to cost and economics and we have to have a trade off at some point with some of these decisions. The trade-off of doing nothing because it is just cost prohibitive or getting something in there. I hope that explains the logic of what these technologies are offering in their abilities of what they are able to do but, in some situations, we make the decision that it is better to do something than to do nothing but we continue to look at how we can actually evolve these technologies and also be able to use co-investment programmes and things like that to make sure that we do deliver the best outcomes and solutions as we go forward.

The Mobile Black Spot Programme. After Round 5A of the Federal Government's Mobile Black Spot Programme is completed, Telstra will have invested up to \$290 million and built more than 880 new sites to improve coverage in regional areas. To date in NSW, we have delivered 137 mobile base stations and 104 small cells and we have brought more than 13,000 square kilometres of new or improved coverage into regional NSW. Round 5A submissions closed last week and the Federal Government has allocated approximately \$30 million in Round 5A nationally with \$22 million of that being allocated to traditional mobile network coverage solutions. The key aims of Round 5A will be to provide new coverage to areas that are deemed high bush fire risk and/or to major transport corridors. Once again third-party contributions for example, from state governments, are a key factor in the prioritisation of which sites get funded because third party contributions make the federal government's dollars and the carrier's dollars go further. That closed last week and we will await the outcomes of the programmes on where sites are allocated.

Some other programmes that we have been using to leverage are the Regional Connectivity Programme is a Federal Competitive Grant Programme to expend the economic, social and public safety benefits of improved digital connectivity in regional and remote areas. In the most recent round, which closed in November last year we put forward three programmes in regional NSW and they were included in Telstra's overall submission and a couple of those included increasing transmission infrastructure out to Oxley and Mossgiel to help accelerate the 4G upgrade of those two sites. We haven't had any feedback on the outcome of that. They're obviously two sites that we have to do by the end of 2024 and if we have some success with the funding there, we may be able to accelerate those and we just wait on the outcomes of those programmes. The other big programme which we are waiting to get some more detail on is the

NSW Regional Digital Connectivity Programme and that is the one that is funded by the Snowy Hydro2 sale and they have \$400 million towards that programme and we understand that up to \$300 million will be allocated towards mobile coverage improvements so we are just waiting on the state government to make announcements on how that programme will work to assess how Telstra will participate. The other things, as I said, is direct co-investments with other third parties are what we look at. Only on Tuesday we launched a tower at Bundure on the Kidman Highway between Coleambally and Jerilderie, and that was a direct co-investment between Telstra and Murrumbidgee Council. The Tooraweenah Branch of the CWA have co-invested with us on a small cell for the village of Tooraweenah and we'll complete that is May this year. There are certainly different ways that we look at to work with other community organisations.

The Alternative Voice Service Trial. The federal government has initiated a two-million-dollar Alternative Voice Service Trial Programme in June and this aims to identify new ways to deliver voice services so this trial will assess their effectiveness, raise the awareness of alternative solutions and provide better services and functionality. Telstra is one of six providers who have now been included in the programme and it is going to deliver up to 885 trial services in different rural and remote locations across Australia. We are offering up to three hundred trial services in thirty-four targeted locations across Australia and the majority of those services will be fixed voice services delivered over our 4G network. We will also trial a small number of voice services delivered over NBN SkyMuster satellite technology and those ones are being done up in the Northern Territory and participating customers will trial the technology in parallel with their existing voice service for a period on twelve months so we get feedback on the reliability and the performance and that goes back into the government for consideration around this whole future roadmap for fixed voice technology.

Finally, I just want to touch on a Code Club initiative. The Telstra Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Telstra and we believe in the power of technology to enable all young people to thrive. This is particularly important around education and Code Club is one of the initiatives under the Telstra Foundation. Code Club Australia is an organisation that provides free digital technology, education to schools, libraries and homes via 2,000 clubs around the country and there are about 20,000 primary school age kids that use Code Club material in Australia every week. Our particular focus is on increasing the digital skills of kids in regional and remote areas and in NSW there are approximately 400 Code Clubs in the programme with more than 4,000 kids participating in areas like Broken Hill, Inverell and Moree are registered as Code Club organisations. Code Club Australia recently launched a series of six engaging lessons on diverse agricultural topics whilst teaching digital skills to primary school aged kids. The lessons highlight the importance of agriculture and technology as a vocational pathway and a way to build a sustainable future. So, digital activity in this programme ranges from helping cattle choose what to eat, making a wheat harvest simulator, herding sheep with a farm dog and help bees pollinate flowers. They are really targeted and practical educational ways of coding and any school can register on our website to become a Code Club and there are even virtual Code Clubs available and all tools and content are also available online.

In closing I just want to again thank the ICPA-NSW for your ongoing partnership and I wish you all the very best for the year ahead and I look forward to working with you to continue to improve services for our regional and remote customers and we did have a number of other questions come in prior to the conference and I am happy to address those and will get back to

your members with the appropriate answers as I know you are on a tight schedule. I am available to talk to you during the course of the day if you wish. Thank you.

Roy Butler MP. Member for Barwon. Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party.

Thank you very much and I will be quick because I know that the last thing you want to hear is an MP waffling on. First of all, can I just say thank you so much for the opportunity to come here and spend time with you. I had a great time last night and it was a bit like a reunion for me to meet up with people from my electorate and people from my educational experience as well so that was fantastic. I just want to talk for a second about the importance of education. This is all stuff you know but for me this is about setting the scene for the rest of what I say. We know that there is a direct link between social, health and economic outcomes for people that is related to their educational opportunities and their educational achievements. If people are denied opportunity in terms of education, the quality of education and the educational outcomes, denied that opportunity, the, obviously, they are also denied equity in health outcomes, social outcomes and economic outcomes and when you look at some of our communities they are significantly disadvantaged from the socioeconomic perspective which means that straight up they are not in an environment that is going to give them the best opportunities that they would otherwise have. A little bit about my own experience in terms of education. It was a bit of an eclectic mix. I spent time in catholic primary schools. I did a prep school in Parramatta and I even did time at a Steiner School which was an interesting experience. Year four at a Steiner School. Come around to Year Seven, I ended up going to boarding school so I went to St. Josephs College at Hunters Hill. Joeys. And John Reading was my form master in Year 12. You're not allowed to say anything John. You're not allowed to say anything about what happened. We won't mention the incident. OK? I really appreciate the rich opportunity that I had and it was not an opportunity that is offered to everyone to have those sorts of quality learning opportunities. It was great for me and I was able to go on and continue to study and continued with post-graduate qualifications. A post-graduate Diploma in Drug and Alcohol. A Masters in Public Administration and a Graduate Certificate in Business. When I first went to study an under-graduate degree at Charles Stuart in Bathurst, I wasn't ready. Simply wasn't ready to go on with tertiary study s I think that whole idea of the teacher advising when the student is ready is very relevant no matter what form of education we are talking about.

I want to talk a little bit about responsibility for education and I have spoken on the floor of parliament about this and I think there is a three-way responsibility for education. There is certainly the responsibility of the parent to make sure they have got a safe environment to grow up in and where they are well nourished, well looked after. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is covered. I think there are a couple of good lines there. There's a Jesuit saying which is gender specific but doesn't need to be Jesuit or gender specific, and it is, "Give me the boy until he is seven and I'll show you the man." The idea being that the value is in beliefs that the child has is largely instilled in the child by the age of seven in terms of what is right and wrong, what their ethics and morality is about. I think that that is a really important thing. There is another great line about that as well which comes from a fellow in the States named Bernie Larson and it runs as, "What we live with we learn. What we learn we practice. What we practice we become. What we become has consequences." That could be good or bad so if we live with really positive social influences around us, it gives us the opportunity to grow into positive and

pro-social people. If we don't have those opportunities and we don't experience from a formative perspective, those pro-social factors and those pro-social influences are, again, an anchor that can hold us back. It doesn't mean that you can't do it but what it means is that it is an extra barrier to get there. The second responsibility sits with the child and I have got three kids. Abby who is nineteen and lives in Wagga and I'm still coming to terms with the fact that I have a child who has left home. My son is seventeen and he is off to AGFA Commando next year which I'm very proud of because he will be fifth generation going through the military which is fantastic. My youngest daughter, Mia, who is the cause of most of my grey hairs so it's not Barwon electorate. They are all good kids; they are all on their own path and they are all incredibly different which is amazing given they have had very similar formative experiences. The child has to be available for learning. They have to be engaged with learning. They have to be willing; they have to want to learn. The third responsibility sits with the state in terms of providing the opportunities, equitable opportunities for kids to be able to learn. I think that has been the focus of my work in the NSW Parliament when it comes to education. I've done, what we call a PMS, a Private Members Statement, which was titled Kids in Barwon, and it was all about disparity and the difference in outcomes from an educational perspective. When you look at a town like Wilcannia which is a fantastic river town, it drops well below the state average in terms of educational attainment especially for aboriginal folk in that town which is really sad because, I guess, disadvantage can go across multiple generations if we don't have a disrupter to actually change that intergenerational disadvantage.

There has been a gap that has been allowed to occur and it is not just a small gap but it is a large gap in terms of the results that we get from educational outcomes for things like NAPLAN and ATAR. There is also a gap in terms of the richness of the educational opportunities that people have across the state. I know that I was very lucky to be in an environment where I had teachers who were very passionate about what they did and I'm not saying that teachers are not passionate in other places but I was very lucky in my own experience to have that. I actually have really good debates with my offsider, Melissa, about the public school system and the private school system and how that equity of opportunity works me being a product of the private school system and Melissa being a very successful product of the public school system. This gap that has been allowed to occur, and it's not a secret, we've got the data that goes back decades and shows us that there is a gap. A gap in life expectancy. A gap in economic outcomes. A gap in social outcomes where education is in deficit. I will just give you one quick little anecdote. In Bourke there is a lady by the name of Maxine Mackie who I hired when I worked as a local community facilitator. Because she had been in the director of the Bourke Preschool for twenty-one years, she could open any door for me in Bourke or Brewarrina. Any door was open to me which was so important in terms of having that local context. The other important thing about Maxine is that she was a prosocial influence in so many people's lives at such a young age and so people regressed her very warmly when we'd knock on the door and Maxine was seen there with me. I understand that she is back working again as well. She has actually come out of retirement.

I've outlined some of the responsibilities and some of the issues and I guess we have heard Chris talk about digital connectivity and one of the things that I want to cover is what we are doing because it is no good me just outlining problems without saying what we are doing in the NSW Parliament. A lot of the people in the room here might have put me there and wondering what I am doing about it. Digital connectivity we know is a huge issue and we know that's in all aspects of our lives so it's not just education. We know that businesses rely on digital

connectivity. We know that social interaction relies on digital connectivity and these days if you want to interact with just about any public or private sector organisation you need digital connectivity. So many forms have moved online. It's no longer a case of filling out the form and sending it off on the fax machine. We did a piece of work and I have a lady at Broken Hill that I must tell you about. Her name is Grace McMaster and she is in her twenties, gorgeous, beautiful lady and she has cerebral palsy and that's not a secret. That's one of her unique gifts. And poor old Grace – her hip keeps falling out so she's this beautiful twenty something lady in a Zimmer frame whose hip keeps falling out and she keeps apologising for having to go to hospital but what she does is work incredibly hard on a number of things one of which is grants so if you want help with grants talk to Grace. But she also works on digital connectivity so we did a piece of work on this where we asked people for feedback on their black spots. We compiled all of that into a map with explanative notes and we provided that to both Paul Fletcher, the Federal Communications Minister and also to the Deputy Premier, John Barilaro. While that's mainly a federal issue the reason we gave it to John is because John at the last election had put \$400 million on the table for digital connectivity. So that's two years ago and so far, less than 10% and that is 39% of that has been rolled out and we've encouraged them to get that money out the door soon and turn it into improved outcomes in regional NSW.

So, when we had kids come home during COVID there were a couple of issues. One is that we had a choking of bandwidth because we had so many people trying to access wither online learning or people who weren't going to work and were working from home or, alternatively, those people who were on Netflix and Stan because they couldn't do anything else at the time. What we found is that there was a cohort who were struggling or competing for bandwidth and there was another cohort who, sadly, didn't have the devices or the internet connection at home in some of those more remote communities. That is something that, if we are going to potentially be with COVID for some time, we are going to see potentially an easing and increasing of restrictions and if we do end up back in the situation where we have got remote learning, we need to make sure that they have got the devices and have the connectivity to be able to do that. Just another example. When I was out at Weilmoringle there was an example that was given by one of the teachers was when kids had to do the NAPLAN testing. Two of the teachers had to activate the hot spot on their mobile phone just to provide enough bandwidth for the kids to be able to do their NAPLAN and this is another example where we have gone online with a form and assumed that is going to work for everyone but, obviously, if you don't have the connectivity, it simply doesn't work.

I met with Sarah Mitchell on Monday in relation to a couple of specific schools. Wee Waa was one and Walgett was the other and I think you have already discussed at this conference what's happening at Wee Waa and Walgett so I won't go into detail there. The other thing we have been hearing from teachers in regards to some of the incentives and I'm sure that you guys are aware of most of this. When a temporary teacher goes into one of these locations that attracts certain incentives, they don't receive the same incentives as a permanent teacher. An example that was given to me was a principal of a very small public school in a small town, he was, as the principal, was being paid less than one of his head teachers. This isn't all about money. I know that. But, if there is one barrier that we can remove which can help people get into the school, we know that when people come to our towns and I have seen this across twenty years in the public service, when we tell people that we have a job in Bourke or we have a job here or there, they sort of, are very cautious about it as they are not sure they want to do that or go out there but once they experience how welcome they are in the community and the families,

the P&C, and everyone is wrapped around them and they are making them involved in social activity, involved in sports, that's when we get them to stay and I think that the P&C's and families and parents around the electorate who are involved in that and making people welcome, I can only say thank you because you help us with the retention more than money ever will in terms of bringing people in and keeping them there. I guess we have got some really good metrics that we can rely on in terms of NAPLAN and ATAR, which I will keep holding up in front of government and saying that until we have got some sort of parity between the results we are getting then you still have got work to do in terms of getting those academic results out for the reasons of, not only the equity of opportunity but also that equity of outcome and therefore equity in terms of social, health and financial outcomes which I would like to see happen to a greater extent across NSW.

I'll finish up by talking a little bit about ICPA and my involvement with ICPA. I didn't have a great deal of involvement with ICPA until last year when we started closing borders. Barwon being 44% of the land mass of NSW was affected by three border closures so we had families who had kids across the border in Queensland and who were being told that their kids couldn't go home for the holidays. We had other kids who were going to boarding school in South Australia who couldn't get back across the border without isolating. It was a bit of a mess. I just really want to acknowledge the work of the parents who individually took this up with the relevant state governments but especially the work of the ICPA. The ICPA as able to give us specific data that was relevant to electorates which added so much more weight when my tea or I made representations to the cross-border commissioner or other states. We were actually able to say that we know there are forty-four families in Barwon who are affected by the Queensland border closure. That is forty-four mums and dads who have got the best season going in their lives, which means they don't actually want to get away from home at the moment and if they do it has to be quick because they have got to get back and get on with the cropping or the farming that they are doing, but what we were able to do, working together, was to get change to that so that those kids could go home with some reasonable measures in place in terms of the time that people spent across the border. We, as MP's, we can do what we can do and we can take things up but when you have got groups like the ICPA who are working towards the same outcome it adds so much more weight to what you are doing because it is not political, it is not partisan, it is just people trying to do the right thing. That leads me to volunteerism.

As an organisation that doesn't actually pay anyone to do things, you have got a group of people who are giving up their own time because they care. Because they are passionate about what they are doing and they want to see better outcomes for kids and I think that is something that all of us should be able to get behind in terms of not just the work you are doing but the work of volunteers across regional NSW because, you all know because you are all from small communities, it's volunteers who make our communities good places to live whether it be at a broader level like ICPA or those who effectively run the local show in the local town and put on the races at Louth. I won't take any more of your time but I'm happy to answer any questions if that is part of your format but otherwise, I'll be here until lunch and more than happy to discuss anything you would like with you. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to be involved and I feel the very positive energy around the room and last night was great fun and thank you for making me feel so welcome.

Richard Dougan. Chairman, Bush Children's Education Foundation of NSW (BCEF)

Thank you and I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about the Bush Children's Education Foundation and where we are and where we hope to help people and where we look to go in the future. A bit of information about myself. I was born in Bathurst, went to Scots School in Bathurst, then attended St Andrews College at Sydney University and then had a career in management consulting. I didn't really get involved in education sector until 1998 when my son informed me that there was no way in the world he would attend St Andrews College. I checked up on what the story was and got myself elected to the Council. We went co-residential in 2001 which was a paradigm shift in the culture of the College and it hasn't gone backwards since. I ended up being thirteen years on the Council, Chairman of the Business Committee, got out of that and then immediately got elected chairman of the Foundation. I did that for three more years and I think the College went from having about one million dollars in the bank when I started with the Council and when I finished, we had about eighteen million and built a building for six million, so that was quite a ride. I got out of the St Andrews College environment which is quite an elitist one and Duncan Gay, a mate of mine, said to me that I obviously needed something to do and I was immediately elected to the Bush Children's Education Foundation Board. Cliff Choudhry, who had done a fantastic job as a lot of you would know, was Chairman. He was not well so he retired as Chairman and I got elected Chairman not having had even attended an Annual Meeting. I took over and I've been Chairman for seven years and it has been a terrific ride and I really enjoyed it and it is terrific to go to things like the ICPA Conference and enjoy what you people do and how professional you are about it. I hope this presentation is worth it as it has taken a bit of effort on my time and a bit of effort here but there it is and we will go from there. The Directors of the BCEF would like to thank you for giving us the time to talk to you today and it is really important to us because it is important to get the message out to people that bush children's education bursaries and university scholarships are available to people to apply for and are getting to be worthwhile.

I would like to talk a little bit about us, what we are doing today, what the three big shifts effecting the BCEF are and what we are going to do for the future. Since its inception in 1971 the ICPA has been facing the same thing as we do which is hostels. *Slide.* That's a little tablet in the Back 'O Bourke Museum. I found that last October when I was going down the Darling River. The link between BCEF and ICPA is that it was all about hostels in 1965 and 1971. We were the Bush Children's Hostel Foundation in NSW and founded in 1965. We were looking after supporting kids in the twenty-three hostels that existed in NSW at the time. In 1967 we changed to the Bush Children's Education Foundation so that we could support children to get to school in other things than hostels and boarding schools and the like. We fund educational opportunities in terms of secondary rural boarding bursaries up to \$2,500 per annum per student at the moment. We provide university scholarships currently at Charles Sturt University for \$3,300 per annum to a total of \$10,000 for three years. We provide for TAFE programmes when we can find one that we can support. We probably haven't supported a TAFE programme for about seven or eight years purely and simply because we can't find where to put the money to help a child. We also look at other educational programmes as they become available and we are always looking for things to support. The Secondary Rural Boarding Programme. Last year we were very successful and spread the word as hard as we could. The drought and then COVID played into our favour and we got 130 applications for rural boarding bursaries and we awarded 80 which was a total cost of \$160,000 and we think that that was a pretty successful

programme. This year we have over 110 to 115 applications and I have a ZOOM Board meeting tomorrow morning where we will be allocating the bursaries and I'm expecting the same number of bursaries will be awarded. So, that is a great result for us and I think the record was 81 done many years ago in the big drought and I'm, hoping we can beat that record tomorrow. This year's scholarships which have been running for nearly 20 years is quite a successful programme as well. We normally get students who end up with a GPA (Grade Point Average) between six and seven with seven being the maximum. We will be supporting five students at CSU this year which is quite a good number. Last year we had 45 applications for our bursaries and only awarded one so this year we will only be awarding one as well so it is a great shame and we would like to provide more but it is a matter of just how much money you have. The scholarships are awarded on the ATAR, community involvement and general acceptance of the person who is likely to do well. In this instance you've got Haley Grimson who is an Early Childhood student and has started to do speech therapy but decided that that wasn't something she wanted to do so she finished that and reapplied to do early childhood teaching. She applied to us and we said we would welcome her on our programme and she did well for us by getting four High Distinctions and four Distinctions in the first year so, we chose well there. We would like to increase our university scholarships further and an option would be to provide an Ag Science Degree at UNE at \$5,000 per annum and we are still trying to find the money to support that because, if you provide a scholarship at \$5,000 a year, then that is \$15,000 which is quite a bit of funding for one student but we are working on it. *Slide.* This chart shows that we have done fairly well in the last few years. We have invested \$2.5 million in students and have had 2,500 students go through our programmes so we are pretty happy with the numbers we have generated in terms of an organisation. We have a number of really good donors and many are listed there on the slide. We have more but these are some of the key ones. Interestingly we find that the banks have been very good in the last couple of years and they are pretty good because they tend to give you big sums of money. The only thing that is missing from there is that there are no agricultural business companies supporting us and we would like to find more of those so if anyone knows of any or can give us some contact details, we would love to hear about it.

Our challenges. I do a lot of travelling and I have done most of Australia and I have been doing a fair bit of NSW for obvious reasons. I also do rally surveys for the Prostate Cancer Rally so I get to talk to a lot of people and promote bush kids. *Slide.* This shows me when I was out at Mendini trying to find a dirt road that we could put a rally down and we were getting a bit lost and a bloke came towards us with a ute and a water tank on the back and we started talking to this guy and I started talking about bush children. He said, "Fantastic. This is me." He pulled out a brochure and said that he was Champion Brendon and we were talking about what he does and he is obviously a guy who wants to help people. Of course, his wife is a member of ICPA. It is a wonderful experience when you are out in the bush and you talk to these people. The other one is when I was in Lightning Ridge and went out to one of the classic mining towns which is a real gem, and I'm in the pub in the scrub having a drink and I'm talking to the lady there about bush kids having bursaries available and she asked why weren't we around when she was having her kids. I told her that we were founded in 1965 and I think we might have been so this highlights the problem that people don't know that we are there to help them get their kids to school. *Slide.* This chart is one that ICPA generated in 2019 and it is incredibly valuable to us and highlights to people the need to get kids to school and we were able to get pretty good fundraising out of that because we were able to show people what the problems in

the bush are and I don't believe that the problems are going away. You might feel a bit different but I don't think it is very different today so, we need to get more data like that to prove to people that things are tough in the bush. Rural demographic change, we all know that, but between 2000 and 2016 the number of farms in Australia decreased by 41% which means less people on farms, less farm workers, less people in towns, less isolated kids but we still have a huge problem in getting the ones who are out there educated. The gap in education is that we are getting more and more children at boarding schools because of the problems with some of the state schools or the same thing with the tyranny of distance and we are looking at that and we hope to be able to help with that. The other problem we face which you don't possible face is the number of charities is proliferating. We are getting more and more charities doing more and more things and I'm not sure that all of them achieve what they want to achieve. It would be really good, and we try very hard, to differentiate to make ourselves heard above the noise but with that many charities it gets difficult.

The future. *Slide.* I hope you can read that but we started a strategic planning exercise a month ago and we very quickly got to the stage where we said that we don't have enough data on what is really happening out in the bush. How many kids are there right out there who are isolated and who need help and we need to find out some data about that. We also need to find out what things we can support them with so we could say we could give them more school support but what can we support? Are there any TAFE programmes we can support? We continually are unable to find TAFE programmes that we can support. We would love to find them but we can't. More university scholarships. We could give away one hundred university scholarships every year or two hundred, that's a no-brainer, we can do it but it does require a lot of funding. Develop other support areas. Additional support around subjects' allowances. All those things we can look at and are looking at and it's important that we identify what the right ones are to help people as much as possible. BCEF can be contacted in four main ways. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn are all there but I have also included my email address because I would really like, if you people have a burning desire to put something forward which we could consider as a programme or a support area which we can pursue with you and work together to fund, we would love to hear from you. My bush kids email address it there and please feel free if you have some ideas or thoughts or concepts, please contact me. Thank you very much.

Comment.

Sue Gordon, NSW/Vic Lone Member. I just thought that the meeting might like to know that the Hay Hostel was sold a number of years ago and the funds were donated to the Bush Children's Education Foundation so, Hay has been a major sponsor of the Bush Children's Education Foundation. So, thank you Hay.

Tom O'Dea. Head, NBN Local – NSW

Good afternoon and thanks to ICPA for inviting us to conference today and I'm really excited to be here. It is one of the most important meetings of my year so I'm looking forward to running through some stuff that we have done with the NBN this year in regional, rural and remote Australia. In October 2019, a business unit within NBN was setup called Regional Development and Engagement. The reason for that is that NBN realised that we needed to do

more for Australians living in regional Australia. As part of that, all of the components that deal with regional Australia from our technical teams and our operations teams were brought under one roof and that is the Regional Development and Engagement. We have a singular boss who looks after every single component of what we do for regional so that goes from our fixed wireless engineering teams, our satellite operations teams and NBN Local who are the community engagement branch of NBN Regional Development and Engagement. I'm the head of NSW and I also have my colleague, Andrew Cottrill, up the back and Andrew is our Community Engagement Manager and looks after Riverina and Murray. NBN Local staff serve in local regions is our catch cry and every single person that works for NBN Local must live in regional Australia. We do not have anyone working on our team who is not based in the region. There is no one flying in from Sydney in a shiny new pair of RM Williams. Every single person lives in the region that they support and while we have been going through the recruitment process, we have spoken to our teams about the fact that the areas they look after are very much constituents and we need to treat them as that. So, it is not just about us coming out to regions and telling everyone about all the great things NBN is doing, and we are doing some great things, it is also about making sure we are listening to regions and finding out about stuff we are not doing so well and we could be doing better. We have people based all around the country and I'll go through the maps in NSW in a second, but, our overarching purpose is to increase the digital capability of Australia and in NBN Local, regional Australia is our focus. There are 22 regions across Australia that are in Regional and 55 Community Engagement professionals are on the ground based in regional Australia. We have 22 Engagement managers, 17 Community Ambassadors and 16 Business Leads.

The Community Engagement managers like Andrew, are responsible for senior stakeholder relations and making sure that we are getting all of our ducks in a row with things that aren't working at a higher level. Things that are structurally needing support. The Community Ambassadors work at a grass roots level and they go to libraries, nursing homes, if we are ever allowed back in them, and provide NBN 101 training to end users about scam awareness. How not to get ripped off on the internet and those types of things. It is a very base level digital capability focus and then we also have 16 Business Leads across the country that are solely responsible for uplifting digital capacity and the end capability in businesses. *Slide.* These are our regions across NSW. The red one in the middle is Metro and everything outside that in me and our team. We have Community Engagement manager who looks after those parts. Andrew looks after the Riverina and the Murray areas down the bottom left-hand corner. Jan Rooney, who looks after the North Coast. David Crowe looks after Hunter/New England. Simon Berriman looks after Central NSW. Nicole Fosteris looks after South East NSW. All of these people have been recruited since October last year so we are a fairly new team but they have extensive backgrounds in both telecommunications, community engagement and supporting communities. We have some priority segments that we are focused on within NBN and they are education, agriculture, health, first nations, arts and culture, tourism, small and medium business. So, within NBN Regional Development Engagement we actually had a head of every single one of these segments and their sole role is making sure that we are at the table when people talking about digital connectivity within those segments in a regional setting.

Some of our COVID support measures that we have recently offered to try and help with the pandemic was that we offered up to a 40% additional capacity to retail service providers at no extra cost from March to November of last year. We doubled our download data speeds for standard SkyMuster services up to 90 gigabytes at no additional cost to retail service providers

from March to November last year. We focussed on our equitable liability by limiting non-essential network maintenance to minimise planned outages for both satellite and fixed wireless. We changed the way we do things at the national level to make sure we were doing any maintenance works that we could at night time so that people weren't impacted, particularly when they were at home studying or running businesses and things like that. We led an industry wide working group including key network carriers and working with streaming and gaming companies to deal with issues around network capability, maintenance and security.

One of the biggest things that has changed from our satellite service perspective is our SkyMuster Plus satellite service. I have spoken to a number of people today who are on SkyMuster Plus and have been very receptive of the changes that we have made to SkyMuster Plus service. The previous SkyMuster service was not analysing the data that was going through the pipe between the ground and the satellite so we just looked at all data being the same. When we initiated SkyMuster Plus we actually analysed what is in the data going between you and the satellite. We don't know what you are looking at but we do know if you are using it for certain things. So, the only two things with our SkyMuster Plus service that are metered are VPN access or Virtual Private Networks, and most people who use VPNs are using them because either they need to get into systems of companies and things like that, or they are using it to anonymise themselves on the internet therefore we can't see what they are sending and the only other one is streaming. Everything else on our SkyMuster Plus service is non-metered. It has made a massive difference to the amount of data that people can use for general day to day living and has reduced costs significantly. Not everyone is on SkyMuster Plus. If you are currently on a SkyMuster plan and you have got a satellite with NBN you might not be on SkyMuster Plus. There was no automatic migration of your service over to our SkyMuster Plus product. If you have satellite at home and you haven't checked with your service provider sometime recently whether or not you are on SkyMuster Plus, it would be worth giving them a call to see whether you are on that version of SkyMuster.

Some of the stuff we are doing to ensure that Australians of any age can participate in online learning is connectivity enabling education, awareness and understanding, thought leadership and partnering in technology and innovation. We have virtual segments that we are running across the country all day, every day, where people can dial in and they can get a virtual session, one on one, on NBN 101, scams awareness, and they are free, fifteen minute, one on one, sessions with one of our Community Ambassadors anywhere in the country. We are also going to be rolling out physical ones now that COVID is becoming less of a thing and we will be doing a whole heap of partnering with NSW Government on the upcoming Senior's Festival in April and delivering a large raft of digital education for seniors across NSW.

Just wanted to thank everyone for inviting us to the conference today and particularly for your feedback from ICPA both in NSW and Nationally, through COVID. There were some things that we needed to do better and we got the word loud and clear and we really enjoyed working with ICPA to make some changes to make the product better. I noticed in the Communications Report, overwhelmingly, those changes were well received by ICPA and we look forward to working more with yourselves and building an even more close relationship. Thank you.

Richard Stokes. Australian Boarding Schools Association.

I needed to say, and I want parents in the room to hear this, NBN Co reached out in that first week of the pandemic and they asked me to find out from all of our boarding schools what

platforms they were going to use for the “at home” learning. I produced a list of 17 pages of the things and they got it all right. They also gave me a contact for any one of our boarding school parents who was having trouble getting the internet to work for them, that they would fix it for them and they did it time and time again. So, I need to say that publicly, well done. It was outstanding for us to know that we were able to support our country schools. SkyMuster Plus was probably the saviour of many things and we were certainly able to help a number of parents with that as well, but that was the level of commitment. We met every week, Tuesday mornings at 11.00 am, every week for months. We still meet regularly so it is a really good opportunity. So, I just wanted parents to know that they reached out very quickly to make sure that you and your kids could learn if they were at boarding school or away. Thanks.

Presentation of NSW/Vic Lone Member, Life Membership

Irene Lund. NSW/Vic Lone Members Officer.

I would just like to make an announcement about something that has been happening over the last week. This morning at morning tea time we presented Lindy Kitto with a NSW/Vic Lone Member Life Membership. Last week, because she wasn't able to be here, we had a little picnic in Queanbeyan Park where we presented Caroline McDonald with a NSW/Vic Lone Member Life Membership. So, thank you very much.

Lindy Kitto. NSW/Vic Lone Member.

I won't take up much of your time but I just wanted to thank everybody and to say how incredibly humbled and privileged I feel to be a part of this incredible association. I would really encourage anybody to step up, get onto State Council, get involved with your branches and you will make some incredible friends and achieve some incredible goals. Thank you very much.

AGENDA MOTIONS

Allowances

A1. Bourke

“That ICPA-NSW assists ICPA (Aust) to lobby relevant Federal Ministers to change the criteria of the Relocation Scholarship so that tertiary students from remote and rural areas, who are not eligible to receive other student allowances, still receive the Relocation Scholarship if they are leaving home to study the year after completing Year 12.”

Moved by Scott Mitchell, Bourke Branch. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Tertiary students who are eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance are also able to apply for the Relocation Scholarship which is a welcome injection of funds for any student having to

leave the principal place of residence and set up a new place to live to attend Tertiary studies. However, it is not available to students who are deemed independent or not eligible for any other allowance.

The meaning of relocate is 'to move or to establish in a new place'. Regardless of whether a student is eligible to receive certain student allowances, they are still relocating. This scholarship was established to ensure students who had to undergo a process of relocation would not have the unfair

financial burden of a move compared to those who are able to live and study from their family home. It would actually appear less just as they are not only unable to access Youth Allowance but also are ineligible for the Relocation Scholarship.

Comment.

Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch. I would support that motion. We recently attempted this process with our family and advice from Centrelink was to apply as an independent first to access the relocation allowance and once that's approved to log back into their system and change and apply for independent status. So, there are loop holes around the system that Centrelink is advising and that if it was clear and accessible to everybody it would be a much more straightforward process.

Wendy Hick, ICPA (Aust). I just want to say that that is certainly an unusual example so I would be really interested to talk with you because the general process for Youth Allowance is that you apply but you don't apply for a dependent or independent. They categorise it when they go through your information and so I would like to get some more information so we can follow that up at Federal Level because Youth Allowance falls under Federal channels. I also wanted to comment again that while we have received the Tertiary Access payment which was just announced in January that Alana mentioned in her report, and we are really excited to see this happening. We really encourage everyone to check this out if you have students going away. It's not quite exactly what Federal Council has been advocating for year after year in the Tertiary Access payment but it is something quite close. I guess there is still work to be done and we are hoping we are going to be able to make further changes but it is exciting to see something happening in this space. So, just because it has a different name to what we've always asked for don't be afraid to and look at it because it can be a means to get some help for some of our children.

A2. Bourke

"That ICPA-NSW assists ICPA (Aust) to lobby the Federal Government to change the criteria for gaining Independent Youth Allowance so that all rural and remote students who have to leave home to study at tertiary level are eligible for Independent Youth Allowance once enrolled."

Moved by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke moved that this motion be withdrawn.

Carried

A3. Broken Hill

"That ICPA-NSW assist ICPA (Aust) to lobby the relevant department to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children for geographically isolated students undertaking secondary education via Distance Education."

Moved by Laura Finch, Broken Hill. Seconded by Ali Allison, Broken Hill.

Carried

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 the 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, it quite often means 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 (BH SOTA) students are continuing their education into secondary through Dubbo School of Distance Education (DSODE) 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 school work. 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.

Comments.

Alana Moller, President ICPA (Aust). I just want to give an update on our AIC initiatives at the Federal level. We have been calling for some time for a review of AIC and as part of that we have been asking that they look at criteria and those sorts of things, not wanting to diminish any of the current criteria but the possibility of criteria needing to be changed. Should that come to Federal Conference that could sit under that AIC advocacy that we do. For interest's sake, at the moment there is no separation between primary and secondary so that would probably have to happen first before the second payment could increase. It would be like a two-level change in criteria or eligibility. But absolutely, if that motion can come to Federal Conference, we would be happy to take it.

Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools and Hostels

A4. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

"That ICPA-NSW requests that acceptance letters to state boarding schools be distributed earlier in the year to align with acceptance of scholarships and paying of deposits at private schools."

Moved by Kate Treweek, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Cath Deshon, Walgett on behalf of Lightning Ridge/Goodooga.

Carried.

Explanation:

For families in rural and remote areas, the decision-making process around accessing secondary education for their children is difficult to navigate. Parents research options available to them considering the social, geographical and financial issues before applying to the schools which are a best fit for their children and personal circumstances. Often applications to several schools are made, particularly in the case of their oldest child. Before deciding on the best option available, parents wait anxiously for not only letters securing a place for their child at selected schools, but also letters offering scholarships. Inconsistent acceptance dates for secondary schools, particularly state boarding schools, makes this decision-making process difficult. Often a scholarship to a private school needs to be accepted and a deposit for the following year paid before acceptance letters to state boarding schools are made available. By government schools bringing their acceptance process forward and sending out acceptance letters earlier, parents will be better placed to make the best choice for their child by comparing all the options simultaneously.

A5. Hay

“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant authorities to create a standard essential traveller exemption for rural and remote boarding school students and their parents and tertiary students that live in a different state to their educational institution, if border closures occur due to a pandemic.”

Moved by Bill Ryan, Hay. Seconded by Carol Huggins, Hay.

Carried.

Explanation:

During the 2020 COVID pandemic many rural and remote boarding and university students and their families were placed under undue stress when state border closures prevented students returning home or back to school or university, preventing them to be able to focus on their studies. Some families were forced to fly their children home at the end of the school term, placing the children and their families at risk of being infected with COVID-19, not to mention the financial stress this caused. These children were taken from COVID free areas into cities with large numbers of COVID-19 cases, placed on a plane and taken to another city with large numbers of COVID-19, their parents then having to travel 1,600 km from COVID free areas to pick up their children. If a standard border crossing exemption is in place for these rural and remote students, they will be able to focus on their studies and it will reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 into these rural and remote areas.

Comments.

Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch. We support this motion. There have been families in our area that have also been affected by the border closures. My own daughter is a boarding student in South Australia also and I think it is fair to say that each time there have been different closures ICPA has advocated when there has not been anybody else able to do that for families and each time the circumstances have been slightly different and I don't think there is confidence that that won't change. It might be other people's children in ten years' time and a different pandemic but different families have been affected in dramatic ways. My daughter came home in March and didn't return to school until term three. I'm a director in a local preschool so we decided not to isolate knowing that we wouldn't be able to get her home until term three when we realised, she wouldn't be able to go back to school. Her whole school cohort was back at school bar two children so she did remote learning but there were two children

remote learning while her cohort were in the class. We made a commitment not to do that again until we isolated and then she came home again in November when the borders closed quickly which was another concern around safety when families jump in cars because they are so panicked and concerned about how they can get their children home and I think the school system was under a lot of stress as well. We couldn't get in or out of South Australia by midnight so we had great friends with students who lived in Victoria who boarded at the same school, they actually took our daughter home and we then couldn't get her. By the time she got home because the NSW/Vic border was still closed, on the Wednesday, South Australia was out of lockdown and back at school. If we could just have a simple national strategy in that boarding students are essential travellers moving forward it would make so many people's lives simpler and safer and allow children to be at school where they need to be.

Kathy Bishop, Principal, New England Girls School (NEGS), Armidale. I totally agree with this motion and would support everyone on the essential traveller exemption but I would also like to put my own support behind ICPA-NSW if you wish to move forward with this recommendation.

Richard Stokes, Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA). My first thing is to congratulate all of you for the work you have done in terms of helping our students. There are 23,000 boarders in Australia and 70% of them are kids from the country. So, that is a very important part of our market and a very unusual part of the world when it comes to boarding schools as we are the only country where that is the case. I believe we need a special case pass for our kids so that they can cross borders. Calling them essential travellers? An interesting question as to whether they can be pinned as different things. If we specify boarding school students as needing to be able to access their education equally, I think we would have a very good opportunity to do that and I know that we are working pretty closely with all of the ICPA's, Federal and all States, and also with our Minister for Regional Education, we find, in fact, the challenges that our state departments have got are quite challenging at times. Different people were making different rules. Different police on borders were actually saying yes or no. I know of many families who waited for the shift to change and then were allowed across the border. That happened many, many times. That's insane. That's why we need to make it very clear for those 23,000 kids that we look after, that some sort of pass should be there. Can I just say that we've had a bit of press today because there are about 3,500 international students who are not able to access our boarding schools either, many of whom have stayed in Australia and haven't seen their families now for fifteen months and won't be able to probably until Christmas. I find that really sad. There is press in the Courier Mail in Brisbane today. But it is really interesting to try and do that. We need to fight those fights and we are there to stand with you to help that.

Alana Moller, President, ICPA (Aust) I just want to reaffirm everything everyone has said. We, at a federal level, have been consistently working on this. The Minister for Regional Education has been absolutely open to any discussion and it has been an absolute pleasure in a really difficult situation to work with Claire and NSW State Council and all State Councils. This is what it is all about. This is why we are here and the fact that we've had to work together and do this together despite the fact that we are all isolated anyway, has just been amazing. Congratulations to NSW State Council for the incredible effort.

Claire Butler, President, ICPA-NSW. I would like to acknowledge the support, the unwavering support that Alana gave me and ICPA State Council. It was greatly appreciated and you gave us a lot of strength and we really appreciate ICPA (Aust)'s assistance with providing all that information from every State for the submission that was put into Andrew Gee's office. So, thank you very much.

A6. Broken Hill

“That ICPA-NSW continues to advocate for those students who board interstate to have equitable access to education by being deemed as essential travellers.”

Moved by Ali Allison, Broken hill. Seconded by Laura Finch, Broken Hill.

Carried

Explanation:

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen State Governments shut their borders to prevent the spread of disease. This meant that many students from NSW, who attend schools in SA, VIC and QLD, were required to quarantine, on returning to school interstate. Some children had to quarantine up to three times, which meant in 2021 some students spent over six weeks of their year in quarantine. Apart from the fact they are missing valuable face to face learning there is no doubt the negative, dramatic affect this is having on their mental health. The anxiety these kids face every time a school holiday is coming up is plain to see, and it is growing each day as this epidemic continues. The anxiety of not knowing if the borders will suddenly be closed and if they are going to be able to get home to see their family. There is also the added pressure for kids, some as young as 12 and 13, having to decide whether they come home and see their family, all the while knowing that if that is the decision they make, they may have to return to quarantine when school resumes. No child that age should choose between seeing their family or going as long as months on end not seeing them. Families would be happy to meet half way with governments and work their livelihoods and businesses around making this work. Even if it means for example, that families, if an outbreak is happening at the time, have their children quarantine at home for the holidays and no one comes or goes from their place. If it means our children can get the education they deserve without the anxiety and extra pressure of possible quarantine. We need a long term, sensible and common-sense approach so these children can access their education freely and without the stress and anxiety of worrying about state borders. A large majority of these students are from rural and remote areas that have had no COVID-19 cases for over a year. For example, Broken Hill reportedly had two positive cases in March 2020, and yet there was no community transmission from these cases and there has not been a single case for over a year. Students living in these areas pose little to no threat of transferring COVID-19 interstate. Forcing them to quarantine is completely unjustified.

A7. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW asks both NSW and interstate Ministers of Health for rural and remote parents to be considered essential visitors to boarding houses at our boarding schools for start and end of term.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council, on behalf of Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Unpacking a child at the beginning of term is an essential part of the process of the return or collection from school each term. Especially those that have had no COVID-19 in their Shires. Clearly COVID-19 caution conditions would need to be adhered to. For example, a declaration of no visit to hot spot or symptoms for the prior 14 days.

Comments.

Richard Stokes, Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA). I do think that this has been a challenge for our boarding staff. Don't think that they haven't noticed the challenges that you face according to this. So often it is actually the facility itself that dictates whether visitors can come in or not because of the size of the places and the measures that we have had. It's just not black and white. It's very grey and so, again, I'd like you to think about the concept about essential visitors because in that case essential visitors are people who fix plumbing and electrics and things like that. I think if you wanted something to go to your Ministers of Health or maybe it's actually the Community Health Officers rather than the Ministers for Health, that you would go to, I think you might consider making a special case study for them rather than an essential visitor because that might blur the line.

Communication

A8. Collarenebri-Mungindi

"That ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) ask Telstra to review its customer service telephone assistance lines to more effectively assist rural and remote students and their families."

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council, on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi. Seconded by Irene Lund, State Council, on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi.

Carried

Explanation:

The current 132 200 line for support is inadequate. After you have punched in all the numbers for account purposes the message tells you a link has been sent to your mobile for you to follow and chat with a Telstra assistant. That rarely happens. If you want to get a new SIM for your phone you have to present to a Telstra office with ID before purchasing a new SIM for your phone. This is not very helpful for rural and remote customers.

Comments.

Chris Taylor, General Manager Southern NSW, Telstra. We acknowledge the point that has been raised in the motion and, at the moment, we are investigating some of these instances where the text message hasn't been received because that should be happening in all cases. On the matter of SIM activations, I would just like to point out that there has been heightened increase in fraudulent SIM activations which has prompted us to try to put in place more controls over authentication of customers before we go ahead do that. Unfortunately, what it has meant is that it has resulted in more people having to go into stores which, as you say, doesn't help people in remote areas. We are reviewing how we can more effectively and efficiently authenticate customers in a really secure way to avoid that situation and make that easier for people. The other thing I will point out is, and I spoke about it earlier, is the Telstra App. You can now actually go into it and activate on your My Telstra account, your own SIMS without having to call a call centre. You can actually go into your own Telstra App and do that. Activate SIMS, request new SIMS for an existing service if your SIM goes faulty, and so those things are all available now to be able to do independently to having to go into a call centre to try and get through that. Having said that, in the meantime, if you do experience considerable problems and issues in getting through to someone, if you are not getting the right support, call 132 000 and just say the word "Complaint" and that does get you through as it bypasses all the other stuff you have to get through. But, as I said, we are working on better ways for our

customers to authenticate their details for us to be able to deal with it on the phone.

Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch. I just wanted to support this motion. I had, unfortunately, Telstra accidentally cut off my home phone a few weeks ago and when I was made aware of that I tried to call the 13000 number, I did “complaints”, I was transferred through three different departments which tried to rent brand new lines into my house. I didn’t have a very good outcome. After two weeks I still didn’t have any response. So, I didn’t have a very effective communication through that way but can I say that your NextG wireless link team, when you call that faults number, is absolutely fantastic. So, ones not working but one is really, really great service.

A9. Collarenebri-Mungindi

“That ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) ask Telstra to urgently expedite the moving of all Telstra call centres to the mainland of Australia, to assist students and their families.”

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council, on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi. Seconded by Irene Lund, State Council, on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi.

Carried

Explanation:

Rural and remote students and their families have experienced problems with the call centres for far too long. All Telstra call centres need to be moved back to Australia urgently, so that they can effectively assist customers needing to troubleshoot issues.

Comments.

Chris Taylor, General Manager Southern NSW, Telstra. I’ll just reiterate that it was announced in November last year by our CEO that by 2022 all consumer and small business calls that are made into our context will be answered onshore so we are moving that way now. At the moment around 65% of calls are answered onshore and that will increase over the next twelve months and by mid 2022 it will be 100%.

A10. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to give an establishment time frame for when the remaining satellite schools will be transferred onto the Fibre Optic (FO) internet.”

Moved by Kathleen Harris, Balranald that this motion be withdrawn as it has been addressed. Seconded by Kristy Wilson, Balranald.

Carried

A11. Balranald

“The Balranald ICPA Branch would like to thank and acknowledge Telstra for the installation of the Small Cell Tower located at Clare.”

Moved by Kristy Wilson, Balranald. Seconded by Kathleen Harris, Balranald.

Carried by acclamation.

Explanation:

In 2013 Balranald Branch moved a motion at the Cooma ICPA-NSW conference that small rural schools in blackspot areas be prioritised for future roll-outs of the mobile footprint. It is reassuring to have this motion acted on. The branch also thanks ICPA State and Federal Councils for their advocacy.

A12. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW strongly urges the Minister for Education to ensure that all remaining TP1 and TP2 schools with satellite internet have a secure and consistent connection.”

Moved by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs.

Carried

Explanation:

At our local TP1 Primary School, Naradhan Public School, the satellite internet connection at the school is unsatisfactory. The internet connection is slow and at times unstable, which inhibits the students and staff accessing essential resources and data. In the classroom, a number of programs requiring an internet connection are unable to be accessed due to slow internet speeds.

The Connected Classroom equipment is vital technology for a small isolated school and requires an efficient internet connection. Students and staff regularly participate in video conferences to access a variety of learning experiences, competitions, professional development and meetings. There is a significant delay from the school's end making it difficult to converse with other participants. A warning symbol is often displayed on the screen indicating a poor connection and quite often drops out, requiring the school to attempt to dial back in. The school has also been unable to participate in the NAPLAN Online trials.

The principal was informed that a satellite option would be made available, however has now been told that Naradhan Public School is on the list of schools that require an upgrade to access NAPLAN Online. The school has recently rolled over to Learning Management and Business Reform (LMBR), the Department's new finance system. Staff have found it difficult to access EBS: Central, the Student Administration tool used to manage Student Attendance, Student Behaviour, Curriculum, Student Finance and Student Health Records. It often takes many attempts to log-in placing added pressure on the Teaching Principal who already has a challenging workload and on the school administration manager. The school has installed a Wide Area Network (WAN) optimisation appliance as a trial to attempt to enhance the satellite internet connection. After a number of trials of this appliance had taken place, it was deemed a failure.

There are now other satellite options available in the area, as accessed by local residents, with much better connection speeds. However, no specific information can be given to determine when the situation will improve. We understand an announcement has been made about these schools being upgraded to Fibre Optic internet access and request that Telstra and Minister Mitchell, the Minister for Education, provide a timeframe of when this project will be completed.

Comments.

Chris Taylor, General Manager Southern NSW, Telstra. Just to back to my discussion earlier around the project, we have set ourselves a timeline for the end of 2021 to have the

physical infrastructure into each of the twelve schools. That is progressing as we go through the year. At this stage we are well on track even to the point where we believe that we may be able to finish that a little earlier than the end of the year but things are on track from our perspective.

A13. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Education Department provide the results of completed NBN trials using Remote Education And Conferencing Tool, REACT, and provide a clear time frame for implementation of an updated system.”

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried

Explanation:

For a number of years, we have heard that trials are being conducted on the suitability of using NBN and REACT in the home school room, but nothing further ever eventuates. Three questions now need to be answered: Have the trials actually been completed? If successful when will the roll out occur? If not successful how long do our students have to continue using ineffective methods of delivering lessons before another option is considered?

Comments.

David McLeod, Department of Education. Yes, the trial has been completed. It was completed in November last year. It has formed the way forward and, as Mike said in the meeting on Tuesday evening, we are looking at the next twelve months as the timing for the upgrade to the new systems.

A14. Broken Hill

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to provide a time frame of when geographically isolated students enrolled in Distance Education will be switched over to the NBN.”

Moved by Laura Finch, Broken Hill. Seconded by Ali Allison, Broken Hill.

Carried

Explanation:

Families living in geographically isolated areas educating their children through Distance Education are still waiting to be informed of when they will be moved over to the NBN. We have been informed that it will be at the end of the year but we would like to have this motion still go forward because things can change and I would like it on record. A lot of students are experiencing a multitude of problems using the current satellite internet provided by the NSW Department of Education. Families that have moved their home internet to NBN have found a significant improvement in the speed and reliability of their internet. As the demands of the school curriculum require students to be online for much of their school day, it seems appropriate that the internet provided to students reflects their educational needs. Having a time frame for the transition to NBN will help ensure families have a goal to look forward to, to ensure our children are going to have access to the best education possible.

Comments.

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. We would like to support this motion and just say that now we have been given a timeframe by Mike Tom in the meeting we have had and the conversations we have had, but we would like to ensure that this timeframe is met because there are a lot of things that need to happen including lots of hardware instalments and if any changes to this timeframe is made that DE families are kept in the loop of these changes.

David McLeod, Department of Education. Absolutely we want to keep parents in the loop around the conversation and Mike has indicated on Tuesday night that he is looking for representatives from ICPA to be part of their consultative group for that.

Laura Stalley, State Council. Those representatives will be Bree Wakefield and myself so we will endeavour to keep everyone informed.

Distance Education

A15. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW follows up with the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to ensure that a Preschool teacher from Dubbo School of Distance Education (DSODE) attends all Bourke Walgett School of Distance Education (BWSODE) functions.”

Moved by Kylie Batey, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Currently, the BWSODE access preschool through DSODE. Therefore, students are continuing their education through the other centres and not returning to BWSODE, due to the logistics. Parents who have more than one child, are having to enrol their students into two centres (e.g., a preschooler in Dubbo, and their Year 1 student in BWSODE) which is practically challenging in a school room and geographically logistically demanding. With the restructure of Distance Education Preschool, children will have to be enrolled through Dubbo DE, but if a preschool teacher from Dubbo attends all BWSODE functions and classrooms this will help families logistically, and keep these families at BWSODE.

Comments.

Mike Tom, Department of Education. In terms of preschool provision, we are aware of the issue from Burke Walgett. That was made reasonably clear to us just in the last twelve months or so. What we have done is that we have really worked with the preschool provision to look at making it a single provision. Basically, the way in which it works, and I explained it to the DE parents on Tuesday night, is that we have four classes of preschool out of basically 100 classes that are in the Department that are actually attached to the Departmental schools. That's how that operates and out of that, four classes sit with distance education. We look at the statistics every three years to see where the spread of young people is going to be and then we make a decision in concert with early childhood and also ICPA. There is a representative from ICPA that sits on that and that took place at the end of last year for this next cycle. In doing that we made the decision to leave the two classes at Broken Hill and the two classes at Dubbo. The object of those classes is to service the state. They are there to service the state. They

don't service just Dubbo. They don't service just Broken Hill. Although we were running them under two principals with separate staff under those principals from two separate schools, we have worked with the principals so we work with Scott Sanford and Debbie Murray to ensure the staff work together, that the programmes are worked together and, wherever possible, we ensure that we interact effectively with other DE centres if it is actually a DE centre that is participating or if it is their student that is coming across. We also recognise that what was probably happening in some cases is that parents were making a decision, either consciously or sometimes, in terms of being encouraged to enrol their child because they were doing preschool in Dubbo and they were coming from the Bourke Walgett area, they ended up in the Dubbo kindergarten. So, we have ensured now that the processes try to integrate back to the home school. Effectively, it used to be, back in 2012 or so, that, if you were coming into distance education kindergarten, you were eligible to attend the preschool class and that was the eligibility criteria. In 2014 when we did the Rural and Remote Blueprint Strategy, we broadened that out. We had places in our four classes so we broadened it out to, basically, allow parents who did not have access to a mobile preschool or a preschool service near them, to have their child attend the distance education preschool even if they weren't going to distance education kindergarten. Effectively, that could mean Dubbo or Broken Hill could be receiving a child who might be at Bellingen or somewhere in the mountains on the coast, or they could be down on the south coast, or they could be within the normal drawing area of Dubbo or Broken Hill, and in those cases, we would expect that that child is transitioned back into their local primary school and into their local kindergarten. So, again, if we are looking at Bellingen then we would expect that child to be transitioned to the kindergarten class of Bellingen Public School. That is what we would expect to happen. So, the staff are going to look at ways in which they would encourage that transition to move forward. That is now part of the processes we are working on. Effectively, the key messages here are transitions back to their local school which, if they have started at Bourke Walgett, they transition back to Bourke Walgett. Wherever possible we have an interaction of staff working with those particular schools if there is a large number of students there so, obviously, we are not going to have Dubbo travelling up to Bellingen, but if there are a number of students at Bourke Walgett then if there is an interaction that is taking place at Bourke Walgett we will do our best, and remember it is part of the scheduling process that principals will have to do to ensure that there is a person that may represent or interact as part of that process. Can I also say that in terms of preschool processes, if you remember yesterday, I said that we were wanting to increase the amount of satellite coverage, and one of the things we really want to be able to do is to try and get a satellite provision into a home if a child attending preschool and they are in a remote area as part of that particular provision and that will allow a better interaction and a more meaningful interaction with those particular children.

A16. Broken Hill

"That ICPA-NSW lobbies the NSW Department of Education to make Distance Education Schools a priority when upgrading bandwidth in schools, to improve internet services and therefore directly improve lessons when using Remote Education and Conferencing Tool REACT."

Moved by Laura Finch, Broken Hill. Seconded by Ali Allison, Broken Hill.

Carried

Explanation:

Currently students enrolled in primary school through the NSW Department of Education via Distance Education are having daily difficulties in relations to connecting to REACT lessons. Students are unable to connect and a consistently being logged out of lessons due to the system not coping. All students attending NSW Department of Education Schools should have equal to access to course content and learning experiences. Students enrolled in rural and remote Schools, such as White Cliffs Public School are able to use the internet daily without interruption. All students are able to access video conferencing and interactive live shows with ease. Students all have their own laptops and are able use the internet simultaneously without any trouble. This is currently not the case for Distance Education students due to issues with REACT on a daily basis.

Bandwidth is described as the maximum data transfer rate of a network or Internet connection. It measures how much data can be sent over a specific connection in a given amount of time. Schools require large bandwidths and can run into service problems when students and teachers are accessing the internet. By increasing the bandwidth for Distance Education Schools this will directly impact the amount of data that can be transferred through the school's connection and therefore improve the quality of REACT lessons. This will ensure that all students are able to access equal education opportunities no matter where they live.

Comments.

Mike Tom, Department of Education. You have just heard from Mark Greentree about the improvements that are being made to the service and for the parents who were part of the Distance Education Forum last night you would know that we are in the process of upgrading the bandwidth across rural NSW for our kindergarten/Year Six area and it is also our intention to try and lift that for preschools and also for years Seven to Twelve and those aren't currently included in the processes. We want to broaden that out and actually expand the number of students that we are supporting and we want to ensure that that bandwidth that is being provided is both fit for service and robust in terms of that process. That is where we want to go. We would also say that it is very important that the students have the same interactions as a face-to-face school so that's what we are aiming for. That's our goal and I would say to you that while we are limited in terms of the satellite process there will always be that physics that are involved from the fact that the satellite is flying up at that height and there will be latency in those sorts of things in there but we are aiming to put as much bandwidth as we can possibly extract from the system under NBN's current processes. In terms of REACT one of the things that has come up has been around some of the technical issues and they have not necessarily been with REACT itself but more about the bandwidth that it's running on which is restricted at the moment and some of the processes that are being run at the home site. In other words, where we have multiple machines. So, we hope to have enough bandwidth to have multiple machines running at remote sites if the number of students requires that so, again, that is a process that we need to have discussion about. We hope to improve the number of devices as part of that and we need to have discussion about what the devices are and how many are appropriate. We hope to also increase the amount of REACT licences we have available so that that frees up the amount of scheduling that happens in the studios of the distance education centres. Then it becomes something that the principals of those schools will need to look at with their teachers in terms of that scheduling and how they schedule those lessons and that is a discussion for them to have with the resourcing that they have in their school. From our side, we have to provide the principals with the flexibilities to be able to make those decisions and you, as the classroom at the end of the line, the ability to get a better interaction with your students. I would say to you that the only thing that I would like you to do would be to give us a call on the help desk number whenever you have a problem with REACT. So, I need that data and, indeed, Mark and his team need that data. Let us know when the system is going wrong.

Having a governess or having yourself sitting at the end of the line thinking that it is your problem is not good enough. You need to log a help desk and let us determine whether that is a problem at your end or at our end. We need the data.

Nerida Healey, Wentworth. I have a governess in my classroom last week and the week before. She spent three days trying to connect to the internet and I told her that she has got to ring Dubbo. She said that she had rung Dubbo and School of the Air, and she was ringing the number on the screen and she had rung for three days. I finally rang and got through and I was told that there was only one person there. So, that took three days to fix that problem. I appreciate that you can log the issue but when it takes three days to actually get someone to answer the phone it is a lot of time that a governess or a parent is spending trying to contact to log an issue. So maybe the staffing levels there need to be addressed or there needs to be a different way for us to communicate that problem instantly.

Mike Tom, Department of Education. Nerida, I take your point and I am unaware of that particular issue but thanks for bringing it to our attention. We have actually made sure that we have removed all the other responsibilities from that help desk so that they are only dealing with satellite and I'll take that back.

Britt Anderson, Broken Hill. I'd like to reiterate that I do think it is a bandwidth problem. We travel between NSW and South Australia quite regularly as our other farm is in SA and my eldest daughter is at boarding school. My youngest daughter can sit on my private laptop with the REACT software on it with my WiFi toggle and have air lessons as we are going down the Adelaide Road. So, I do believe that it is a bandwidth issue.

A17. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW urges NSW Department of Education (DoE) to implement an initiative to ensure practical access to high schooling for geographically isolated stage four students, using the existing primary school facilities in remote and very remote areas."

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Anabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

For many years NSW DoE has not provided practical high schooling options for some isolated children who are beginning high school. The students this motion refers to are those who, for many reasons, are unable to successfully assimilate into a boarding school environment. These children may be emotionally unready to leave their families to attend boarding school or because of a variety of other prohibiting reasons. The only practical pathway left to access high school is by Distance Education. Successful Distance Education requires a tutor and an appropriate place. Currently children in this category are unable to access AIC, In Home CCB or financial aid for the employment of a home tutor. DE allowance may financially cover the setting up of a school room however some students are without a space to 'set up'.

We would like to see a situation in which a successful time at high school is as accessible and the attendance obligation to do so, is as rigorous as it is in primary school; at the very least for stage four students. It is unreasonable to expect or imagine a student having any success completing the DE or SOTA high school curriculum without a literate adult to support them and an appropriate environment to learn in. Many students whom this motion addresses are living

within sight of a DoE primary school which are resourced to meet their needs. Therefore, in some instances, remote families are anxious when their children are nearing stage four (year seven). Latterly with the increase of regulations accessing the primary schools' facilities for studying high school has been more difficult. This situation has led to parents arranging for their children to repeat year six. In some instances, the whole community worries and wants the year six student to repeat because effectively that 'buys' them one more year of school. The family and community recognise it will be those students' last chance of a genuine school year. Louth ICPA recognises the complexities with enrolments in dual schools however we ask the NSW DoE work with ICPA NSW to find a solution as quickly as possible because the current reality is that for some children their future is inescapable with the one avenue - education - being closed to them.

Comments.

Mike Tom, Department of Education. I understand where this is coming from and I think in some of the DE schools, particularly in the high school side of things, have organised an outreach process by which they actually look at a suitable location where children may come together. It tends to be a non-school site where they can get some extra tutoring and extra support. So, that does exist but it exists because the individual principals of those schools negotiate that particular process. In this case, what you're seeking here or if I understand the motion correctly, you are actually wanting a primary school with the principal to make available their classroom or their facilities for a child to receive or do some work. While that has happened in the past and I can think of a couple of examples where that has happened over the years, it is absolutely negotiated and needs to be negotiated, not mandated, by the principal of the small primary school and the principal of the distance education site. There are a whole host of reasons around that including the fact that someone has got to do the supervision and processes in place. Examples we have had in the past is there has been a relationship with Broken hill School of the Air and Tibooburra Public School and that whole relationship was about brokering a relationship between the principals and the fact that the parents would have to be part of that negotiating process. My advice in this particular case is that, if you have someone who is in that need, then the first thing they need to do is have a conversation with the distance education principal of the school that they are actually enrolled in and, if you have a great relationship with the school, you might be able to do that as well, but I would start by talking to the principal of the school.

A18. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to support incentives, such as recognition of work experience, for graduate teachers who accept work as governesses tutoring Distance Education students in remote areas."

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Many families who have more than one student in the home school room may employ a governess. Usually this is an untrained person or backpacker. In supporting graduate teachers to be employed as a home tutor in a distance education school room there are several benefits. For the students, they are being supervised by someone who is a graduate teacher. The advantages

for the graduate teacher is that they have a full-time job, including full board and keep, they are working in the industry they have trained for, they are working under the guidance of an experienced teacher, they are gaining experience working in a multistage classroom and would be gaining recognition work experience.

For the family, they are able to afford to employ a qualified supervisor to help educate their children. This has the potential to encourage qualified teachers to move to the bush. The government is saying that the amount of funding for education is continually rising with the standard of education getting further and further behind. Could this be a way of helping close the gap in education between the rural, remote and metropolitan schools?

Comments.

Laura Stalley, State Council. We support this motion. A lot of our members are coming to us now and it is starting to get really hard to find supervisors to teach children in distance education. It is really hard to find qualified people to come in and teach them so State Council fully supports this motion.

A19. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW asks the Minister for Education to change the policy to ensure that isolated home secondary students of School of Distance Education have access to their peers and teachers in person each term.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Currently in DE primary school it is policy that students access their peers and teachers each term. 2020 was a year like no other, however, even though our rural and remote high school students were not in COVID-19 shires they did not have any face-to-face opportunities with their teachers or fellow students other than three days in term one before COVID-19. Even when all other high school students were back to face-to-face learning Dubbo DE High school students were not afforded the same option. For example, in 2020 there was a remote family with two students studying Year Seven through Dubbo School of Distance Education (DSODE) and other than three days in Term 1 at the residential camp held on school grounds in Dubbo, which was before COVID-19, they had no further contact in person with either their teachers or their peers for the remainder of the 2020 school year. Even after every other NSW student returned to in person learning after COVID-19 restrictions had eased, these DE students were not afforded the same option, even though the DE primary component was able to gather as a group for camps at the school site in Dubbo.

Comments.

David McLeod, NSW Department of Education. As we know last year was a year like no other and the restrictions that our school principals were put under around access to the schools was incredible. Most of the principals, once there was an opportunity to start bringing the schools back together, ran field services with the bigger schools and it became much more complicated to do that and they had to prioritize different groups. We’ve certainly learnt a lot out of last year. No borders for boarders. We’ve learnt lessons and I suspect that during 2021 we will be able to respond in a much more agile manner to the fact that there are restrictions placed on us from above.

A20. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to urgently address the technology and delivery platform provided to School of the Air (SOTA) and Distance Education (DE) students.”

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried.

Explanation:

In 2020 all students in Australia moved to online learning and parents of existing SOTA/DE students were astounded at what was made available in mass and with such a short time frame. 2020 also showed significant problems arise with the existing technology provided to SOTA/DE students. Many lessons were cancelled due to satellite and/or Remote Education and Conferencing Tool (REACT) problems and no alternate lesson platform was offered. When the rest of the country are allowed to use other platforms to deliver effective lessons, why can this not be offered to children who have to receive their entire education via this means for their entire school life? Our children cannot return to face-to-face learning and catch up, so we must get this right to begin with. Numerous cancelled lessons are completely inadequate. The hardware provided is also outdated and inadequate. Children should have access to a larger screen that allows for their lessons and worksheet to be displayed at the same time. Access to WiFi is also essential in a functioning classroom, which would allow the effective use of printers, scanners and iPad or tablets. Many parents who are still recovering from drought are going to extraordinary lengths and expense to be able to access basic technology and internet in their school room to ensure their children can access a functioning level of education. This situation is not acceptable.

Comments.

Mike Tom, Department of Education. I couldn't agree more and, as a matter of fact, I could almost speak for the motion but what I'm saying in here is that we acknowledge that there were a range of issues with providing a service for you and you didn't get the service you should have and for that all I can do is apologize. Where we are going at the moment, I think will remedy that situation for you. I would say to you that COVID was probably the silver lining in the cloud there in that COVID caused everyone to focus on that. There were a range of people across the world, I suspect, who would have said thank goodness they are not having to deal with this with my children every day and the thoughts would have gone out to you guys because you do have to deal with this every day. So, we are wanting the same level of interaction with the teachers and the students as everyone else is experiencing and the bandwidth absolutely showed itself as lacking in the system and that is what we are trying to remedy. I would say to you that there is also now a range of products of ZOOM is one of them which are very, very simple to use and a lot of people were using those on their standard domestic service. However, when we run those on satellite it is not quite as reliable and the other things are that it tends to use a whole lot of bandwidth in its video usage that really has an impact on other sites. So, some of the things that we see coming up are because some people are using ZOOM and the system simply can't support it. The nice thing about REACT and one of the reasons we are sticking with REACT in the interim period at least, is that we can control and tweak the throughput on video and we think with the larger bandwidth it will be far more robust. I think the previous motion had your members speaking to that.

A21. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education consult with parents and supervisors before updating the technology provided in the School of the Air and Distance Education home school room.”

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried

Explanation:

It is imperative that the DoE consult with a core group of parents or supervisors from a range of schools to ensure appropriate technology is provided to enable lesson delivery in the home school room. Consultation must involve the people who are in the home school room using the technology day to day, to get an effective understanding of the problems that are hindering the education of our children. It is the understanding from the home school room that is imperative to getting this right.

Comments.

Laura Stalley, State Council. To give the floor an update we had a meeting yesterday afternoon with the distance Education families and we did discuss this issue and we have spoken with Mike Tom and we have come to an agreement that ICPA will have two members who will be able to consult with the process of rolling out technology and NBN when it comes to that point.

A22. Broken Hill

“That ICPA-NSW lobbies the Department of Education to make NSW Department of Education Distance Education Schools a priority when upgrading bandwidth in schools, to improve internet services and connectivity for geographically isolated students studying through Distance Education.”

Moved by Ali Allison that this motion is deemed covered by Motion A16.

Carried

Explanation:

Currently students enrolled in primary school through the NSW Department of Education via Distance Education (DE) are having daily difficulties in relations to their internet service. These difficulties include, but are not limited to - trouble connecting to Remote Education and Conferencing Tool (REACT) lessons and being logged out of lessons, extremely slow download speeds, very slow loading of web pages and difficulty watching online videos as it takes a long time to load and buffers throughout the video. All students attending NSW Department of Education schools should have equal access to online course content and virtual learning experiences, but geographically isolated students studying through DE seem to be experiencing difficulties where others are not.

Students enrolled in rural and remote schools, such as White Cliffs Public School, are able to use the internet daily without interruption. All students are able to access video conferencing and interactive live shows with ease. Students all have their own laptops and are able to use the internet simultaneously without any trouble. This is currently not the case for DE students who

are encountering difficulties with their internet, especially with their satellite lesson platform, REACT.

White Cliffs is a very remote and isolated town and some students studying through Broken Hill School of The Air (BHSOTA) live on stations not too far from White Cliffs, so it is hard to see how the internet is not of equal reliability for all students who live in remote areas. Bandwidth is described as the maximum data transfer rate of a network or Internet connection. It measures how much data can be sent over a specific connection in a given amount of time. Schools require large bandwidths and without it can run into service problems when students and teachers are accessing the internet.

By increasing the bandwidth for DE schools this will directly impact the amount of data that can be transferred through the school's connection and therefore improve the quality of education for geographically isolated students studying through Distance Education. This will ensure that all students are able to access equal education opportunities no matter where they live.

A23. Broken Hill

“That ICPA-NSW asks the Department of Education to investigate whether Remote Education and Conferencing Tool is the most effective video conferencing platform for the delivery of essential satellite lessons to Distance Education students.”

Moved by Laura Finch, Broken Hill. Seconded by Ali Allison, Broken Hill.

Carried

Explanation:

Technology and the part it plays in our lives has evolved dramatically over the past few decades. We rely on technology in all aspects of our lives but DE students, especially those who are geographically isolated, rely on technology more than most. DE students have been so fortunate to have had access to video conferencing satellite lessons for approximately 20 years. The REACT program has been invaluable in allowing students to see their teachers and peers, show their work and engage in satellite lessons that can make them feel like they are in the same room with their teacher and peers. However, the REACT program does not seem to be evolving and changing as our technology demands increase.

Case Study: “I have been using REACT since I started our DE journey eight years ago and unfortunately, I have found that the quality of satellite lessons delivered using REACT have deteriorated rather than improved as other technology available to us improve. I am not the only one who has experienced this. Many, if not all, families enrolled in Broken Hill School of The Air (BHSOTA) have had difficulties using REACT.”

Broken Hill Branch asked SOTA families to complete a log book of issues they experienced with REACT late last year and there was a multitude of problems. Students are unable to be heard, their microphones are delayed or won't turn on. The teacher is unable to turn a student's video tool on as it distorts their audio, so the student can be seen but not heard.

Students working on Google classroom to complete work interactively have difficulty, especially younger students as they need to have their REACT screen open to hear instructions from their teacher but also have the Google classroom screen open to complete the work. This can cause a lot of difficulty and stress for students trying to navigate their way between the two programs.

The most common problem was that students are being logged out of their lesson by REACT with no warning or reason. Unfortunately, from evidence given by families, this is happening

during most lessons. Students are being logged out during the lesson; they then have to spend time quickly logging back on before they miss too much. For younger students this can be very distressing, as their satellite lessons are often quite short and they feel they are missing out, as it can take some time to log back on to the lesson. These problems seem to be quite unacceptable, especially children being ‘kicked out’ of their classroom during a lesson. Imagine if this was happening in a face-to-face classroom with a teacher kicking students out of the classroom with no reason on a daily basis. The community would be in uproar. As technology changes our connectivity and ability to communicate and complete tasks online has significantly improved. Yet unfortunately REACT doesn’t seem to be improving at the same rate as other available technologies. For this reason, we would like to perhaps see an investigation into whether or not REACT is actually the best platform available for our DE students, or whether there will be changes made to REACT, as it is a 20-year-old program. We want to ensure DE students have access to the best technology possible.

Comments.

Carol Huggens, Hay Branch. I would like to support this motion. It is really evident when the rest of Australia can have brilliant delivery of lessons during COVID-19 but our distance education kids are definitely left very behind. So, I fully support this motion.

Laura Stalley State Council. We talked about the survey that we did and I guess these sorts of statistics help support this motion. From the survey, 80% of parents and supervisors felt that there was a need to upgrade the video platform that we currently use. With the video platform, 44% of people said that they were having daily issues and 42% said that they had weekly issues and in terms of the quality and interactivity with it, 40% said it was poor. 20% said that it was very poor and 29% said it was satisfactory. So, that is just some statistics from the data that ICPA-NSW collected regarding the video platforms.

Early Childhood

A24. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the Minister for Early Childhood establish preschools in small isolated schools where there is no other access to preschool for three and four-year-olds.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

Several remote schools have been identified as servicing areas without access to preschool. This is despite an on-going effort to collaboratively find a system with sustainably which could facilitate preschool in remote villages for three and four-year olds. Weilmoringle has opened its preschool in October 2017 and yet that is the only operational preschool despite the Department of Education’s (DoE) announcement of them being approved and actioned in March 2017. We believe that the process could be hastened if the three key elements, site/venue, staffing and provider, were worked on at the same time. Louth Public School is one of those schools. Louth Branch ICPA, along with many western communities is no longer able to be anything other than insulted by the Department of Education’s Early Childhood and Education and Care Directorate’s (ECECD) approach towards resolving this educational inequity.

Comments

Sue Gordon, Lone Members. I would really like to support this motion and I remember years ago when we were on State Council this was one of the issues that we took to Government when all that funding came in for early childhood services that looked at maybe they could start establishing preschool facilities in the small rural schools. So, I think this is great initiative although probably ten years in the making but I think, good on you Louth and all the other motions that are following. I think it is great initiative and I think that the Department needs to be pushed into making this happen quicker.

Annabel Strachan, State Council. As at present when Wanaaring have got their building and their provider and have no staff being trained and so therefore the preschool cannot commence.

A25. Bourke

“That ICPA-NSW lobbies all relevant Ministers and State Government Departments to use a more accurate mapping method than the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Combined Drought Indicator (CDI) or ‘drought map’ that has been used to determine how affected a particular area is for assessing funding and drought services for early childhood education.”

Moved by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Bourke. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke.

Carried

Explanation:

An example of how the inaccuracy is causing disparity is Bourke was assessed at the lowest rate of drought impact as at 30 June 2019. As most people would be well aware, this is indeed far from the case, and that Bourke still continues to feel the significant impact of the prolonged drought both economically and socially. The funding payments anticipated for the Bourke and District Children’s Services (Preschool, Mobile and Childcare) for the three licences were a third of what was received due to assessment determined by the CDI. This would have allowed the Services to install water saving measures such as irrigation and tanks and replace plantings so that we could provide quality learning environments during the ongoing drought. The use of the CDI mapping has also meant that children in our area are not eligible for the Drought Break Program run by the Office of Sport, as the map indicates that Bourke (along with Cobar and Wilcannia) are not severely drought affected. The children and families in these areas are ineligible.

A26. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW request the Minister for Education and Early Childhood to address the lack of salary parity between four year trained early childhood teachers and four year trained primary and high school teachers.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

It is necessary for the Department of Education (DoE) to take over the salary payments of early childhood teachers so that they 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.

Comments

Laura Stalley, State Council. I would like to support this motion. I think it is really important. A lot of areas within NSW that have early childhood centres or preschools are really finding it hard to find qualified staff for the required number of hours they need for the centres to stay open. So, it is a really important thing. A lot of teachers come to town but they come and they work at the schools and the early childhood centres don't even get a look in. I think this is a really important motion and it really needs to be looked at.

Sue Gordon, Lone Members. I would highly support this motion as well. I think it is long overdue. The only explanation I can offer is that early childhood has come from a welfare background which was always traditionally poorly paid. I think now early childhood teaching is a highly trained position and I always used to say that if I had the choice between a high school teacher and an early childhood teacher for my 15-year-old I would employ an early childhood teacher any day. So, I just think this needs to happen to save the staff going over to the school's system where they are better paid, get more holidays and that sort of thing and depriving the early childhood sector of well-trained teachers.

A27. Bourke

"That ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) lobby the relevant Ministers for funding to be sought to address Early Childhood Teacher pay parity."

Moved by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Bourke. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke.

Carried

Explanation:

Pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers is a significant issue. An Early Childhood Teacher completes a four-year degree course. If they elect to work in the Public School System in a rural and remote location, the additional benefits they would get compared to working as an Early Childhood Teacher would include:

- Additional seven weeks of annual leave (approx. \$10,000pa)
- Significantly shorter contact hours per week
- Approximately \$20,000-\$30,000 additional salary
- Professional mentoring by other Teachers
- Structured Professional development programs (\$10,000 pa)
- Access to Teacher Housing (at a 70% discount on market rates in Bourke) (\$10,000 per annum)

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.

A28. Bourke

“That ICPA-NSW lobby Minister for Education and Early Childhood to explore options for better governance models for Early Childhood Services in Western NSW.”

Moved by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Bourke. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke.

Carried

Explanation:

In rural and remote areas of NSW most Early Childhood Services are provided by Community Managed not-for-profit organisations or Local Government. The significant weight of responsibility placed on the volunteer management committees means that many potential candidates will not volunteer for such a role. There is limited capacity for volunteers to undertake rigorous training and, indeed, Early Childhood Services have extremely limited resources to be able to deliver training in governance and financial management.

Comments

Neridah Healey, Wentworth. In Pooncarie we currently have 15 expressions of interest for preschool. The parents of these children are already volunteer firefighters, ambulance officers, cleaners of the RTS Clinic, P&C members as well as many other community organisations. Combined with this they run their own businesses with no option of child care to complete these tasks. Volunteer fatigue is a major concern in rural and remote areas and needs to be considered at all levels of government. Our parents are not trained to manage a preschool and nor should they be expected to.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I think this is a really big issue in local communities where they're in charge of running centre. They are in charge of staff. They are in charge of the pay roll. They are in charge of everything and it makes it really hard for the communities when you are a volunteer on a committee and you don't have this training and yet you're expected to run a community or organisation that sometimes isn't even making or braking even for these communities. This is seen not only in preschools but also in early childhood centres as well. It would be great for that training to happen for the volunteers so they know what to expect and so that they can then ensure that they are getting quality teachers and staff working at the centres.

Sue Gordon, Lone Members. I can only empathise with this motion. I spent many years advocating and working in early childhood in the management position, on the preschool committee, the long day care committee, and I was even part of the organisation then called The Country Children's Services Association, that is now Community Connections and Solutions or something like that. CCSA anyway. There is still a peak organisation. A lot of Pooncarie is possibly a member of that organisation and I would suggest that ICPA-NSW perhaps talks with CCSA about how this can be carried forward because I think it is extremely important. All our services grew from just community-based organisations when there wasn't the regulation and the responsibility that is imposed on the governance of organisations today. I think that, if you want early childhood well you have got to be part of that governance organisation but certainly, I would be talking to CCSA about how you can advance this because

it is extremely important. Otherwise, the service just folds.

A29. Louth

“ICPA-NSW asks NSW Government Ministers to not announce initiatives which they have actioned until those projects are ready to be commenced.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

The establishment of preschools by the NSW Department of Education in very remote NSW was announced at the 2017 ICPA-NSW State Conference in Mudgee. To date there are two (perhaps three by the time of this 2021 conference) operational of the ten identified by ICPA-NSW.

A30. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to include children from remote and very remote settings in the priority group for three-year-old’s so that they can access preschool.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

We would like remote and very remote children to be included in this criterion primarily due to the cost, time and other vagaries associated with travel in remote and very remote areas. This would enable the children to access 600 hours of preschool over two years. This also allows time for children to complete any intervention programs which may need to be delivered.

A31. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW communicates to The Smith Family review into attendance strategies for early learning, the idea that 600 hours preschool accessed through the universal guarantee could be done across a two-year period prior to school in rural and remote areas.”

Moved by Kate Treweek, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Liz Powell, Walgett.

Carried.

Explanation:

Four-year-olds attending face to face preschool 15 hours a week, often across three separate days, is not always a financial or physical possibility for families in rural and remote settings. This is primarily due to the cost and time associated with travel to access early childhood services. Families may be able to access one day the first year (3yo) and two days the following

year (4yo) accessing the recommended 600 hours across two years instead of one. This would benefit small rural preschools through increased funding for three-year-olds who would not be able to attend 15 hours as four-year-olds. It would also allow students more contact time with educators who may be able to recognise if early intervention for students with developmental delays may be required.

A32. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to incentivise students who are studying Early Childhood qualification by assisting with study costs, to enable remote preschools to be staffed adequately.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

After a protracted process Louth Branch is delighted to have, pending at the time of writing this explanation, three of the original ten sites identified as needing practical access to preschool, actually running as preschools. These are at Weilmoringle, Louth and Wanaaring and staffing is a critical component to their success. It is obvious that in these areas there is a dearth of early childhood certificate, diploma and degree qualifications amongst the people who live there. While there are local people interested in training to take these positions, they will need to be supported financially to complete the required training.

Comments.

Annabel Strachan, State Council. I will just reiterate that Wanaaring has no educator. They have the provider and the building but no one is able to any educating so the preschool is yet to be started.

A33. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education to provide preschool within the school environment where numbers and continuous population are considered too low to fund an independent preschool.”

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth.

Carried.

Explanation:

For the past few years, Pooncarie parents have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure their children can access some form of face-to-face preschool. The mums meet regularly for mothers' group in Pooncarie and there are a number of children looking for preschool in the coming years. It has now been four years since Reporting the Health and Development of Children in Rural and Remote Australia was prepared by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. The report states that, *“Given that Early Childhood is the period of greatest developmental plasticity with profound long-term influences, access to timely and quality Early Childhood Education and Care service such as preschool and Early Childhood Intervention services such as allied*

health can prevent the avoidable and address presenting issues from the onset.” With little change or progression to preschool in remote areas since the release of this report, it is now time to reconsider the options to delivering preschool where small numbers exist and allow for the provision of preschool in small schools where possible.

Comments.

Sue Gordon, Lone Members. I just think that this is an absolute no-brainer. We just talked about being unable to find committees to manage the local preschools. If preschool can be offered in a school setting, then this just makes so much sense especially in rural and remote areas. I would love to have the Minister’s comment on this.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell MLC. Minister for Education and Early Childhood. I agree with this motion and I have had the opportunity to speak with Nerida earlier about what they wanted to do out at Pooncarie. I think that there is a real opportunity to look at how we do this. Obviously, we have got that community safety net and I agree with the motions that have been coming from the Louth Branch that it has been too slow. We have only done three and we have to improve that, but also, I think that we particularly need to look at what do in schools in these smaller communities. We are on board for having that discussion about what we can do and I look forward to that discussion as well.

Rural Schools

A34. Bourke

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to advocate that permanent Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item numbers for telehealth consultations that are assigned to Telehealth Allied Health Services, specialists and consultations, including but not limited to Speech Pathology, Paediatricians and Psychologists, and to support the specific educational needs and learning difficulties of geographically isolated children.”

Moved by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Bourke Branch. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Bourke Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Many allied health services are unavailable to rural and remote families. In border regions this unavailability is heightened, for example; Qld practitioners cannot see patients who live in NSW and vice versa.

Barriers are:

- that people sometimes travel long distances only to have the appointment cancelled
- lengthy waiting lists to access practitioners are located in the metropolitan areas
- little or no access to Allied Health Services, particularly for children with special needs and developmental delays (often on more than one domain)
- financial hardship caused by travel and accommodation costs while accessing treatment
- low socio-economic families living in rural and remote areas do not have the means to travel for treatment
- rural and remote people are often unable to find their way around or are unfamiliar with metropolitan areas when accessing treatment
- many people needing National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plans are unable

to navigate the system and without access to services they are unable to utilise their plans.

Utilisation of telehealth services can be of a great benefit to families in geographically isolated locations who would otherwise have to travel considerable distances or encounter lengthy delays to access face to face consultations with relevant health professionals. Students with developmental difficulties require frequent and timely consultations and these can be accessed via telehealth services for many families otherwise unable to access allied health professionals due to living in rural and remote areas.

Some specialist consultations, such as speech pathology, can be satisfactorily delivered using telehealth services where the technology is available. These services are already providing improved access to health services for some children in geographically isolated areas. The cost to families to access such services should also be equitable.

Comments.

Alana Moller, President, ICPA (Aust). I just wanted to let conference know that Federal Council have been working hard on this, particularly since the pandemic, and we have raised it with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Regional Health most recently in a virtual delegation meeting with the Minister for Regional Health, Then Hon. Mark Coulton, MP, and what he indicated at the time is that there will be things forthcoming and continuing following on from what happened during the pandemic. They don't know what it is going to be or how it is going to look as yet but it is coming and we will certainly be continuing to work on that as much as we possibly can.

A35. Collarenebri-Mungindi

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to change the numbers of students registered at the school for the limited schools’ program be lowered to 20 students.”

Word change requested. That “lowered” be changed to “increased.” and remove “to 20 students”.

Permission granted.

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to change the numbers of students registered at the school for the limited schools’ program be increased.”

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Collarenebri/Mungindi.

Carried.

Explanation:

The limited schools’ programme has one criterion where the number of students registered at the school is 25. In rural and remote areas this number is preventing families from being able to apply for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) under the limited schools program. This registered number which includes students enrolled but not attending, needs to be reviewed.

Comments.

Mike Tom, Department of Education. When we met with ICPA executive on Tuesday we had a discussion around this. There are two parts to the AIC process. The first part is the part that was discussed yesterday in terms of Walgett and that is around naming or listing a limited programme school. The second part is the part that they pass down to each jurisdiction which is looking at a case-by-case basis for a Statement of Support. The Statement of Support has

specific guidelines around it that the Commonwealth dictate. What we try and do is, like every jurisdiction, as Queensland will have their way of dealing with this which will be different to ours as will South Australia, we try and bend, twist, do what we possibly can, to stick within the guidelines but to be fair and reasonable with the process. Part of this which we negotiated with ICPA a number of years ago was simply to look at, not so much the isolation in terms of geographic isolation because that is taken into account in our process already by allotting points to the schools that are furthest away and the more isolated the school is the more points are given to that particular school, but to try and look at social isolation. So that is what we are trying to look at in terms of here. Part of that is to say that if the school has a very small number of children in a particular year those students would be perhaps socially isolated. That's the one that you people will tell us all the time, the per to peer interaction and how that is important. So, we are trying to take that into consideration. At the moment it stands at 25. What I will say is that changing that will require discussion with a range of senior officers in the Department but what I'm happy to do is to undertake discussion with the ICPA in terms of where that should be and we can have a discussion around that so I'll take that onboard.

A36. Balranald

"That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to strongly promote and emphasise the benefits of early transition programs into rural and remote schools throughout NSW."

Moved by Lisa Duryea, Balranald. Seconded by Kathleen Harris, Balranald.

Carried.

Explanation:

In 2019 Clare Public School introduced the early transition program for the four preschool aged children in the community that would be attending in 2020. Apart from fortnightly access to the Hay Mobile Preschool, these children would otherwise have had no other access to an early education due to the huge distances involved - for some a trip of 180kms one way.

The early transition program introduced at Clare Public School allowed these children to access the program in mid 2019 instead of late in the year. This early transition program allowed the children to have access to education resources and was received positively by the children, who showed great advancement in their school readiness. The universal 600 hours of preschool recommended by the Federal Government is difficult to achieve. Many children from rural and isolated areas barely, if at all, receive the recommended hours of preschool education because of the limitations in their community. By encouraging more rural and remote schools to introduce the early transition program the NSW Department of Education would be allowing children to have some preschool education before attending primary school. The Balranald Branch would like to thank the NSW Department of Education and the Principal at Clare Public School for implementing an early transition program.

A37. Louth

"That an ICPA-NSW representative meets annually with each Director Educational Leadership overseeing rural and remote schools and that these meetings become embedded into the directors' calendar."

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

When we have education issues in the bush, we are always aware of how fortunate we are to have ICPA as a voice through which we are able to advocate. However, this motion is really too old as it was first presented and carried with Department of Education (DoE) acclaim in 2011. It is a simple initiative to action. It has come to our attention however that new Directors responsible for 'ICPA areas' are sometimes aware of ICPA existence only after a conference when a motion that concerns their office has been carried. However, without ICPA-NSW asking annually for a meeting they currently do not happen. We feel it would be beneficial to both the community and Directors, newly appointed or not, if they'd had the opportunity to meet with State Council and or members from their area and, at least, heard of some of the issues ICPA-NSW is working towards.

A38. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW requests the Executive Director of Public Schools NSW to ensure that the Director Educational Leadership actually physically attend the rural, remote and very remote TPI schools in their area, at least twice a year."

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

There are many reasons for which the Louth and Wanaaring School communities feel that the Director should be on site at least twice a year. Most importantly they need to review the teaching principal's program to be delivered and register of work which has been delivered to the students. The Director then also, and perhaps this is the most integral part of the overseeing role of a principal, needs to inspect and enjoy the students' completed work; whether it be a work in progress or published and ready for sharing. How else can the tax paying public be assured that the above is happening in a positive manner? We believe that the Director's physical presence will engender friendships and networking which will allow them to understand issues between teaching principals and their communities before problems arise. This level of support is necessary for the teaching principal who is working in professional peer isolation even though they have access to online mentoring, and the communities they are serving who deserve the best education possible for their children.

A39. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Department of Education Director Educational Leadership responsible for isolated schools monitor their principals to ensure that the communities are being thoroughly included in any school decision process."

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

Currently the principal can access a series of training opportunities for themselves even though

they are intending to transfer from their current school. Louth Branch certainly does not wish to hinder any in-servicing of staff if it is necessary for their jobs in our remote schools. Without a definite school program to follow or sometimes a casual teacher to deliver it, students can miss valuable learning days while their teaching principal is away. Other examples of lack of community consultation have resulted in issues with throwing out of and reordering school resources. We feel that Directors should be aware that in some circumstances, training needs to be moderated and we feel that safeguards still need to be put in place to prevent wastage of students' school time and school resources. We ask therefore for the Directors to help local people induct principals with a strong sense of the need to collaborate in an inviting way with communities to enable them to make decisions with which they are genuinely comfortable.

A40. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW urges the Executive Director of NSW Public Schools to ensure an interview process is undertaken when a TP1 school's relieving principal's position is to be filled for longer than two terms.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

When a principal is away from his or her permanent position for whatever reason it can stretch to years in time. Obviously, the relieving principal is then a significant person in the school life of a child. Louth ICPA Branch feels that when the relieving principal is in the situation of ‘filling in’ for longer than two terms, for their sake and the school families involved, the position of relieving principal should be opened for applications of expressions of interest and the formal interview process should be conducted. Anything less is creating an environment for confusion and awkwardness.

A41. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Department of Education to monitor and encourage consistent information at handovers of principals in TP1 rural schools”

Moved by Kirsty Wilson, Balranald. Seconded by Kathleen Harris, Balranald.

Carried

Explanation:

The changeover of principals at Clare Public School, six in the last four years, has had a negative impact on the pupils and staff at the school, detrimentally affecting the education of the pupils and putting an excessive amount of time constraints on the new principal. Inconsistent information and difficulty accessing the department's computer system due to contract changes for new principals means that the teaching principal has a lot of catching up to do and in some cases, it takes a whole term for all the administrative applications to be implemented. This impacts on the productivity of the principal in the office and ultimately impacts the time spent in class with the students. Contracts commence on the first day of school, however if they were dated 1st January the new principal would have access to applications and information well

before the first day of school and would be able to familiarise themselves with information applicable to the new school.

It is vital in this small school and other TP1 schools that correct information is exchanged and there should be a consistent handover to ensure a smooth transition at the start of the school year.

A42. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW urges the Director Educational Leadership, to ensure that there is always a ‘hand over’ between principals in TP1 schools particularly in the program.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

It has been the practice in small western schools, for the succeeding principals not to have crossed over. The common arrangement is for the leaving principal to tidy and pack up the school, collect their own resources, hand back the keys and drive away just before Christmas. When the new principal arrives in the blinding heat of January with all the problems it creates for stock people, most isolated school community members while welcoming, are not focused on school. Even with an industrious will, it is hard for the new teacher to set up the school for the following year, not knowing the students or his or her way around the resources. Seldom is there an on-going Term 1 program, scope and sequence or assessment records. To be frank, there have been several cases where there is not even the preceding year’s program. In general, the teaching principal is felt to be the boss in the sense that they are responsible for students’ welfare and schooling, the staff and the school’s budget, assets and grounds. As the leader the principal often must assume a role of command which is difficult when all the vagaries of whatever scenario they are faced, are totally unfamiliar. In our experience of assisting new teaching principals as they begin their appointment, the major shock is the huge workload required to program appropriately for a multistage classroom, let alone rigorously implementing same and following up with constant assessing. While obviously this is the most important task, often it is the one which the teacher is not able to do expediently as he/she are having to mentally grapple with and make decisions about other issues which also require immediate attention. This has resulted in poor coordination of programs, resources and staff rosters; generally a longer period of time for the community and principal to feel comfortable as co-workers in an isolated setting which has led to any dispute or misunderstanding being presented as a complaint; a program vacuum being created, as in no set outcomes, adjusted program being followed daily; awkward staffing arrangements; new resources being unnecessarily purchased and a myriad of other negatives, most of which could be prevented by the outgoing principal inducting the incoming principal.

A43. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW ask the Minister for Education and the Minister for Regional NSW if the agreed 2019 staffing levels for 2020 and 2021 not be immediately or gradually removed but remain in place in public schools.”

Moved by Kate Treweek, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. Seconded by Liz Powell, Walgett Branch.

Carried

Explanation:

The support that was provided to children in drought and bushfire affected communities by maintaining staffing entitlements at public schools was a godsend to many communities over the past few years. For some schools they were able to reach goals of providing a wider range or elective subjects. Take this away and we will see families moving away and enrolment numbers still decreasing. Knowing our local schools have the capacity to retain skilled and dedicated staff during these times of hardship helps give our children the opportunity to be the best they can be. It is acknowledged that some areas have come out of drought but it must be also noted that it takes some years for some families and communities to regain their footing.

A44. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW lobby the ministers for education and health to invest in the availability of on the ground youth and adolescent Mental Health services in rural schools and communities, further more provide incentives for these specialists to remain in our communities.”

Moved by Kate Treweek, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. Seconded by Liz Powell, Walgett Branch.

Carried

Explanation:

While there is some access to services, supply in many rural areas does not meet demand, to the point of failing to refer and lack of disclosure. If these services are not available locally, the expenses and continued trauma associated with travelling to access services are prohibitive for many families. By not providing incentives for specialist to remain in our community's it creates a fly-in fly-out mentality, a perception of a lack of care and a continuation of a lack of referrals and disclosure.

A45. Walgett

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Minister for Education to place Walgett Community College (WCC) on the list for bypassing from Years 7 – 12 commencing 2021.”

Moved by Liz Powell, Walgett Branch. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

We acknowledge and thank the effort made by ICPA-NSW State Council to address this issue over the years but sadly our members and our community are still very much in need. We continue to lose valuable community members, some of whom have lived in the area for generations, in pursuit of an appropriate education for their children in the secondary years.

For 2021, 19 Queensland Schools were on the list for bypass and only two schools in NSW. In comparison with information already researched and collected by Bank West Curtin Economic Centre called Educate Australia Fair, most of the 19 schools in QLD have a better educational opportunity and a better socio - educational advantage than the Walgett Community College. Ten schools in this report are in an advantaged area and ten are in a disadvantaged area. Walgett is number two and where I grew up at Goodooga, far west NSW, number one.

Once again, we have lost a Principal with this making it in the last seven years an average loss of one Principal per year. Up to nine staff are not returning for another year so this unrest and instability is a major disadvantage with staff losses reaching 60% turnover per year over the last five years.

We all know the figures, that 88% of students are in the bottom quartile for socio-educational advantage and that only 19% of students attend for 90% of the time. The curriculum has been significantly modified to meet the needs of the students attending the school and the prospect of achieving an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) almost impossible, with only five senior secondary students awarded a senior secondary certificate on completion as per information provided on the My School website 2019.

In 2019 Walgett Community Centre (WCC) received approximately \$4,000,000 from the State Government and \$1,500,000 from Australian Government recurrent funding. Therefore, 106 students on average cost the Australian Government \$6,000,000. This information is freely and openly supplied on the My Schools website. This therefore makes the \$114,000 for six families averaging three children requiring the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance seem comparatively insignificant. Out of the 2020 graduating students from the local Catholic Primary School one is attending the WCC and only seven from the State Primary School. This is about choice and equality.

Comments.

Mike Tom, Department of Education. The AIC process and the Bypass process is complex. I don't think I can go into it in huge amounts of detail on the conference floor but I would certainly encourage you, through the executive of ICPA, a deeper conversation with the Department of Education and, certainly, in terms of the Walgett Branch, I am available for the next two days so please come up and share a conversation, specifically in the context of Walgett and the Bypass process. We spent yesterday for around about an hour meeting with the executive of ICPA to go through the AIC supporting statement process. Obviously, Walgett has been an issue for you as a community for a number of years and we will work with you through the supporting statement process. Every jurisdiction is different in terms of how they deal with that. So, I would say to you that making comparisons between jurisdictions is probably not going to be helpful because, when you look at the jurisdiction, which is way education is laid out in each of those jurisdictions, it will be very, very different. Each jurisdiction will have to actually go or support the guidelines that are actually laid down by the Commonwealth. It is a Commonwealth allowance and they detail how schools will be made, as you say, a Bypass school. It is actually called a Limited Programmes School in terms of the proper language. So, again, I encourage the Walgett representatives here to come and have a conversation at some stage during the conference.

David Cameron, Namoi Branch. This issue regarding the Statement of Support was around ten years ago and it has been re-jigged. The Statement of Support was started in the 1990's and the issue has been around forever. We all have figures on what it is costing the schools. You can pour as much money into some schools as you want. You can have better teachers or better curriculum but the bottom line is that families need to decide where their children go to school and, with no bad words about Walgett, if they don't want to send their children to Walgett, then they should have the choice to send them somewhere else. This allowance that parents have

been asking for, for years, doesn't pay for boarding school. It doesn't pay for very much at all. It's not a huge allowance. It is just a help and I think we have mucked around for too long because governments and departments just don't to admit that a school might look bad if there is a number of kids leaving. They're leaving anyway by choice. So, come on, let's fix it up. Not everyone wants to go to boarding school. Give them some choice.

A46. Walgett

"That ICPA-NSW request that the NSW government change the criteria for bypass to not be based on subjects alone but to include socio educational advantage and individually assess a school."

Moved by Karen Ricardo, Walgett Branch. Seconded by Liz Powell, Walgett Branch.

Carried

Explanation:

Once again, we acknowledge the effort made by ICPA-NSW State Council to address this issue over the years but sadly our members and our community remain in need. Walgett Community College (WCC) should be the most obvious choice for bypass in NSW and added to this existing list of two schools. This is not an option for these families and this is becoming and always has been a great injustice. We also accept this isn't just a school problem but an entire community battling alcohol, drugs, abuse, domestic violence and generational government dependency and this creates an environment that makes it difficult to learn in.

The criteria for bypass include subject restrictions and as most subjects are available, there are very few, if any students doing them. We understand and are willing to accept that as stated on the Department of Education Procedure for Bypass printed by the Queensland Government that it would need to be assessed every two years. We also see on this document that the HR assesses student enrolment numbers and that for Years 11 and 12, criteria is given to schools with less than 25 students in Years 11-12. This also makes WCC eligible.

The list of criteria should also include student behaviours. The WCC has a history of assaults to Teaching staff and to other students. After receiving documents from the Freedom of Information Act we were made aware of police being called to the school on a number of occasions with weapons, drug exchanges, assaults on students and at least four teachers assaulted in 2019 alone. In 2019 we noted a serious assault where a student physically harmed a teacher. There are many of these incident reports available and these are increasing every year. This doesn't include injury to staff who are trying to protect other students from assault. Of the five applications for a statement of support for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) only one student was successful and that was because they were in Year 12 and the subject was not available. In November 2019 we were made aware that a teacher, after trying to save another student, was assaulted leaving the staff member with a broken vertebra leading to surgery and of course, as we all know, mental and physical trauma. We feel that these statistics and incident reports and student safety issues should assist WCC in becoming eligible for the bypass and should be added to the required initial criteria by the NSW government to support all students residing in the Walgett Shire.

Comments.

Robin Beckwith, Walgett Branch. I'm not a farmer. I'm a plumber and I live in the town of Walgett. We met Minister Mitchell at the Bourke Cabinet meeting and we explained this situation. We were told by her advisers that in December 2019 that within two weeks we would

be able to apply for AIC and it would be granted. This went on and on and we do accept that there were other issues that came up such as bush fires and everything in between. We were then informed in April that we wouldn't be able to qualify for it and it wasn't possible to be done. The situation at Walgett High School has deteriorated with some staff saying that it is at its worst since 2015 when it was named as the state's worst high school. They say that it has never been as bad as it is now. We had a teacher who was strangled last year, there are lockdowns averaging twice a week, the situation is dire and we cannot attract people to the town. We have farmers and contractors who can't get staff. The aboriginal medical service can't get staff. Walgett Shire Council can't even get people to drive ride-on lawnmowers any more and people are leaving the town. In Walgett you are no less geographically isolated access to quality education because you live in town. It is actually worse. We are only asking for access to the small amount of help that is available through AIC. We are not asking for all our school fees to be paid or anything like that. We are just wanting to be on a level playing field with those that can access it. We are really at a point now where we have to make decisions whether to leave town. Ironically COVID probably saved us and certainly prolonged my time in Walgett for a little bit longer. We just need some real help out there. We need new strategies for the school which we have discussed with various people but it needs to be done now. It is destroying the community and we are losing businesses; we are losing families; we have families who have split up and we have aboriginal students in Year 11 and 12 who have given up. Their teachers are gone and they haven't got teachers to teach them so they have given up and their parents say that they are just staying at home. We have a student in Year 12 who hasn't struck a blow in seven weeks on one of her elective subjects because there is no mechanism for her to be taught that subject because of the staffing levels. The staff are scared. They are bound by the so-called Code of Conduct and unable to really speak out. I think it is incredibly brave of them that they had a walk out recently and that has led to press coverage which we all in the Walgett community would really rather have not had because it is just going to make the situation even more dire and, I'm afraid, if this situation doesn't get resolved it is going to get worse because it is going to perpetuate until we have community that is absolutely decimated.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch, neighbouring Walgett, also past State Council and State President. Over my years on State Council and still here and been to all these conferences. Walgett has always had these issues and like we have heard it is getting worse and worse. We keep coming to you about these problems. We're meant to be here to put all our issues up front, have your comment, have some resolutions and have some way forward. This is going backwards and going backwards very, very quickly. So sometimes, to the rest of the room, I just feel why do we bother because this isn't happening. This is just going backwards. So, you are not really giving us enough hope and encouragement and this is really getting worse and I am worried that we are not encouraging our members and what we are here fighting for is looking at department ministers and saying that we have this problem. We seem to get other problems helped or other ideas fixed. Education just sort of sits there and some issues are just plummeting so much so that yes, we have health issues, we've got police involved and we've just heard of some atrocities that are happening in our schools. It shouldn't be and we need to do something. We need to encourage others because we need to get these issues fixed no matter what they are for the education of our children.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell MLC. Minister for Education and Early Childhood. What I would like to say is that Walgett is a really, really complex case and I'm not just telling you that. Kate, please bear with me, I completely understand what you are saying and the emotion

you are feeling and I know, Robin, that my office was working with you to try to find resolution here. I think, as Mike said before, these aren't easy issues to solve and that doesn't mean that we should walk away from them but I've got a job to play as Education Minister. We've got wider community issues that we need to be looking at there as well. I don't want you to be disheartened to think that this isn't a priority or something we forget about or that we don't want to work with you. I can't fix things overnight as much as I would like to but I just want to reassure conference that this is a priority looking at what's happening at the school and what's happening more widely in the community because schools are a microcosm of the community and there is a lot of complexities and a lot of issues that have been going on for many, many years and I know that. I can't give you all the answers that you want because there are a lot of things we've been trying to do and it has been quite challenging. I know that Mike has said that he is happy to sit down and talk to you more about what we can do as am I. You know that you can always get in touch with me. We are trying to find solutions to the problems out there but, like I said, I wish that I had a silver bullet solution but I don't and I don't want you to be disheartened or to think that we don't care or that we don't want to provide support because we certainly do and we want to keep working towards a solution.

David Cameron, Namoi Branch. Minister, it is a complex issue and it is far more than education. It's health, its social issues, its drugs, alcohol, the whole bit, but we are here for education and a very simple way to fix it is to allow any student that wants to bypass to get the small amount of money to keep people in the town. Keep their mother and their father in the town while they go off to another school and it is only a small amount of money for the AIC that would fix part of that problem. We can work on the health and other issues later but any student should be granted access to the AIC would help people like the plumber, the agronomist and the nurse in the town.

Jenny Sheaffe, Hay Branch Life Member. I'll be very brief and my comment is addressed to the Minister. Minister, you are the one responsible. I know there is no silver bullet but it is time to start taking some responsibility. I've seen this issue when I was on State Council in 1992. We would address issues like that so it's time that something is done and I hope you have the courage to stand up as a Minister and do it.

A47. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to provide single person accommodation at Louth Public School, as they have done in other small remote schools."

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

There is literally no affordable accommodation in Louth. So, when a casual teacher or visiting consultant needs to overnight it is not feasible for them to do so. There is no additional funding which allows for this extra expense. This is yet another disincentive for principals as they cannot leave their position for any amount of time as the school would not be attended by a teacher.

A48. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to ensure that teacher housing is maintained to a high standard in remote and very remote schools by insisting the relevant authorities respond immediately to any reasonable requests.”

Kylie Baty, Louth request permission for word change. Permission granted.

Motion A48 now reads:

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Minister for Water, Property and Housing ensure that teacher housing is maintained to a high standard in remote and very remote schools by insisting the relevant authorities respond immediately to any reasonable requests.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

Because of the isolation and distances from amenities and trades persons it is imperative that remote teacher housing be maintained at such a level that is comfortable, safe and an incentive for the principal and their family to make it a home throughout their time at the school. We believe that there should be consultation with the staff who are going to live there. For example, the Louth School house has been there 30 years and the recent upgrade did not include a dishwasher. The installation of a new stove and oven is also necessary as the current one is about to die. While in Louth the principal and family are happy with the renovations the community is disgusted with the following and we would like to table those issues by way of explanation of our motion. The installation of a new rain water tank. The original plan was to clean out the tank, however this did not happen due to safety concerns from the contractors and the tank is old and corroding inside. There needs to be a new tank installed and attached to the kitchen and bathroom. Since moving to Louth in April 2019, the current principal has had to purchase his family’s drinking water as the water in the current tank is bore and river water and undrinkable. The external blinds which were on the house veranda originally have been removed. These are illegal due to the length of the cords and the community is wondering if they will be put back or replaced. The front of the house faces the west and is extremely hot in summer and requires blinds or something similar. The community would also like to have ceiling fans installed in the house as this would assist with the cooling of the rooms. These issues are in themselves not hugely expensive and we urge an immediate response.

Comments.

Kate Treweek, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. There is such a thing called the Department of Planning and Environment and the Minister for Water.

Ellen Walker, Rankins Springs. Google is a wonderful thing. The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment has four Ministers one of which is the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. So, it is just a matter of pausing at the right spot in this motion. So it is, *“requests the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (pause) Minister for Water, Property and Housing.”* There is also a minister for Planning and Public Spaces. A Minister for Energy and the Environment and a Minister for Local Government all within that one Department. The wording is correct so it is just a pause in the way that you read it out.

Claire Butler, President, ICPA-NSW. Thank you. That won't change who we advocate to and we would still be advocating to that Minister.

A49. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to include an appropriate vehicle for the Louth Public School."

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

Louth ICPA Branch requests as a matter of urgency a car that could transport all of Louth Public School students to extracurricular activities. For example, a car could transport the students to activities such as team sports, sports carnivals, swimming carnivals, excursions, any cultural activities they may be invited to attend, other small school cluster days and the like. All these activities require at least a 200 km round trip on dirt roads. Students' access and participation in these activities is a crucial part of their development. Currently parents have to drive those long distances requiring time away from work and other family commitments in order for their children to participate. Therefore, quite often attending such events are logistically impossible. This means that Louth Public School students' schooling opportunities are inequitable. Vast distances and unsealed roads in these isolated communities coupled with the fact that there are no essential services, for example, health, emergency services and telecommunications, means that the school and students are even more isolated without an appropriate vehicle. Obviously, it is an expensive decision to accept a position as an incoming principal at a rural and remote small school as they need to have or buy an appropriate vehicle. Therefore, without a vehicle attached to the school, these very remote students are at a disadvantage.

A50. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to ensure that procedures are followed before sending a complaint to Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate."

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

We understand that once a complaint has gone to Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate (EPAC) the Department is unable to do anything about it. We believe before a complaint goes to EPAC that the person about whom the complaint has been made are able to defend their actions and any other persons who can give information are asked before the person responsible sends it to EPAC. This would alleviate the stress that occurs when waiting for long periods until the complaint process is dealt with by EPAC. Only when all the information has been gathered and the person responsible is not satisfied should it then be sent to EPAC.

A51. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education to ensure that rural and remote schools have access to face-to-face counselling sessions for students.”

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch. Seconded by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs Branch.

Carried

Explanation:

There are students requiring counselling face-to-face in rural and remote schools, however, due to the lack of services being available locally, they don't have access to an appropriate face-to-face counselling service. At our TP1 School we have been fortunate enough to try the Royal Far West (RFW) counselling service via video conference, but it freezes and stops working due to our poor internet connections. Our local TP1 School, Naradhan Public School has not had access to a regular school counselling service for over two years. The school has a significant need for regular face to face counselling to support students academically and emotionally and we are being disadvantaged by not having this support. They have recently participated in a further trial with RFW where they had access to a psychologist who provided a mix of telepsychology and a fly-in, fly-out service. At the end of the second trial, the principal saw the model as a viable last resort but had many students missing out on vital support as there was only capacity for one student to be receiving counselling through the telepsychology program. The effectiveness of this program was also hindered by the school's poor internet speeds. During the fly-in service part of the trial, students had to be transported to the nearest larger school, at the school's expense, for cognitive assessments to be conducted as the school's internet connection was insufficient. The teaching staff are also feeling the absence of a regular school counsellor who had previously provided support with classroom management strategies and learning adjustments to ensure every student was supported.

A52. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW urges the Department of Education to ensure that the Hub and Spoke Program position in rural communities is retained for TP1 and TP2 schools so that relief teaching staff can be accessed when needed.”

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs.

Carried

Explanation:

Our local schools currently have access to a Hub and Spoke Program, formally the Rural Area Relief, (RAR), program teacher when covering teaching staff on leave or who are attending professional development days. These positions are filled on a temporary basis and at the end of each contract the position is reviewed. School principals are continually fighting for the positions to continue as casual teacher availability is extremely low in rural areas. These positions are vital in ensuring schools remain operational in the event of an unexpected illness and/or leave. TP1 and TP2 schools have a low number of staff and do not have the ability to split classes in the event of an unexpected absence.

A53. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister of Education to allow TP1 and TP2 Principals more autonomy on how Routine Planned Maintenance funding is spent.”

Moved by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs Branch. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch.

Carried

Explanation:

Currently the Assets Management Unit identify what projects will be funded with the Routine Planned Maintenance funds whilst the Principals of TP1 and TP2 schools don't have any say in where the money will be spent in their school. Often the money could be better spent in other areas that would be of immediate benefit to the students and staff. Funds associated with Routine Planned Maintenance are for carpets, painting, adjusting doors and windows, cupboards and boundary fencing.

A school where students of some of our members attend wanted to fix some old blinds in the staff room and place ceiling fans in some of the rooms. However, they could not use the money they had available to them in Routine Planned Maintenance fund as the items requested were classified as new fittings and fixtures. Improvements need to be included.

A54. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW congratulates the Minister for Education on the success of the Rural Experience Program and requests the program be further extended.”

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council on behalf of Wentworth Branch.

Carried

Explanation:

Many small schools have reported enormous benefits from being provided with an additional teacher with different experiences. Some teachers have decided to continue in these rural and remote communities. Benefit would also be gained if rural and remote teachers were encouraged to take part in an exchange program. This would provide those teachers with experience in a larger mainstream setting where they are exposed to many and varying teachers and methods that they can learn from, adapt and bring back to their home school.

Special Education

A55. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW lobbies the Ministers for Education and Health to increase available allied health services in rural schools and communities.”

Moved by Kate Treweek, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Cath Deshon, Walgett on behalf of Lightning Ridge/Goodooga

Carried

Explanation:

While there is some access to specialised allied health services such as Occupational Therapists and Speech Pathologists, supply in many rural areas does not meet demand. If these services aren't available locally, the expenses associated with travelling to access services are prohibitive for many families. As the NSW Government have been unable to facilitate practical face to face early childhood education for numerous children in Western NSW, we have students in need missing out on vital early interventions which has a carry-on effect throughout their school life. This lack of educational experiences and socialisation results in children starting school without the required language and other social skills required to succeed. It also means children requiring early intervention are not being identified until they start formal schooling.

A56. Balranald

"That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Health to implement an incentive program to encourage allied health professionals to come to rural and remote areas."

Moved by Kathleen Harris, Balranald. Seconded by Kirsty Wilson, Balranald.

Carried

Explanation:

Children benefit the greatest from early intervention. To give one example, a speech issue is usually identified at preschool. Parents are then referred to the relevant therapist at a local allied health services, however there is an increasing gap and turnover of health professionals in towns like Balranald, therefore parents may need to travel over 300kms one way to access a speech therapist or occupational therapist. Balranald Branch therefore requests that more incentives be offered to allied health professionals to work in rural and remote localities.

Tertiary

A57. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to request the Minister for Education to consider ways to condense tertiary training, such as at Marcus Oldham Agricultural College, which would benefit very remote students."

Moved by Kylie Batey, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Several member families at Louth have expressed concern about the 'time wasted' when their young adult children are completing a tertiary qualification. Students who live in a very remote context such as Louth, Wanaaring, White Cliffs, Hungerford and other places our members come from, by necessity relocate many kilometres away to access training/studies. In most instances the study/training institutions' destinations are expensive places to live. Isolated students are entitled to access Independent Youth Allowance once they have proven their independence. The Youth Allowance rates allow for rent and living costs, leaving very little if any at all once they are deducted. Accessing extra part time work prevents students from receiving the full Youth Allowance rate. Thus, it is often a frustrating time and the reality is that

remote parents need to financially assist their children whereas peri-urban and urban families can arrange accommodation which is cheaper or free. These stresses would be alleviated if the courses could be completed in a shorter time frame, such as at Marcus Oldham. Louth ICPA members would like to see public universities considering offering that flexibility to condense their studies too. Louth ICPA members would like to see that remote students have access to an accommodation institution at which they study on daily basis from nine to so that they finish their courses at a speedier rate. We have mentioned Marcus Oldham as an exemplar of education delivery, not because of its agriculture courses, but rather because its model is based on high student contact hours, small class sizes and devoted lecturers. Another benefit would be students possibly returning in a smaller time frame to their remote communities with their skills.

Comments.

Sue Gordon, Observer, NSW/Vic Lone Member. I would support this. I think this is long overdue and I wish you well. (Most of Sue's comment was inaudible)

Wendy Hick, ICPA (Aust). I would like to make a comment that at the Federal level we don't have this policy. This motion hasn't been submitted to a Federal Conference yet so I highly urge the branch to bring this to the Federal forum so we can have a discussion and if it is what members want to take forward it can be officially put in. I appreciate the discussion here because that will give us a lot of feedback to take back on that.

A58. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW works with Universities to ensure that an adequate level of support be delivered by university/tertiary educators."

Moved by Kylie Batey, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Louth ICPA Branch has family members who have struggled to receive enough help from their lecturers and tutors with their studies. This lack of support is compounded by the fact that they felt they would be penalised if they were too forthright about their needs not being met. As a result, we have several families whose children have withdrawn from courses. If a student is living within their family and extended friendship group, they have more chance to benefit by discussing the topics they are studying. For remote students this is not possible.

A59. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) in requesting the Federal Government to increase Centrelink rent assist payments."

Moved by Kylie Batey, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried

Explanation:

Obviously regional, remote and very remote children need to factor in rent to their study plans.

Rent is the biggest component of a student's costs and is often prohibitive therefore to study for example in a larger city or it may mean that a student has to work so much that their course suffers.

Fortnightly Example:

If a student is over 18 years of age, has no children and the single Youth Allowance is \$304.60. Until March 2021 there is a Corona Virus supplement allowance of \$150. Rent Assist varies according to your rent. If a student is paying \$124.60 in rent, they will receive a maximum of \$93.07 rent assist.

- Approximate average fortnightly costs based on single basic room
- Charles Sturt University Orange - \$400 without board
- Port Macquarie's Charles Sturt University - \$480 without board
- Coffs Harbour Southern Cross University - \$400 without board
- Women's College Sydney University - \$1200 with board
- University of New England - \$350 without board
- Sydney rented share accommodation - \$600 without board
- Larger regional NSW town/city rented share accommodation - \$320 without board.

Comments.

Alana Moller, President, ICPA (Aust). This is in policy federally and I just wanted to let everyone know that we do work on this within Youth Allowance. I just wanted to clarify some of the numbers that are in that example in the explanation. I'm going to have to read this.

For single students with no children 18 years and over that need to live away from home the rate is actually \$462.50. The \$304.60 is actually for students who still live at home with their parents.

Also, to let you know that rent assistance is paid per fortnight. The single rent assistance is paid on a sliding scale if rent is over \$124.60 and to get the maximum rate of rent assistance rent has to be at least \$310.73. Single rent assistance in a share situation is paid on a sliding scale if rent is over \$124.60 and to get the maximum rate the rent has to be at least \$248.69. So, I hope that clarifies some of those figures around what is available.

A60. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education to review the way credits and advance standings can be transferred when a student studying an accredited teaching degree moves from one university to another."

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

Louth ICPA Branch asks for this because we believe the circumstance is unfair when, a university degree course unit has been completed and passed that a student is required to re-do and pay again for that same unit. For example, a student completed two and half years of a primary school degree at Notre Dame University when, due to the expense of living in Sydney, he transferred to Charles Sturt University (CSU) in Dubbo. He then discovered that only two units from Notre Dame were acknowledged in his primary school degree at CSU. As a result, this student has ceased his training.

These degree courses are both certified by Department of Education so we feel the lack of unit

acknowledgment is an inequitable deterrent for students' success in achieving qualifications; requiring more time to complete, increased accommodation costs, plus having to pay twice for the unit. Are these regulations serving for monetary gain or the altruistic education of young people? This seems especially counterproductive when one considers that some of these students are from isolated addresses, who when qualified, may return to rural and remote Australia to be employed in the hard to fill professional positions. Obviously, students everywhere change universities for a variety of reasons. A rural student has the added worry of course length when choosing because of always needing to factor in cost of accommodation. Thus, the lack recognition of passed units is particularly frustrating for bush families.

A61. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

"That ICPA-NSW lobbies the NSW Department of Education to investigate alternate delivery modes to video conferencing at small rural TAFE campuses."

Moved by Kate Treweek, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Liz Powell Walgett on behalf of Lightning Ridge/Goodooga.

Carried

Explanation:

TAFE campuses in rural towns offer courses by video conference. This delivery method does not suit the learning style of many students. In order for courses to run they require large numbers of students but in an area with small population it is almost impossible to get the numbers in order to have a face-to-face teacher. We would like to understand if any other delivery methods have been considered and if not, can they be?

A62. Monaro

"That ICPA-NSW calls on the NSW Government to support recommendations 17 and 18 of the NSW Parliament's Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education report into The Future Development of the NSW Tertiary Education Sector."

Moved by Pam Fletcher, Monaro. Seconded by Tim Fletcher, State Council on behalf of Monaro.

Carried

Explanation:

On 22 January 2021, the NSW Parliament's Education Committee released its report into The Future Development of the NSW Tertiary Education Sector with its strong endorsement of the Country University Centre (CUC) model and its centres. ICPA-NSW had provided a submission into the inquiry supporting the CUC and its role in regional development in NSW. The Chair's Forward at page x notes: *"The Committee was highly impressed with the CUC model. In an NSW education system overloaded with problems and challenges, it is refreshing to find a successful, community- led innovation like CUCs.... Their targeted attention to student learning needs is a sharp departure from large, impersonal campus education. The more CUCs grow and succeed in NSW, the more our higher education system will flourish."*

After reviewing a Case Study on the CUC, the Committee comments at paragraph 3.38 on page 36: *"The committee was very impressed by the CUC model and found it to be a compelling community-driven initiative that was delivering high-quality tertiary education opportunities to its students. The committee commends the CUCs around the state for their efforts thus far and*

encourages the NSW Government to further explore ways to contribute to the future success of the CUCs, and other similar models.”

This endorsement has led to Recommendations 17 and 18 of the Parliamentary Committee:

- Recommendation 17: That the NSW Government prioritise support for CUCs in its forthcoming Higher Education Strategy.
- Recommendation 18: That the NSW Government engage with the CUCs about where future centres should be located, and support CUCs to provide careers guidance and advisory services.

ICPA-NSW was instrumental in developing the student learning and support models for the CUC, particularly through the involvement of people like Caroline McDonald, Jesse O'Donoghoe and Jilly-Ann Strother. ICPA-NSW should take great credit and satisfaction from the Committee endorsement of the CUC model. With government acceptance of the Parliamentary Committee recommendations, the CUC will be inserted into future strategic planning of higher education in NSW and ICPA-NSW will have the opportunity to engage with the NSW Government about the future location of CUC Centres.

A full copy of the Report can be found at

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2597/Report>

Travel

A63. **Rankins Springs**

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport and Transport for NSW (TfNSW) to lower the number of students required to start a non-commercial bus run as a matter of urgency.”

Moved by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs.

Carried.

Explanation:

Although a bus run may be maintained with eight students, 15 students are required to start a new bus run. This requirement means that an operator needs to purchase a Category 2, which is a 14 to 24 Authorised Adult Seating Capacity (AASC - excluding the driver), bus to service the run. This would mean for example a Toyota coaster or similar bus. If the required number to commence the run was brought back to eight then a Category 1, which is an 8 to 13AASC bus, is all that would be required; a Toyota commuter bus or similar. We understand that the larger bus allows for a significant growth of student numbers but would argue that the lower number of eight is hard enough to attain in most rural and remote communities so that much room for growth is not necessary. Consideration of applications for commencement numbers lower than the requisite 15 on a case-by-case basis would be welcome and appreciated.

All communities are different, and consideration of this should be taken into account. Perhaps it is time that Transport for NSW again looked at community owned bus runs where feasible, which would be less expensive to support.

Comments.

Lewis Clarke, Executive Director, Customer Systems and Operations. Customer Strategy and Technology. Transport for NSW. Just in terms of this motion, while there are some rules that are in place around starting and stopping bus services, I think your comment at the end was probably the most important in the fact that services are unique. I'd

encourage you to work with your local bus operator where you are having issues and also ask them to get in contact with Transport NSW. We are happy to look at unique circumstances and give due consideration outside of the rules so that is not to say that you will always get a different answer but we are aware that there are unique circumstances which we are happy to consider.

A64. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport to reconsider minimum numbers required to start and maintain bus runs in small rural communities.”

Moved by Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch that **Motion A64** be deemed covered by **Motion A63**

Carried.

Explanation:

There are currently several small schools in our area that would benefit from a school bus service. Pomona Public School is one such school where new families are considering School of the Air over attending the local school due to travel commitments. The Pomona bus was discontinued in 2017 and we find families are seeking for it to be reinstated.

A65. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport to allow preschool children travel on rural and remote bus runs in the year prior to commencing school enabling them to be included in the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) and the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) for that year.”

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs. Seconded by Megan McCarten, Rankins Springs.

Carried.

Explanation:

The costs relating to getting preschool children to the service’s front gate are a significant barrier for many rural and remote families. If the preschool children were included in the contract between the bus operator and the Department of Transport this would result in certainty of numbers and financial remuneration for the bus operator, as well as a definite seat for the child. For those families who do not have the option of putting their preschool child on the local school bus, the ability to receive the SDS to transport their child from home to preschool would be of great benefit. This would alleviate some of the costs relating to driving their own vehicle to transport the child to the preschool’s front gate. Families should be able to receive either the SSTS or the SDS, not necessarily both. We understand that some trials were conducted around this and perhaps Transport for NSW could provide some further information on the results.

A66. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW asks the Minister for Transport to fast track the inclusion of preschool children on the School Drive Subsidy (SDS).”

Moved by Lisa Duryea, Balranald. Seconded by Kathleen Harris, Balranald.

Carried.

Explanation:

By being able to access the SDS parents that are already or will be travelling substantial distances to access preschool education for their children will face less financial pressure to access an early education. Balranald Shire has a huge geographical area and combined with the impact of drought, being able to access the Early Learning Centre in town, for some, up to 190km away, is getting more and more challenging. Enrolments and attendance would improve if families could receive a subsidy to drive their children to preschool, and would help them to reach the universally recommended 15 hours per week.

Comments.

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. I would just like to speak of my experience with the preschool School Drive Subsidy. I have a current student in Distance Education Preschool. I live 640 kilometres from the centre in Broken Hill. That is 640 kilometres return. I travel to town once per term for face-to-face experience. It takes us two days and I would travel a total of 3,840 kilometres to receive 48 hours of face-to-face preschool education for my child. This is the equivalent of travelling 80 kilometres for one hour of face-to-face preschool education. This is like travelling from the Sydney CBD to the Blue Mountains all for a total of the year travelling from Sydney to Melbourne four times. Being able to include preschool students in the School Drive Subsidy would definitely assist in the social, mental and wellbeing outcomes of preschoolers.

Neridah Healy, Wentworth Branch. We actually had this as a motion a while ago and when we did our meeting, we actually took it off our list of motions as we thought that this was something that was promised and already going to happen so we are a little bit surprised that this still continues to be on the list even though there has been talk that this was going to be an easy fix and possible.

It is a little disappointing that it is still here.

David Butler, State Council. Like I said before in the report, we just have to go back to that recommendation that is in the Effected Rural Communities. The recommendation was for the Minister to include preschool children in the School Drive Subsidy. I don't know how long that takes to implement but it has already been recommended.

A67. Lightning Ridge/Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW request the Minister for Transport to make provision for preschool students in rural and remote areas in the year prior to school to be included in the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) and the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS).”

Moved by Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett Branch on behalf of Lightning/Goodooga.

Carried.

Explanation:

Distance is currently a barrier for four-year-olds accessing preschool in isolated areas of NSW. The choice is currently between preschool via Distance Education or a long drive to the nearest service at the parent's expense. The former requires a committed tutor and limits students contact time with other children and the opportunity to develop important social skills. It also limits contact time with educators who may be able to determine if early intervention is required for students with developmental delays. While face to face preschool addresses these needs, the costs and time associated with travel exclude some families from accessing services. Early childhood education is the best investment we can give our children prior to them starting full time-school, no matter where we live.

Comments.

Lewis Clarke, Executive Director, Customer Systems and Operations. Customer Strategy and Technology. Transport for NSW. Just a response from Transport NSW's perspective. There are a number of safety concerns in relation to preschool aged children travelling unattended on public buses. These safety concerns include child supervision, seating and belt requirements, driver distractions and road speed limits in rural and remote NSW. Due to these concerns, TfNSW has no plans to include preschool children in the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) or the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) which subsidises private transport to the nearest public transport service pick-up point. Instead, TfNSW is intending to trial a new scheme which aims to supplement personal transport costs for preschool attendance. This has been identified as a safe and appropriate alternative to SSTS and elements of the SDS. An application process for a separate scheme is currently being developed that covers the transportation of preschool children living in remote and very remote areas of NSW. These areas are defined in the Australian Bureau of Statistics developed Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas and include towns such as Broken Hill, Cobar, Walgett and Coonamble. Using these boundaries assists with determining areas that require additional services to address socio-economic disadvantage and various health and educational outcomes. Selection of locations in remote and very remote NSW will also provide additional support to Aboriginal families to access preschool.

The trial scheme will operate similarly to the SDS and apply only to eligible preschool aged children being driven by parents from their home to the preschool centre that they attend (door to door) using private vehicle transportation. It will not cover private vehicle travel to a transport pick-up point to access public bus services. Similar to the SDS, the new scheme will only be paid on days where an eligible preschool child's attendance at their preschool centre is confirmed by their enrolment records.

Where a family has children attending school and preschool, the journey will be calculated under similar rules as the SDS, with one payment per family. For days where a child is attending preschool, the subsidy will be calculated between the home and preschool while still allowing for school age children to be taken either to their school or to a transport pick-up point. The trial scheme is being established in line with the Commonwealth Government's commitment to support access to preschool education for children in the two years prior to their commencement of kindergarten.

TfNSW will work closely with the Department of Education. The introduction of a Preschool Drive Subsidy will require improvements to the school portal and supporting technology. We are aiming to have the trial up and running before the end of 2021.

A68. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport to supply adequate funding and encourage local councils in rural and remote areas, to prioritise and maintain unsealed roads that are travelled on by families accessing schools and school bus routes.”

Moved by Kate Treweek, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett on behalf of Lightning Ridge/Goodooga.

Carried

Explanation:

Children in the Lightning Ridge and Goodooga region are often required to travel long distances along unsealed roads to access schools and school bus routes. It is recognised by local families that there are risks associated with these trips and it is important that these trips are as safe as possible.

While members are aware of the importance of driving to the conditions, they believe improving the maintenance programs conducted on these access roads will greatly decrease the risks associated with the frequent trips. Without giving priority to roads that families travel on to access schools and school buses, accessing face to face education becomes difficult and dangerous.

While Distance Education is a valuable alternative, many families do not have the time to commit to providing the necessary school room supervision or be in a financial situation to employ a suitable supervisor. For these families, travel on poorly maintained unsealed roads becomes an exhausting daily task for students and parents, impacting on school attendance and classroom performance. Now just wearing my archives hat, I found a letter last week that was sent from ICPA to the Bland Shire and it was for this issue and was dated 1985. That is how long we have been addressing this issue. This is just another example of why we are here.

Comments.

Kathleen Harris, Balranald Branch. We would like to support this motion because it directly involves Balranald as well. We have the same issues in our shire and we are constantly complaining to the shire about poor condition and poor maintenance of our roads, especially on school dedicated roads that some of the families from Clare Public School and other schools' use. Also, coming from and into Balranald the roads are poorly maintained and regardless whether it is a school road or not they tell us that there is no money so we really feel like there needs to be more attention given to these roads so that people aren't having to consider if they can afford to drive their children to school because of the maintenance of their vehicles and damage and fuel or stay at home and do school of the air because, realistically, financially it equals the same amount.

David Butler, State Council. Regarding the maintaining of the shire roads, when we met with Minister Paul Toole, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, he said that there was money available and it's under the Fixing Local Roads funding. You should lobby your local shire about it because he is telling us that there is \$90 million dollars available and they only apply for \$20 million each year so he is suggesting to see your shire and they are meant to maintain the school runs under the Fixing Local Roads Programme.

Lewis Clarke, Executive Director, Customer Systems and Operations. Customer Strategy and Technology. Transport for NSW. Just a further comment to David. It is really for you to try to address this with the local council. As a bit of context, Transport works in concert with local government to provide funding to allow them to maintain their local roads. The Fixing Local Roads Programme is specifically designed to assist local governments with funding for

that and that provides about \$500 million from State Government and about \$191 million from Federal Government for fixing local roads. The first round of this programme provided about \$243 million to improve the local road network for 253 projects across regional NSW. The submissions for Round Two Programme have closed and it is expected that the successful projects under Phase Two will be announced in the next couple of weeks.

Transport for NSW also provides block grant funding for local government which can be used on their road network. This financial year I this area Transport for NSW has provided just over \$2.5 million in block grants to the Walgett Shire Council and about \$1.2 million to Brewarrina Shire Council. In Round One in Fixing Local Roads Walgett received about \$200,000 and Brewarrina received \$5 million for Fixing Local Roads. Both those local government areas have submitted further proposals for Round Two and in addition to those schemes the NSW Government has committed \$5 million under the NSW Fixing Country Roads Programmes towards the upgrades and sealing of Goodooga Road. I think the State Government is providing assistance as is the Federal Government. I really encourage you to work with local council just to make sure that they are clear on where your priorities are as local residents.

Kate Treweek, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. My question was about the funding and it actually relates to that old letter which states that it is State and Commonwealth funding as well. So, I think, certainly address the shires as well again. Certainly, knowing on those figures you just gave, plus Alana and Wendy, we could take this to Federal. I think it has been mentioned at previous Federal Conferences so we will just keep it on the table until we can see our roads improved.

Supplementary Motions

S1. Nyngan

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) in requests to the Federal Government to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children boarding allowance to more closely reflect the real costs of educating isolated students.”

Moved by Jodie Stewart, Nyngan. Seconded by Kate Yabsley, Nyngan.

Carried

Explanation:

Boarding school fees continue to rise at a greater rate than the CPI. The AIC boarding allowance, an equity allowance, needs to be updated constantly to reflect the increasing financial burden being placed on isolated families by the government to educate their children. There is an underlying problem of ongoing erosion of this benefit as an allowance as boarding and tuition fees increase at a greater rate than the allowance. If our government is serious about providing world-best educational opportunities that will equip children with the skills they need, this equity allowance needs to remain equitable, giving rural parents choice in education for their children, equivalent to their city counterparts.

S2. Louth

“That the Department of Education increases the funding for remote preschools’ positions to allow for the purchase of an appropriate vehicle to ensure the position, and school’s ability to function, is sustainable.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

The positions attached to the newly established preschools at Louth and Wanaaring attract funding of \$120,000 each. This is for staff salaries, resources and the running of the facilities. An early childhood teacher is expected to travel to these schools over long distances on gravel roads. The provider, Cobar Far West Family Day Care (CFWFDC) is therefore only able to pay for the educator's time he or she spends travelling. Far West Family Day Care would be able to meet the running costs of the vehicle. Far West Family Day Care has had two applicants for the early childhood educators' job at Louth and Wanaaring. Both queried the travel and withdrew their expression of interest. We have an educator in Louth who could travel to Wanaaring from Louth and therefore service both preschools.

S3. ICPA-NSW

"That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to have a consistent policy for geographically isolated distance education students to have an appropriate interaction with teachers and peers both in person and using video conferencing in both secondary and primary."

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council.

Carried

Explanation:

We have been made aware that, currently, it is an expectation that primary DE students have set satellite time with their teachers and peers, but there is no expectation for the secondary students to have the same as their primary counterparts. To quote Minister Sarah Mitchell during COVID-19, "Every year at school is a critical year. Every child is important and we recognise the importance of the relationships between teachers and students." For DE students having daily interaction and regular in-person catch-ups is so important socially, mentally and for their development. Many of these geographically isolated children often have little or no regular daily interaction with other children. In a recent survey which ICPA-NSW conducted, 66% of participants felt that their child would benefit from an increase in satellite time with their teacher and that survey went across several DE centres within NSW.

Comments.

Ali Allison, Broken Hill. Broken Hill Branch strongly supports this motion and would greatly appreciate the Department of Education reviewing their policy on distance education and satellite lessons interaction time. Currently, on average, a school of the air stage two or three student has a maximum of four hours satellite interaction with their teachers and peers per week. In a thirty-hour school week this is just over ten percent of their school time. Just to put that into context, some students can have up to 325 minutes of set work for a day but only 20 minutes of that is satellite interaction time. We would like the Department of Education to consider whether this is an appropriate interaction time when making decisions and creating consistent policy. We implore the NSW Department of Education to not only create a policy which

stipulates increased satellite interaction time but also support schools and principals with the resources and facilities to implement this policy. For example, allowing teachers to use other platforms to interact with their students from their desks rather than having to use a studio.

S4. Goolgowi

“That ICPA-NSW request the Minister for Education to review the implementation of out-of-zone enrolment policy as it pertains to the enrolment of students who are experiencing bullying in small rural schools.”

Moved by Penny Haddrill, Goolgowi Branch. Seconded by Rob Haddrill, Goolgowi Branch.

Carried

Explanation:

The out-of-zone policy is used by the Department of Education to prevent students from enrolling in schools outside their designated areas. The policy is largely used to manage over-enrolment in urban areas. In rural areas where numbers are not under pressure, the policy prevents students who are experiencing bullying from being able to access an alternative public school education without families moving to a new town. In the case of bullying in small schools, the small numbers in the cohort often prevent the issue from being resolved or effectively managed. In an example from our branch, a child had been bullied to the point where she no longer felt she could attend her zoned school. Despite the efforts of the parents to have the issue addressed at their current school they felt that the only alternative for their child to access education was to move to another school which was accessible from their home but out of their zone. The student was not only denied enrolment to the out-of-zone school but also to School of the Air with the out-of-zone policy used to prevent enrolment. The parents have had to rent a house in the new school zone for their child to be able to attend.

S5. ICPA-NSW

“That ICPA-NSW thanks the Minister of Education and the NSW Department of Education for announcing the upgrade of the dormitories at Yanco Agriculture High School.”

Moved by Monique Watkins, State Council. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council.

Carried by acclamation.

Explanation:

This has been a motion for a number of years and it is pleasing to see this announcement.

S6. ICPA-NSW

“That ICPA-NSW works with Transport for NSW to immediately resolve the inadequacies in the Aria mapping system so that rural and remote preschoolers are eligible for the school drive subsidy.”

Moved by David Butler, State Council. Seconded by Laura Stalley, State Council.

Carried

Explanation:

Many rural and remote preschool children live in vast Local Government areas that have preschools in small towns. These towns under Aria are classified as outer regional, remote and very remote but, in fact, service only rural and remote children. The recommendation by the Federal Government to access 600 hours of preschool in the year before compulsory schooling is making it very costly to families as there is limited access to preschools in outer regional, rural and remote areas. Some parents are driving considerable distances to access this early learning requirement. The ongoing drought and subsequent recovery period are having a huge impact on the affordability to transport children to preschool. It is well documented that access to preschool plays an important role in a child's education. ICPA-NSW views access to preschool as a vital step towards an equitable education and recently surveyed 106 service providers in rural and remote NSW. The response was overwhelmingly positive towards a school drive subsidy for preschool children and ICPA-NSW has published a separate paper on this issue. Two years ago, ICPA-NSW supplied Transport of NSW with data relating to a number of preschoolers in each rural, regional and outer regional LGA. It needs to be noted that on the Aria map some towns are classified as outer regional yet they do service rural, remote and very remote children.

S7. Nyngan

"ICPA-NSW lobbies the Minister for Transport to provide tertiary students with a travel subsidy, similar to the School Drive Subsidy, but providing a subsidy based on the distance from their home to the tertiary institution as a kilometre rate, assisting with travel costs at the start and end of each semester."

Moved by Jodie Stewart, Nyngan. Seconded by Kate Yabsley, Nyngan.

Carried

Explanation:

Dependant tertiary students still live at home with their parents but are required to move away from home during the semester time to access their tertiary education. With limited access to transport links in rural and remote NSW it is an equity issue that these students have access to a travel allowance similar to the School Drive Subsidy, for travel and the beginning and the end of each semester.

Comments.

David Butler, State Council. We put this to Minister Constance three or four years ago and when we suggested it to him, he just said that it seemed pretty simple and shouldn't be too hard to do. Ever since then we have been pushing stuff uphill.

S8. ICPA-NSW

"That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant ministers to ensure that universities providing teacher training include a stand-alone, mandatory unit on Autistic Spectrum Disorders in their curriculum."

Moved by Kellie Turnbull, State Council. Seconded by Laura Stalley, State Council.

Carried

Explanation:

With the alarming rate of increase in the diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) the chance of a newly graduated teacher having a student with ASD in their class is significant, therefore, knowing how to manage this condition with an appropriate level of skill and knowledge in behaviour management strategies for ASD would provide beneficial outcomes for all students in the class. This early training could also lead to a reduction in the high level of early burnout with between 40% to 50% of teachers leaving in their first five years of teaching because they feel that they don't have the skills to deal with the challenges of having children with ASD in their class. Educating teachers at the undergraduate level would be more cost effective than having to provide post graduate training during the first few years of teaching. This could also reduce the amount of time that teachers need to take out of the classroom for professional development. In some rural areas, teachers are unable to take time out for such training because there is a lack of relief teachers available or they are required to travel considerable distance to attend training workshops and this is often not an option for them.

Very little learning happens when children are not engaged. Teachers need the training to recognise when a student's coping skills are not working. They need to recognise the signs and be able to avoid the melt down before it happens. They need to be proactive so that they won't have to be reactive. Dealing in a reactive way when the student has lost the ability to cope creates a stressful situation for everyone. With adequate training a teacher learns to create the environment that will reduce the likelihood of a meltdown. A teacher can learn these things the hard way over many years, but, by then, coupled with the curriculum and extra curricula activities expected of them, they are looking for the door. The cost of the four-year degree is wasted not to mention the toll on the teacher's health. The biggest cost is the damage done to the students, not only those with ASD but also to every child whose education was impeded by a teacher, through no fault of their own, didn't have the necessary skills and support to teach the wide variety of students who are now in every classroom. The reason we have chosen Autistic Spectrum Disorder is because the behaviour issues related to a child's inability to cope with learning, that are displayed as a result of ASD, are very similar to that of children diagnosed with Dyslexia, Asperger's, Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHA), Axis II Personality Disorder (APD) and many others. By training to understand ASD behaviour related issues, a teacher would have a strong grasp of a student's inability to cope regardless of their disability and have the skills to deal with the situation.

S9 Bourke

"That ICPA Bourke Branch host the 2022 Annual State Conference in Bourke on a date to be set by ICPA-NSW State Council."

Moved by Scott Mitchell, Bourke. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke.

Carried by acclamation.

Miscellaneous

A69. Bourke

“That ICPA-NSW lobbies NSW Minister for Health for the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) to be made available for rural and remote students travelling to access face-to-face specialist Allied Health services.”

Moved by Scott Mitchell, Bourke. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council on behalf of Bourke.

Carried

Explanation:

Children with specific education needs and developmental delays require access to appropriate specialist Allied Health services which often require face-to-face consultations. Adequate and uniform assistance should be available to assist geographically isolated, vulnerable and at-risk children accessing face-to-face specialist sessions with expenses such as travel and accommodation when extensive travel is required to attend these consultations.

A70. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW urges the Department of Education to recommend that their remote staff connect with ICPA-NSW as an information source for understanding isolated education processes and difficulties that may be incurred due to remoteness.”

Moved by Kylie Baty, Louth. Seconded by Annabel Strachan, State Council on behalf of Louth.

Carried.

Explanation:

Louth ICPA Branch welcomes knowledge sharing with professional staff and believes that all communities, to which teaching staff come, would always wish to share issues with the aim of working collaboratively towards solutions.

Comments.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I fully support this motion and I know that I have talked to other Council members about how hard it is and often we feel that the school is against you and you are really just trying to help the school and the students. So, I really support this motion because, at the end of the day, the Department of Education works so closely with us and has great regard for us and asks us for our opinions so all we ask is that they pass on to the schools that we are here to help. We are not here to do anything else but help the children and help the schools. It is just vitally important that that message from the Department of Education goes down to the principals and the teachers that we are all here to work together. We are all here for our children. We are not here to name names or push anyone out. We just want to work together to make our children have a better education.

Nerida Healy, Wentworth. I just have a comment regarding this one and a few of the other ones that have cropped up. One of the small schools in our area uses a Department provided survey to their parents at the end of each year and it is an anonymous survey that they send out

to their parents and they gather the feedback on everything that is happening in the year and then the principal got an informed view of how the parents and the families are feeling about the school and how they operate in the community. I'm wondering if the Department adopt this method. At the moment it is up to the principals as to whether they choose to use that service. I'm wondering if the Department adopted this method in the far west, for the Area Directorate to send that out and to assist with the communication between the parents, the community, the principals, the teachers and the Area Directorate so that they all have a better understanding of what is happening in some of these smaller schools. It may just help the Area Directorate to address some of these smaller issues that keep coming up on our motions year after year. Maybe some of these can be addressed through those surveys.

A71. Monaro

"That ICPA-NSW thanks the NSW Minister for Education and NSW Minister for Health for the expansion of the Wellbeing and Health In-reach Nurse (WHIN) program in NSW schools."

Moved by Pam Fletcher, Monaro. Seconded by Tim Fletcher, State council on behalf of Monaro.

Carried

Explanation:

The Wellbeing Health In-reach Nurse (WHIN) is a registered nurse who provides a range of support and coordination of health services with the aim of contributing to improved education, health and wellbeing outcomes for children, young people and families. Tasks undertaken by the WHIN may include identifying and triaging health needs of students and coordinating appropriate assessments and referral pathways into the relevant services. There are currently six positions in NSW with a further 100 positions to be established over the next four years.

A 72. Broken Hill

"That ICPA-NSW lobbies the Department of Education to provide a second computer to all geographically isolated home sites with more than one student enrolled in primary school through the NSW Department of Education via Distance Education."

Moved by Ali Allison, Broken Hill. Seconded by Laura Finch, Broken Hill.

Carried

Explanation:

Many geographically isolated families with two children studying distance education via NSW Department of Education only have access to one computer provided by the Department of Education and Training. As the curriculum requirements continually move towards more online learning, computers have become an absolutely essential piece of equipment that students need to access at nearly all times during the day. As many families only have access to one computer this can be a logistical nightmare trying to ensure access to the computer for both students when they need it. Many families have resorted to using their own home computers and laptops in the school room to be able to ensure that the school day can run more smoothly and the students can complete their work without interruption. We feel that this is not fair on families. It also means that families are having to use their own home internet as nearly all learning requires internet access. This in itself is an issue as geographically isolated families

may not have access to the most reliable internet and they are limited to how much data they can use. It also means that families don't have free access to that laptop during school hours as the student will be using it. This can cause difficulties especially if the laptop is used to run the family business. We feel that this is an unacceptable situation. All students have the right to access equal education opportunities and public education should not be exclusionary. Therefore, each child should be provided with their own computer to be able to complete their work with no interruptions. Families who access a public education should not have to use their own computers and internet to ensure that their children have this equal access. Their geographical isolation should not place inconveniences on their daily lives.

Comments.

Pip Ryan, Hay Branch. I support this motion wholeheartedly. I think it is really important, particularly nowadays, that every student in the school room has their own computer.

Laura Stalley, State Council. This is definitely something that we have been taking to the Department. For the last two years it has definitely been a motion and we do continue to take it to the Department and we will continue to push for this.

Floor Motion

F1. Hillston

"That ICPA-NSW supports local farming families in the Western Division to oppose the release of the gas exploration area."

Conference permission was granted for this motion to be presented and discussed.

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council on behalf of Hillston. Seconded by Laura Finch, Broken Hill on behalf of Hillston.

Lost.

Explanation:

We feel that the proposed gas exploration area in the Western Division of NSW will have a negative impact on the family farm. There are several factors, some including border security, livestock disruption and health which will ultimately affect the business's viability. Some of the factors that we worry about are our children and mental health, education, no opportunities, and the continuation of the family farm. Children and young people in drought ravaged NSW have told UNICEF Australia that the natural disaster has meant that they have had to prematurely grow up, facing difficulties in balancing increased workloads with their education as well as experiencing escalating levels of stress and adverse psychological outcomes. We are worried that, if the gas exploration affects the wellbeing of the parents and the viability of the family farm this will, once again, affect the wellbeing of our children and the next generation of the Western Division. We are a productive area within Australia providing meat, fibre, fruit and vegetables and we need to protect and sustain the area so that the next generation can continue the legacy of the past.

Comments.

Kathleen Harris, Balranald. We are pleased to support this motion as it is widespread in the Western Division and it is going to negatively impact our future viability on these farms, especially for our kids.

Lindy Kitto, NSW/Vic Lone Members. I feel that, while this is a very valid thing to be discussing, I think it is something that should be left to NSW Farmers, the CWA or other like organisations. I don't think it is actually appropriate for education and the ICPA.

Pip Ryan, Hay. I'm against this motion. I think that the ICPA lobbying time need to be prioritised to educational matters. I think your time with politicians is precious and I don't think that this is a priority. I think that there are other higher priorities that we have heard of over the last two days.

Scott Mitchell, Bourke. As much as I think it would be good if ICPA supported those people who are against the gas exploration I think it best to let them go on and fight their fight. It is not an ICPA matter.

Kate Treweek, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga. It certainly is a valid point in issue but, as we have just heard, it has not the educational aspect that we are looking for and just looking at the Constitution to be correct, it doesn't come under the objects of our organisation. So, as Lindy suggested, CWA, National Farmers would be the best avenues.

Dennis Kitto, NSW/Vic Lone Members. I've never been up to speak to one of these things but I've been to a lot of these conferences because my good wife has been to a lot of ICPA occasions so I have a fair background in these matters. This is not for ICPA. Don't put yourself in this position. You are here for the ICPA – the isolated children and parents. Don't go near farmers. This association is for the children's education. Stick to your last. Do what you do very, very well and I honour you for it but don't go near something that doesn't really involve you. Do it as a private citizen but not under the ICPA banner.

David Cameron, Observer, NSW Life Member. We live around the coal seam gas area that Santos has in the Pilliga. I'm speaking against the motion and the reason being is that what has happened in the last five years where we live has divided the community. It has divided the politicians. It has divided the local government. What happens when you divide a community? They are not united and sometimes if you divide a politician away, then when you come with an education issue the response is that ICPA has joined the coal seam gas exploration fight and that takes the heat away. If you're just concentrating on educational issues then you have got more chance of having everybody on board and trying to find a solution than if you get into something divisive. I understand from the movers of that motion, I understand what they are getting at but I think we just leave it, like Dennis has said, to other organisations that are better equipped for this sort of thing. ICPA is overloaded as it is and I think we need to stick to the education of our children.

Shennah Joiner, State Council. I would like to say that I think we all have empathy for the situation but I think we need to draw on what David said and work with our commonality and that commonality is the education of our children. I think that this does not affect all of us and I think we need to focus our energy on the commonalities we have in this room and the forum for this situation is, as discussed, NSW Farmers, CWA and not ICPA, but I do have empathy for their situation.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I really appreciate everyone's feedback and understand that ICPA is about children's education but I do also feel that a lot of isolated children and parents are farmers and if you look at the area that they are looking to go into, we don't know if it is

going to be five years, ten years, we don't know when it is going to come into play and we don't even know what they are going to do. The area you are looking at is a lot of these distance education families and we do it hard already. Whatever they choose to do and it affects our water then we are gone from that area. You have lost it and will possibly have to move away from country areas and lose the areas we love, our farms we love and I do appreciate everyone's comments and thoughts but I'm not asking that we lobby even. I'm not asking that we go in but that we support the other organisation and just say that we back these farmers. We want them to stay in our area. We don't want the health of these children, the next generation, to go off their farms. To be affected. We want them to still have access to their education. If we lose income because of what happens well then how are we supposed to afford to send our children off. All I'm saying is that we don't know what is going to happen. We don't know when it is going to happen. But if it does, we don't want to leave the area and I take whatever. If we don't support it that's fine because that is what ICPA is about. We are here to vote and we are all allowed our own opinion and I appreciate that so, I just want you to think about the children and these farming families. What if it was your area? I'm sure there are other people in here that have had this and we don't want to divide our community because we are an amazing community. We're strong and we do get through.

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MINUTES

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES INCORPORATED

Convened at Griffith on Saturday, 6th February 2021

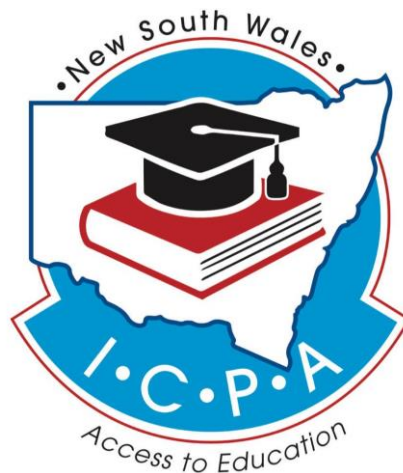
If attending: Quest Apartments Conference room,

Griffith NSW

Or VIA Zoom

Zoom Link:

<https://zoom.us/j/95587665942>



Claire Butler
President

Deborah Castle
Secretary

Welcome and opening of meeting.

Claire Butler, President

Welcome to the AGM of the ICPA-NSW, 2021. As you are all aware, the reason we are holding this AGM separate to conference is due to the need to ratify the proposed amendments in the Constitution. Most pertinent is to ensure that we can, if the situation requires, hold voting by electronic means which means, in the event of a change in the COVID situation, we can easily switch to an online Conference. It is hoped that we will not need to do this, however, it is important that we have this restriction fixed in the Constitution. Hay Conference is scheduled for March 10th and 11th and on behalf of ICPA-NSW I thank the Hay convening committee for organising a COVID safe gathering where we can all enjoy each other's company face to face. State Council has managed to convene many meetings throughout the year via ZOOM and we have stayed in close contact with the Department of Education and consulted with them on the recently announced Rural and Remote Strategy. State Council has submitted four submissions into Parliamentary inquiries on health, two education submissions and one on tertiary and we have given evidence at these enquiries on behalf of our members. State Council also sat on numerous advisory boards and our annual deputation consisted of us all converging on Dubbo where we split into groups and had over thirty ZOOM meetings with Ministers, Members of Parliament, stake holders, officials and our Patron, the Governor of NSW, Her Excellency Margaret Beasley. We welcomed onto State Council, Bree Wakefield halfway through the year as a co-opted member to assist with border issues. We had a very challenging year lobbying the Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and NSW Governments to ensure access to education with the children, both day and boarding students and I would like to state for the record that it has been sent to me on numerous occasions, that, if it was not for ICPA where would the children be? So, I would like to acknowledge Federal Council and all of the State Council bodies who collaborated together. So, from 1971 until now that trust and that reputation certainly assisted us when we needed it the most. I would like to thank all the State Councillors for their hard work and commitment this year. The voluntary work involved is a huge undertaking but, as the old saying goes, "Team makes the dream work." There has been much achieved this year which will be showcased in greater detail at Conference on March 10th and 11th in Hay. Thank you to all the Branches for all your work this year. It is greatly appreciated and we hope to see many of you at conference in Hay. I will now hand over to State Secretary, Deb Castle, for continuation of the meeting.

Good afternoon everyone, my name is Deb Castle I am the Secretary of ICPA-NSW. Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW, 6th February 2021.

Attendance in the Room:

Claire Butler
Deb Castle
Shennah joiner
David Butler
Libby McPhee
Gabby LeLievre
Irene Lund
Tim Fletcher
Anabel Strachan
Monique Watkins

Attendance via Zoom:

Kate Warby
Alana Moller

Bree Wakefield
Laura Stally
Tanya Mitchell
Kerrie Johnston
Sue Kingwill
Kate Treweek

Pam Fletcher
Jim Strachan
Scot Mitchell
Craig McPhee

Apologies:

Kelly Turnbull
Debra Nielsen
David Shrimpton
Jenny Shrimpton
Ellen Walker
Senator Perin Davey
Nicole Piper
Helen Rogers
Helen Dalton
Lindy Kitto
Sue Gordon
Jane O'Brien
Alison Glenn
Pip Ryan

Terese Davies
Libby Clarke
Annette White
Joyce Holburn
Jodie Stewart
Kate Yabsley
Toby Allworth
Cala Armitage
Heather Wigam-Reid
Heather Langfield
Sandra Hewit
Bruce Paynter
Katie Davies

Motion 00.02.21 *"That the apologies received be accepted."*

Moved: Deb Castle

Seconded: Irene Lund

Carried

Claire Butler, President

Just before we go on to the adoption of the minutes, we do have two online participants, Alana Moller, the Federal President and Kate Warby from the Moree Branch and to reiterate, we cannot have any voting online but you are more than welcome to make a comment. If you do have a comment, please state your name and Branch just for the record.

Adoption of the Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting:

Motion 01.02.21 *"That the minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting as circulated electronically be accepted as a true and accurate record."*

Moved: Libby McPhee

Seconded: David Butler

Carried

Business arising from the Minutes: Nil

Correspondence: Nil

Secretary Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present my Secretary's Report.

I have found this year challenging, as I suspect others have. I would have predicted that this pandemic would have been long over by now but here we are looking to amend our constitution to enable us to have future conferences using a different platform with voting options. I am looking forward to my first conference in Hay as Secretary as last years was sadly cancelled.

State Council have had another busy year advocating for equity of access to education on behalf of rural, remote and very remote families. We needed to adjust to a different format, we have had lots of zoom meetings, phone calls and letter writing this year. Main deputation looked a little different with us all being able to converge on Dubbo and conduct our meetings via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Ironically, it was the Stakeholders and ministers that had trouble with the technology and connectivity during our meetings. We have still been able to conduct face-to-face council meetings with social distancing this year, enabling us to continue to advocate on behalf of you all. With the use of technology being used so much this year, we even convinced Irene to get Facebook and messenger on her new phone!

Main deputation was held in October with a busy schedule planned over the four days. State Councillors split into groups and attended 33 meetings. Meetings were held with The Governor of NSW, Deputy Premiers Office, Ministers Taylor, Mitchell, Toole and Hazzard, Shadow Ministers Veitch, Car, Washington and Harrison, Member for Barwon, Royal Far West, NESSA, ACCAN, BCEF, CCSP, Telstra, Transport for NSW, Bus NSW, Australian Independent Schools, Local Government NSW, UAC, DPI, CCSA, CONTACT, Open Support/Country care link and the NSW Department of Education. This is a very useful way of getting issues most affecting our members heard at both a parliamentary level and to key educational stakeholders.

It is appreciated that these organisations make the time to meet with ICPA-NSW to listen to concerns and State Council look forward to further associations with them in the future.

Some of the main issues ICPA-NSW discussed were focused on border closures, boarding students and COVID, counselling, telehealth, distance education, travel, and communications. Many issues raised in Dubbo were brought to the ICPA state council at previous conferences as we had no conference in Moree to present motions. State council portfolio holders liaised with Branches to ensure new motions could still be raised as 'relevant issues' for that branch. It is important that issues be brought to State Council so that they can then be researched and followed up on. In saying that, issues do not have to be carried at a Conference to be raised at State Council. ICPA-NSW Councillors are available all year round to listen and advocate on behalf of its members, as was demonstrated throughout the year with COVID issues.

Some of the feedback from our meetings was that these organisations and parliamentarians see our organisation as a great source of information for them as this helps with their decision making and strength in services, they can deliver to you as members.

I would like to finish with a quote from Brian Tracy, “There are no limits to what you can accomplish, except the limits you place on your own thinking”.

Deborah Castle
ICPA-NSW Secretary

Motion 02.02.21 *“That the Secretary’s Report be accepted.”*

Moved: Deb Castle **Seconded:** Shennah Joiner **Carried**

Shennah Joiner, Treasurer

The Treasurer explained that the Auditor’s Report was not available until last night due to the AGM being brought forward and so apologized that the Financials were not available to all members in time for the AGM but will be available after the AGM.

Treasurer’s Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Treasurer’s Report for the 2020 Financial Year.

These audited financial statements, with accompanying auditor’s report, have been prepared by Kellie Nulty, Accountant in Mildura.

Statement of Income and Expenditure

There are several points of interest in this year’s figures when compared to last year’s;

- **Memberships:** The amount of \$11,573 is the total of all branch membership payments forwarded to ICPA-NSW in the 2020 year. Additional Membership income was received through the online PayPal payment method.
- **Donations:** Included in this amount are Branch Donations and a donation from Emerging Minds.
- **Government Grants:** The Educational Support Grant (ESG) for the 2020/21 financial year was received in October. The Educational Support Grant program is currently under review and we hope to have an indication of the continuance of this program shortly.
- **Funds Held in Trust:** \$2908.39 is being held in trust by ICPA-NSW for Cobar Branch and an additional \$4985.04 is being held in trust by Lone Members for Warrumbungle Branch. These funds will be absorbed by State Council if the branches do not reform within five years of going into recess. This occurs in 2022 for both branches.
- **Income:** Overall Income for the 2020 financial year was \$162,610. This amount is significantly higher than 2019 due to the incorporation of the ICPA-NSW Conference Account within the ICPA-NSW account list. This decision was made following the cancellation of the Moree 2020 Conference to aid in the ease of refunds which were completed by State Council.
- An additional category of Advertising / Promotional has been applied this year to account for the promotional calendars and Christmas Cards that were sent to members

and stakeholders. This was a new initiative to try to increase the visibility of ICPA-NSW within the homes and offices of our members and interested parties.

Due to the lack of events in 2020, there have been no Merchandise Sales.

Expenditure: Overall expenditure for the 2020 year was \$109,171. This expenditure is also significantly higher than 2019 due to the incorporation of the ICPA-NSW Conference Account and the subsequent Conference Registration Refunds following the cancellation of the Moree 2020 Conference.

Within the spending was an increase in Computer Expenses. Due to the reliance on virtual meetings, ICPA-NSW purchased additional computers for councillors and engaged the services of a computer technician to install and set up the software required to optimize these devices. Subscriptions to both Zoom and Dropbox have also been purchased to enable virtual meeting.

Top Wire Costs have remained largely stable, both for the printing and postage. We have again had great success with the advertising in Top Wire with \$6750 being received for the 2020 year.

State Council's overall expenses were lower this year with many meetings attended via video link and teleconference instead of face to face. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, State Councillors have been given the option of single accommodation during this time to reduce the risk of exposure and this has increased the costs at the meetings that have been held physically. The result for the 2020 financial year is a profit of \$53,439. This increase is largely due to the Conference Account balance.

Assets and Liabilities Statement

The overall equity position of ICPA-NSW for 2020 is as follows:

- Assets: The Unexpended Donation Account has not been utilised this financial year, the balance remains unchanged.
- Plant & Equipment: Five additional Computers were purchased during 2020.

Merchandise

ICPA-NSW merchandise has not recorded any sales 2020 year. This has been a difficult year for Merchandise sales due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. Many thanks to David Shrimpton for continuing to hold the stock items.

Lone Members

Irene Lund has once again shown great passion and commitment in her role as Lone Members Officer. Lone Members ended the 2020 year with 126 memberships. Irene has additionally held the role of Membership officer and her assistance is invaluable.

Sponsorship

ICPA-NSW is very appreciative of the continued support of Telstra through a community partnership agreement. We would like to also thank the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) for their generous grant towards the Moree 2020 conference. Despite the cancellation of this conference, FRR have kindly allowed unspent funds to be rolled over to the Hay 2021 Conference. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our sponsors, both major, and the just as valuable smaller contributors, your generosity helps make our conferences affordable for all members.

Membership

At the end of the 2020 membership year, ICPA-NSW had 25 financial branches (not including Lone Members), and five branches in recess.

Membership numbers for 2020 are slightly higher than 2019 at 847. The 2021 membership subs are coming in slowly, and I thank all members and Branch Treasurers for acting on their renewals. I would like to encourage members to use the online portal when paying your membership subs. This option reduces the workload of the Branch Treasurer and ensures your payment is received promptly. Please consider holding your AGM in October or early November so you can set your branch fees and get your memberships in by the due date. This has been problematic this year.

I would like to acknowledge our Auditor, Kellie Nulty. Unfortunately, Kellie has indicated that she will not be performing Audits moving forward and as such, we are seeking a replacement. Kellie instigated the move to QuickBooks and has been of great assistance during my time as treasurer. I wish Kellie all the best.

To my fellow State Councillors, a very big thank you, we have overcome some rather large obstacles this year and if anything, we are stronger and more determined. In conclusion, I would like to thank all Branch Treasurers for their patience and support. Whilst many of the Branch Treasurers remain unchanged from last year, there are also a few new faces. Please take the time to introduce yourselves if you are at the Hay 2021 Conference.

I hereby request that this report and the audited financial statements be accepted. I also recommend that the state component of a Branch Family membership remain at \$18.00 for the 2022 membership year.

Shennah Joiner.
Treasurer.

Motion 03.02.21 *“That the 2020 audited financial statement of ICPA-NSW Inc. and the accompanying Treasurer’s Report be accepted.”*

Moved: Shennah Joiner

Seconded: Deb Castle

Carried

Comment:

Irene Lund, State Council. I just wanted to say thank you for the immense job that Shennah has done. She is always on the ball and she is always prompt and accurate.

Motion 04.03.20 *“That ICPA-NSW appoints a new auditor and notifies members of this appointment once finalised”*

Moved: Shennah Joiner

Seconded: Irene Lund

Carried

Motion 05.02.21 *“That family membership of ICPA-NSW remain at \$18.00 for the 2021 Membership year.”*

Moved: Shennah Joiner

Seconded: Irene Lund

Carried

Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc
ABN 68 132 394 867

Financial Statements
For The Year Ended 31 December 2020

Income Statement

Balance Sheet

Notes to and Forming Part of the Financial Statements

Committee Statement

Independent Audit Report

ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC
ABN 68 132 394 867
INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
INCOME		
Sales of Merchandise		717
Memberships	11,573	15,795
Conference Registrations	31,290	-
Paypal	15,651	17,392
Donations	1,409	15,186
Government Grants	95,247	55,455
Sundry Income	631	5,804
Advertising	6,750	5,977
Interest Received	59	242
	162,610	116,568
EXPENDITURE		
Advertising/Promotional	2,196	-
Audit & Accounting Fees	1,341	1,500
Bank Charges	222	174
Branch Fee	3,717	7,228
Brochures & Badges	354	134
Computer Costs	3,983	863
State Conference Expenses	50,015	7,588
Meeting Expenses	22,028	34,661
Federal Conference Expenses	-	5,465
Federal Membership	6,460	10,164
Government Charges	83	97
Depreciation	1,684	609
Donations	708	605
Insurance	1,539	1,476
Merchandise Purchases	206	233
Newsletter	11,997	12,400
Postage	256	3,079
Printing & Stationery	52	305
Subscriptions	302	457
Sundry Expenses	2,028	717
Telephone & Internet	-	120
	109,171	87,875
Net Profit/(Loss)	53,439	28,693

The accompanying notes form part of the financial statements.

ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC
ABN 68 132 394 867
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECMEBER 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash on Hand	-	20
NAB Cash Management Account	89,021	48,756
NAB Cheque Account	64,696	88,971
NAB Merchandise Account	4,456	4,456
Westpac Lone Members Account	26,304	24,427
Unexpended Donation Account	9,494	9,494
Conference Account	33,654	-
Paypal	5,168	3,840
Opal Cards	399	399
Accounts Receivable	910	-
Stock on Hand	5,325	5,325
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	<u>239,427</u>	<u>185,688</u>
NON CURRENT ASSETS		
Plant & Equipment	17,583	13,285
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(14,360)	(12,676)
TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSETS	<u>3,223</u>	<u>609</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>242,650</u>	<u>186,297</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
NAB Business Credit Card	955	18
GST Control	3,916	3,816
Income in Advance	-	-
Lone Members Trust	26,304	24,427
Unexpended Donation	9,494	9,494
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	<u>40,669</u>	<u>37,755</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES	<u>40,669</u>	<u>37,755</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>201,981</u>	<u>148,542</u>
MEMBERS' FUNDS		
Opening Balance	148,542	119,849
Profit/(Loss) for the year	53,439	28,693
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS	<u>201,981</u>	<u>148,542</u>

The accompanying notes form part of the financial statements.

ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC
ABN 68 132 394 867
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

Note 1: Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

These financial statements are special purpose financial statements prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the members and Associations Incorporations Act NSW. The Committee has determined that the organisation is not a reporting entity.

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historic costs and does not take into account changing money values or, except where specifically stated, current valuations of non-current assets.

The following significant accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless otherwise stated, have been adopted in the preparation of these financial statements.

- a. Cash and Cash Equivalents**
Cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.
- b. Revenue and Other Income**
All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST).

Grant and donation income is recognised when the entity obtained over the funds, which is generally at the time of receipt.
- c. Goods and Services Tax (GST)**
Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Tax Office. In these circumstances the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of an item of the expense. Receivables and payables in the balance sheet are shown inclusive of GST.
- d. Plant & Equipment**
Plant & equipment is carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

The depreciable amount of all plant & equipment is depreciated over the useful lives of the assets to the association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use.

Note 2: Related Parties

The names of the Committee members who have held office during the period are:

Claire Butler - President	Gabrielle Le Lievre - Publicity Officer
David Butler - Vice President	Kerrie Johnston - Top Wire Editor
Libby McPhee - Vice President	David Shrimpton - ICPA Merchandise
Deborah Castle - Secretary	Annabel Strachan
Kellie Turnbull - Assistant Secretary	Tanya Mitchell
Shannah Joiner - Treasurer	Tim Fletcher
Irene Lund - Lone Members Officer	Deborah Nielsen
Monique Watkin	Laura Stalley

Transactions between related parties are on normal commercial terms and conditions no more favourable than those available to other parties.

ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC
ABN 68 132 394 867
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

Note 3: Contingent Liabilities

At 31 December 2020 the Committee is unaware of any liability, contingent or otherwise, which has not already been recorded elsewhere in these financial statements.

Note 4: Capital Commitments

At 31 December 2020 the Committee is unaware of any capital commitments, which has not already been recorded elsewhere in these financial statements.

Note 5: Events Occurring After Reporting Date

Since the date of these financial statements, there have been no events occurring after reporting date which require specific disclosure.

ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC
ABN 68 132 394 867
STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee has determined that the Association is not a reporting entity and that these special purpose financial statements should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the Committee the financial statements:

1. Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc as at 31 December 2020 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:

.....
Claire Butler, President

.....
Shennah Joiner, Treasurer

Dated this 3rd day of February 2021

General Business

Revised Constitution.

Deb Castle, Secretary. The revised constitution including the original Constitution, the one with the proposed edit and then the revised Constitution including edits has been circulated throughout our branches and members and moved the following motion.

Motion 06.02.21 *“That the Constitution for the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of New South Wales, Incorporated be adopted, as circulated to members in the required time frame.”*

Moved: Deb Castle

Seconded: Shennah Joiner

Carried

Motion 07.02.21 *“That Motion 04.03.20 be amended to Motion 04.03.21.”*

Moved: Shennah Joiner

Seconded: Irene Lund

Carried

There was no further General Business.

Merchandise Report

Presented by Deb Castle on behalf of David Shrimpton

Due to the cancellation of ICPA conferences in 2020, there have been no sales of merchandise.

Prior to the 2020 state conference, stock was purchased so that all sizes would be available for purchase. Following the cancelled Moree Conference, I received a consignment of calico bags that had been produced for the event which will be used as carry bags for stock when sold.

I plan to attend the 2021 NSW State Conference in Hay and the 2021 Federal Conference in Longreach with merchandise. The merchandise stand will be well stocked, with all sizes of polos and shirts available. Please visit the stand and show you belong to ICPA by purchasing and wearing with pride the merchandise.

David Shrimpton

Merchandise Manager

NSW Membership Officer Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the NSW Membership Officer's Report.

- At the end of 2020 ICPA-NSW had 847 financial members which number includes 89 new members. At the end of 2019 we had 834 financial members
 - Branches are informed of any new or renewing members who have used the online portal.
 - New Member Welcome Packs are mailed to new members and changing school contact people within a short time frame of joining.
 - We have an occasional new member who nominates one of the branches in recess. Anyone nominating one of these branches is looked after by NSW/Vic Lone members and an email sent to the new member explaining why and given the opportunity to perhaps choose another branch.
 - Address labels for the Top Wire were printed and mailed to Kerrie Johnston.
- Thank you to everyone for their help and support and particularly to the hard-working branch treasurers. Please don't hesitate to ask any questions if you need information.

Irene Lund
NSW Membership Officer

Lone Members Report

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

NSW/Vic Lone Members is the one of the biggest group of members within ICPA-NSW. Lone Members are usually members who live too far from a branch to attend meetings and may be involved in educating isolated children or interested in supporting those who do. A number of Boarding Schools in NSW and Victoria also hold membership as many of their boarders come from regional and remote areas and the schools wish to support the aims of ICPA.

With Covid-19 causing events such as Boarding Schools Expos to be cancelled, there was very little in person contact with members but we continued to be in touch via regular newsletters. We had an influx in numbers in the second half of the year with many new Lone Members who had been impacted by the border closures. ICPA-NSW was able to help many of them resolve issues over movement of students to and from interstate boarding schools.

At the end of 2020 we had a total of 72 family members and 54 school/organisation members.

It is always a pleasure to talk with a Lone Member, either by email or by phone. It is also a great privilege to be on State Council and count everyone as special friends. Thank you to all the Council members who have given me so much advice, help and encouragement during 2020 and in previous years and one day I'll get onto Messenger.

Irene Lund
Lone Members Officer

Top Wire Report

Madam President, Distinguished Guests and fellow members of ICPA. It is with great pleasure I present to you the Top Wire report for 2021.

As I looked over each of the four editions of the Top Wire magazine published throughout 2020 in putting together this report, it is clear that, despite all the challenges associated with Covid-19, ICPA-NSW has been consistent with lobbying the powers that be regarding the issues around an equitable access to education for rural and remote families.

Thank You to those branches who have contributed articles and photos to the Around the Waratah section in the Top Wire. We continue to love to read of all that is happening in the lives of members and branches around the state. I challenge all the branches out there in NSW – that's 31 branches - to contribute just one article each year to the Top Wire. Now wouldn't that make for some great reading?

Thank You to the schools who have supported ICPA-NSW again with advertising in the Scholarships & Bursaries section of the November edition as well as the quarterly contributions to the School Directory published in each edition of the Top Wire. Of course, we welcome more schools on board whilst reaching a diverse demographics of rural and remote families.

Once again – a MASSIVE thank you to our Rankins Springs branch members for coming together, often at a moment's notice, to collect the Top Wire from the printers and then to stick, tape and bag each Top Wire magazine in readiness for posting to you all. Sometimes we may be gathered few in number, but mostly we have around 10 people resulting in getting the job done in about one and a half to two hours. The Rankins Springs branch members manage to fit in this exercise amongst the busy-ness of life whether it be on the way home from town, coming in from the sheep yards covered in dirt, dust and grime, picking up the kids from school or leaving our harvest duties – the Top Wire packaging must go on and indeed it does! So, thank you, to each and every one of you that ensures ICPA-NSW members are kept up to date with all things ICPA.

Kerrie Johnston

Top Wire Editor

Publicity/Webmaster Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen it is with great pleasure that I present the Publicity/Webmaster report for 2021.

2020 State Conference

Unfortunately, the first casualty of the COVID epidemic for ICPA-NSW was the 2020 conference which was to be held in Moree. Due to constitutional restrictions, we were unable

to hold any form of online conference and this then started a year of firsts for our team. The Annual General Meeting was held via teleconference and as I had already made the decision a few days prior to conference to attend remotely due to the escalating situation with COVID, I loaded Facebook posts and did what I could to assist Council from afar. My fellow councillors became my roving reporters providing me with photos from Moree.

Facebook

In the year when social media has become ever more of a source of information for us as a population worldwide Facebook has been such an important information channel for our branches and state council to utilise. As we all are continuing to evolve in our changing world that has been 2020, Facebook has been a tool that we have used to pass information to the majority of our members on a regular basis.

Top Wire and Pedals

A great deal of appreciation needs to be afforded to the amazing Editors of these magazines for the amazing job they do in bringing these together for us to read. Both Kerrie at Top Wire for NSW and Raelene at Pedals for Federal do many hours in the preparation process that we never see. During the year I have supported both publications with articles and photos.

Main Deputation

Another first for NSW state council in that we gathered in Dubbo as a council and had majority of our meetings via zoom. Our contingent in Dubbo consisted of President, Claire Butler; Secretary, Deb Castle; Assistant Secretary, Kellie Turnbull; Vice Presidents, Libby McPhee and David Butler; Treasurer, Shennah Joiner; myself, and fellow Councillors, Irene Lund; Annabel Strachan; Tanya Mitchel; Tim Fletcher; Bree Wakefield; and Monique Watkin with Councillors Deborah Nielsen and Laura Stalley joining in for various meetings from home via ZOOM.

Over the course of the few days in Dubbo State Council divided into different meeting rooms for our meetings with various Ministers, Members of Parliament, Shadow Ministers and senior advisors and various industry. Among the topics discussed were conversations on #nobordersforboarders, drought and long term recovery, small rural school transport, School Drive Subsidy for preschoolers and tertiary students, better access to technology, preschool needs in various small rural schools, tertiary travel allowance, telehealth and connectivity, Mobile Black Spot program, local road conditions, Child Care Subsidy, NBN SkyMuster, access to counselling for rural and remote schools, second year Visa criteria to allow governesses to assist Distance Education, NSW Curriculum, graduate teachers, establishment of government girls boarding schools and provision of vehicles for very remote schools.

Although it looked a lot different than usual our deputation this year was no less hectic or successful. It was also a chance for our state council to actually be face to face after months of only ZOOM meetings.

New Logo

The Deputation was also an opportunity to unveil the new logo for ICPA-NSW. The logo is very user friendly and branches are encouraged to use it with all their correspondence. State Council is also in the process of updating our brochures and banners to a more modern, concise

format to assist in the promotion of our association and incorporating portfolios from Preschool through to Tertiary.

Other Media

During the year ICPA-NSW has been once again well supported by various media and as a result we were able to be heard on pressing issues via various media both print and radio.

I can say with certainty that 2020 was the year that no one saw coming and with it has brought a wave of issues that State Council has had to navigate. With the emergence of COVID-19 in 2020, the issues surrounding border closures and interstate borders became a focus for ICPA-NSW with the still continuing #nobordersforboarders. We gathered photos & footage from our boarding families and started the campaign to allow boarding school students to have two-way access to home and their respective boarding schools out of State without having to quarantine. As a result of many hours of hard work and tenacity from ICPA-NSW State Council exemptions were awarded to affected students followed by directives implemented by state governments highlighting the need for boarders to be allowed such access from school to home and back again without the need for quarantine. Unfortunately, this cross-border issue continues into 2021 and with previous arrangements being revoked it just further highlights a need for a permanent, concise, coordinated and consistent solution for the families and students affected by this.

This year saw the launch by ICPA (Aust) Federal Council of the Geographically Isolated Distance Education Day on 1st December. Such an awesome initiative by their team with the day recognising and honouring the ongoing plight of the geographically isolated families who must educate their children at home.

ICPA Australia Federal President Alana Moller said “Geographically isolated distance educated families, often across generations, have dedicated themselves to educating their children at home. This needs to be recognised and lauded”. The Geographically Isolated Distance Education Day is a day to honour those in distance education classrooms across remote Australia and their ongoing commitment and resilience.

Phil Jackson said “*The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team*”. I am incredibly proud of our team, NSW-ICPA State Council and the achievements we have made in spite of what 2020 threw in our direction. Led by our amazing President, Claire Butler, it has been a hectic year for all. They say “Team work makes the dream work”. Well, we certainly have an awesome team.

ICPA-NSW continues to strive to provide a strong voice advocating for our rural and remote families driven by passion, tenacity, pride and a want to make a difference for our members.

Gabie Le Lievre

Publicity Officer/Webmaster

Election of Office Bearers

All positions were declared vacant and Susan Kingwill, the Returning Officer took the Chair for the elections.

Susan Kingwill, Returning Officer

It's wonderful to be together again and I have to say that before we start and I am sure you also share that feeling simply as a Council to have the ability to be face to face and sharing each other's time and company and achieving all the things that ICPA-NSW does so well. Humbly, I will have to say that I have heard consistently about the strong and wonderful team and I have to say from hearing your words in your reports it is an exceptionally strong team and I congratulate each and every one of you on Council for your efforts during the year in what you have managed to do. I'm not surprised but I think it should be acknowledged that you have done an exceptional job in challenging times. As Claire has said, all positions are duly declared vacant for the AGM of the State Council of NSW. I've received all the nominations for all the various positions including the Trustees roles and I can attest they have been duly signed and moved and seconded appropriately and I have had confirmation that all are financial members.

I declare that there are nominations for all the positions which is a true sign of people feeling confident and wanting to be a part of such a great organisation.

To start I'd like to talk about the Trustees. Within your framework there are three Trustees positions and they remain as Trustees for a three-year tenure and they may renominate after three years.

Your Trustees to date have been Joan Treweek, Anne Milliken and Lindy Kitto and Anne Milliken's three-year tenure is coming to a conclusion but she wishes to renominate this year for another three-year tenure.

Election of Trustee for 2021 three-year tenure:

Anne Milliken

Nominated by: Deb Castle

Seconded by: Libby McPhee

Carried

Trustees for 2021

Anne Milliken

Lindy Kitto

Joan Treweek

Election of Officer Bearers and Committee Members for the State Council of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales Incorporated.

President: Claire Butler nominated by Jamie Fitzgerald. Seconded by Deb Castle

Vice Presidents: (two) **David Butler** nominated by Libby Mcphee. Seconded by Deb Castle

Libby Mcphee nominated by Shennah Joiner. Seconded by Deborah Castle

Secretary: Deb Castle nominated by Kerrie Johnston. Seconded by Shennah Joiner

Treasurer: Shennah Joiner nominated by Irene Lund. Seconded by Deborah Castle

Assistant Secretary: Kate Warby nominated by Simone Cameron. Seconded by Irene Lund

Lone Members Officer: Irene Lund nominated by Shennah Joiner. Seconded by Claire Butler

Publicity Officer: Gabie Le Lievre nominated by Shennah Joiner. Seconded by Claire Butler

Election of Committee (six)

Tanya Mitchell nominated by Prue Ritchie. Seconded by Deborah Castle

Bree Wakefield nominated by Claire Butler. Seconded by Laura Stalley

Annabel Strachan nominated by Monique Watkin. Seconded by Deb Castle

Monique Watkin nominated by Deborah Castle. Seconded by Shennah Joiner

Tim Fletcher nominated by Pamela Fletcher. Seconded by Bernadette Moser

Laura Stalley nominated by Lois Stalley. Seconded by Shennah Joiner

That concludes all the nominations I have in hand so I think by acclamation I would like to congratulate everyone and say well done and have a great year ahead. Acclamation.

I would like to acknowledge Kate Treweeke as the Archivist. Thank you, Kate.

Claire Butler, President.

Thank you, Sue, for being our very trusted Returning Officer and congratulations to everybody who has been elected onto State Council. We hope to have a great year ahead of us with a few more challenges I suspect as well. We welcome Kate Warby onto State Council and I would like to make special mention to Kelly Turnbull who has stepped off State Council and thank her for all her hard work as well.

Kate Warby, Assistant Secretary

Thank you everyone and I am looking forward to the next twelve months. Hopefully we don't have the challenges of 2020 but if we do, we're ready to fight them head on.

Alana Moller, President, ICPA(Aust)

From up here in sunny Queensland I just want to congratulate all of the NSW State Council on what you've achieved in what has been an incredibly difficult and challenging year. Congratulations Claire. You've been an absolute gem and a treasure and that needs to be recognised. Congratulations on being re-elected and all those elected to State Council, on behalf of Federal Council I just wanted to pass that on. Welcome Kate to the team. It's wonderful to know that you have a new member on the team there. So, congratulations and best of luck for the upcoming Conference.

Claire Butler, President.

Thank you so much Alana. Thank you also for your unwavering support because without Federal Council's support behind us we couldn't do the job we do. So, thank you. We greatly appreciate it. We hope to see you face to face one day.

That concludes the AGM and thank you everyone for coming and continuing to support ICPA-NSW. I look forward to seeing everybody at Conference.

The 49th Annual General Meeting of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW Inc. held in Griffith, NSW was officially declared closed at 12:52pm.

.....
Mrs. Claire Butler

**President
ICPA-NSW**

.....
Mrs. Deb Castle

**Secretary
ICPA-NSW**

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**Claire Butler, President, ICPA-NSW**

I would like to announce and thank the sponsors of ICPA-NSW. The FRRR; Telstra; the Drought and Flood Agency; ABSA, Richard and his team; and the Boarding Schools Expo. They are the main sponsors which State Council had this year and we thank them very much.

I was very fortunate to be the liaison officer with these amazing ladies of the convening committee. We always say, “ask a busy person to do a job,” but these women, and Bill, are the busiest people I know and they have done an amazing job. When we first talked about having a conference here and I had Sandra in the car with me and Michele Spence, and we were heading to federal conference in Adelaide, and on this road trip we talked about on our way. By the end of that trip, it was pretty much decided. Sandra was very keen to have a conference in Hay and then we talked about the goals of that conference. The goal was not to have a big fund raiser but rather it was about just bringing everybody together and raising awareness for ICPA and the local community. They even mentioned the words, “let’s go no frills.” But I don’t think that this conference has been “no frills”. I think it has been amazing and the feedback I have received after speaking to a lot of people over the last few days is all positive. These people are so easy to work with. Nothing is a problem and it has just been fabulous and I feel s lucky to have been the liaison officer for state conference as well as the President. So, thank you very much.

**Sandra Ireson. Hay Conference Convenor**

Thank you, Claire. You have been an awesome role model for us and supporting us along the way and helping us and advising us as to what to do in such a nice way. All the ZOOM meetings and getting together was great and we have loved having you all here to Hay. Thank you so much everyone for a great conference.

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**All business of conference was concluded and there being no further agenda items the ICPA-NSW 2021 Annual Conference conducted in Hay, NSW, was closed at 4.30 pm**

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