



Submission

to the
Australian Bureau of Statistics'

**Review of Occupation Classification -
Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA)**

from the
**Federal Council
of
The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Inc.**

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The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (Aust) is a voluntary, apolitical parent body dedicated to ensuring all geographically isolated students have access to the services required for an equitable, affordable quality education, from early childhood through to tertiary and training. The member families of the Association reside and work in rural and remote Australia and all share a common goal of achieving access to an equitable education for their children, despite their geographic location. They often live long distances from services required to support the education of their children and therefore need specifically designed rural and remote programs that allow these children to learn, develop and thrive.

ICPA(Aust) are putting forth this submission to support the recognition of a Distance Education Classroom Supervisor role within in the current Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA). Although Education Assistants, specifically Teaching Assistance are similar, they fall short of covering the unique skills and circumstances faced by geographically isolated Distance Education Classroom Supervisors.

For approximately 1,000 families in remote areas of Australia, traditional face-to-face schooling is not possible due to geographic isolation. In these circumstances, Distance Education (DE) is not a preference but a necessity. The effectiveness of this model depends heavily on the presence and capability of the Distance Education Classroom Supervisor.

Distance Education Classroom Supervisors play a critical role in the daily delivery of educational programs.

Their responsibilities extend far beyond supervision and include:

- supporting lesson implementation, removed from the school and classroom teacher
- explaining concepts both online and offline
- preparing resources
- managing student behaviour
- maintaining structured learning routines
- facilitating ongoing communication with distance education teachers
- attending Face to Face events with the student
- technical support and technical set up of online lessons and platforms
- giving feedback to the student
- timetabling for the day/week/term
- setting the daily routine
- actively helping deliver lessons
- developing learning materials to differentiate curriculum for the individual student
- producing an inspiring and uplifting environment to learn in
- professional development to upskill themselves
- track completion of work
- encourage participation in online lessons
- keep students motivated
- printing materials
- supporting the child(s) emotional wellbeing
- keep the child connected through the virtual classes
- help prepare for a transition to Face to Face interactions and mainstream school
- supervise testing
- upload and submit work completed
- administration role

Particularly in the early years, supervisors function as the primary educator in the geographically isolated learning environment.

Despite the essential nature of this role, it remains poorly defined within existing wage classification frameworks. Establishing Distance Education Classroom Supervisors as a distinct category within wage systems is both necessary and justified for several key reasons.

First, the scope of the role differs significantly from traditional classroom support positions. Supervisors are responsible for facilitating access to digital learning platforms, troubleshooting technical issues, coordinating with remote teaching staff, and maintaining student engagement. This combination of educational, administrative, and technical responsibilities requires a specialised skill set not adequately reflected in current generic classifications.

Skills needed to fulfil the role of the Distance Education Classroom Supervisor, that is physically disconnected from the Classroom teacher, school and its resources and structures:

- Strong communication skills
- Basic teaching ability
- Organisation and time management qualities
- Passion for working with children
- Patience and adaptability
- Self-motivation and initiative
- Digital and technical skills
- Encouragement and motivational skills
- Understanding of child development
- Problem solving skills
- Resilience
- Independence

Second, the level of accountability carried by supervisors warrants formal recognition. In most cases, they are the primary adult responsible for student supervision, wellbeing, and learning continuity. They act as the link between the student and school. This level of responsibility aligns more closely with specialised educational support roles than with entry level or general support positions.

Third, distance education is no longer a niche provision. It is an established and growing component of the Australian education system, driven by geographic necessity, technological advancement, and increasing demand for flexible learning models. Wage structures must evolve to reflect this reality.

Additionally, the absence of a wage category creates inconsistencies in pay, role expectations, and career progression. This can lead to inequities among individuals performing comparable work and may negatively impact workforce retention. A formal classification would provide clarity, consistency, and a structured pathway for professional development.

Distance education enrolment policies across Australia clearly demonstrate that the presence of a supervisor is a mandatory requirement, not an optional support. For example:

- Open Access College (SA) requires parents/caregivers to actively supervise learning, assist with digital platform access, and monitor progress.
- The Alice Springs School of the Air (NT) Parent Handbook states that learning programs are designed to be delivered with ongoing support from a home tutor and are not intended for independent student instruction.
- Schools such as Broken Hill School of the Air and Dubbo Distance Education School provide structured guidance and training to supervisors, recognising their role in delivering daily

instruction, supporting lesson comprehension, monitoring participation, and providing feedback to teachers.

These requirements clearly position supervisors as integral to the instructional model rather than supplementary support.

Finally, formal recognition of Distance Education Classroom Supervisors within wage frameworks would signal the value placed on inclusive and flexible education systems. It would acknowledge the workforce that underpins access to education for geographically isolated students and ensure they are appropriately compensated and supported.

The ICPA (Aust) submits that the distance education classroom supervisor role falls within a gap between current industrial awards. This gap contributes to inconsistent classification, remuneration, and employment conditions.

The Pastoral Industry Award is currently applied in some circumstances to distance education supervisors, largely as a matter of convenience rather than alignment with the nature of the role. The duties performed by distance education supervisors are centred on educational support, supervision of learning, and coordination with teaching staff. These responsibilities do not sit comfortably within a pastoral or agricultural classification. As a result, the application of this award is often misaligned with the work being undertaken.

While an education-based award, for example School Support Officer or Student Learning Officer may appear to offer a more appropriate framework, geographically isolated distance education classroom supervisors are not employed by schools. Consequently, existing education awards do not legally apply and do not adequately capture the nature of the role.

ICPA(Aust) would like to see the Geographically Isolated Home Classroom Supervisor be recognised as an individual occupation. We have identified the following similar occupations but feel the unique tasks undertaken within the occupation, as listed previously, ensure it is recognised.

Teaching assistance 4322

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/osca-occupation-standard-classification-australia/2024-version-1-0/browse-classification/4/43/432/4322>

Teaching Assistant (4322) does already have a have Subcategories, so we feel another split could be seen as appropriate place to recognise the 1,000 Geographically Isolated Home Classroom Supervisors that ICPA(Aust) understand to be working across the country.

Teaching assistants 432231

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/osca-occupation-standard-classification-australia/2024-version-1-0/browse-classification/4/43/432/4322/432231>

other Education assistants 4329

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/osca-occupation-standard-classification-australia/2024-version-1-0/browse-classification/4/43/432/4329>

In 2025, approximately 1,800 geographically isolated students are supported through the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme, Distance Education. Based on ICPA (Aust) estimates, many families educate more than one child via distance education. This equates to an estimated 1,000 distance education

classroom learning environments, and therefore approximately 1,000 distance education supervisors across geographically isolated areas of Australia.

ICPA(Aust) know that many DE Home Supervisors are the mother of the family involved, who is also running the household and often also responsible for the family and business' administration and full-time employee. These women are essentially full-time distance education system volunteers for school hours, day, weeks and years. This is to ensure the education of their children is possible and effective. Although mandated position by the State Distance Education facilities – the unique role is not identified within OSCA or its predecessor. Those who volunteer in these roles are taken out of full-time employment in the business or off farm. To highlight this inequity ICPA(Aust) has previously run a campaign where members calculated their employment hours, wages, and entitlements such as superannuation, sick leave and long service leave to be a volunteer in their child's Home School Room.

Facebook Campaign in 2022 (2 images)

"MUM'S IN THE SCHOOLROOM"

GIDE TUTORS SPEND AT LEAST 6-8 UNPAID HOURS IN THE SCHOOLROOM EACH DAY

WE ARE ASKING GIDE MUMS FROM ALL ACROSS AUSTRALIA TO SHARE AN IMAGE OF YOU TELLING YOUR STORY

LET'S PUT A FACE TO THE STATISTICS AND GET OUR MESSAGE SEEN AND HEARD

SUPPORTING ONE CHILD THROUGH 7 YEARS OF GIDE PRIMARY EDUCATION EQUATES TO 10 000 HOURS OF UNPAID WORK

Geographically Isolated
7000 unpaid hours
supporting my 2 sons via
distance education
#iamicpa

Geographically Isolated
4800 unpaid hours
supporting my two
daughters via
distance education.
#iamicpa

85% OF GIDE STUDENTS HAVE THEIR MUM AS THEIR TUTOR

85% of GIDE students have their mother as their tutor
This role includes on average:
- 6 to 8 hours per day
- 20 hours per week
- no remuneration
I have been the tutor for my children for 12 years



Distance Education Teaching Allowance



Facts regarding the Isolated Distance Education Classroom

85%
OF DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDENTS
HAVE THEIR MOTHER AS THEIR TUTOR

40 HOURS
The commitment usually extends beyond 5 years and often involves more than 8 years of dedication to the role.

6-8 HOURS EACH DAY
The Distance Education tutor is often the mother according to a recent survey of ICPA members. The tutor must make themselves available to commit between 6-8 hours each day to the classroom to teach the lesson.

DISTANCE EDUCATION REQUIRES A HOME TUTOR..
the tutor is the lifeline between the children and the Distance Education Centre.

1500
families across Australia use Distance Education because there is no other option.

The vital role of the Distance Education tutors should be recognised through the payment of an allowance which acknowledges the essential work they perform.

www.icpa.com.au

After the April 2026, Webinar with Tracey Rowley and Chris Hinchcliffe we understand that 300 people are needed in an occupation for it to have a classification, and that based on our research -previous data collection such as 2021 Census doesn't reflect this in the Distance Education Home Classroom Supervisor role. We believe the recorded occupation is so limited because it is not represented in an industrial award, and if the parent/mother is in the role they may also have other occupations that they may have recorded. As a parent/mother many Distance Education Supervisors are also partners in the family business so may validly record Grazier, Farmer, or the likes of Cattle Breeder as their occupation, which distorts the recorded data.

This cohort represents a small but essential workforce that underpins equitable access to education for geographically isolated students, yet it remains without clear appropriate industrial recognition.

In conclusion, Distance Education Classroom Supervisors perform a distinct, skilled, and essential role that is not adequately captured in current wage classifications. Establishing a dedicated classification would promote fairness, improve workforce stability, and better align remuneration structures with the realities of contemporary education delivery.

Appendix A following is a copy of a Distance Education Classroom Supervisor advertisement, often called a Governess.