

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Inc.

"Access to Education"



Submission

to the

Future Drought Fund Annual Report

from the

**Federal Council
of the**

**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Inc.
ICPA (Aust)**

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Contact:

**Kim Hughes
Federal Secretary
ICPA (Aust)
Harrogate Station
RICHMOND QLD 4822
FedSecretary@icpa.com.au
Tel: 0427 377 985**

Contact:

**Alana Moller
Federal President
ICPA (Aust)
Star of Hope
CLERMONT QLD 4721
FedPresident@icpa.com.au
Tel: 07 4983 5353**

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, ICPA (Aust), welcomes the opportunity to contribute to [the](#) consultation on the **Future Drought Fund Annual Report**.

ICPA (Aust) is a voluntary, apolitical, national parent organisation, which advocates on behalf of our members for equity of access to an appropriate education for all geographically isolated children and students, from early childhood through to tertiary. The majority of member families of the Association reside in geographically isolated areas of Australia and all share a common goal of achieving equitable access to education for their children and the provision of services required to achieve this. Students whose family home is in rural and remote Australia, often live great distances from their nearest education institution and from services required to support the education of these students.

As an organisation advocating on behalf of equitable educational opportunities for rural and remote children, ICPA (Aust) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the Future Drought Fund Annual Report, specifically against the following provided questions from the FDF Annual Report feedback survey:

Question 11 What new programs and activities should be considered?

Question 12 How would these contribute to the five themes and/or the Drought Resilience Funding Plan?

ICPA believes that more needs to be done to support families educating their children in times of drought and believes this should be included as an important consideration as part of the ***'More Resilient Communities'*** theme.

When experiencing drought conditions, immense pressure is placed on families as their ability to earn an income is severely impacted and besides struggling to pay for day to day expenses, these families also have difficulty in paying for the extensive additional educational costs associated with accessing schooling for their children in rural and remote areas, whether they are boarding away from home, attending a local rural school/kindergarten or studying via distance education

ICPA (Aust) believes programs and measures should be implemented to assist with the significant out-of-pocket educational expenses incurred for education due to where these families live, should be implemented. Ideally this could be realised with the introduction of a Rural Hardship Education Fund (RHEF) to assist families with the cost of education during drought or other rural hardship. Geographically isolated children should not be disadvantaged or unable to attend their studies at boarding school due to ongoing long term droughts. Educational expenses are an investment for the future prosperity and resilience of all our rural and remote communities and ICPA (Aust) urges the Federal Government to assist rural families in educating their children in these tough times. The critical need for equitable educational opportunities for rural and remote children and the need to support and maintain this education as a safeguard for the ongoing resilience of their communities cannot be overstated.

Many of our member families reside in locations where there are limited or no secondary schooling options available to them, which means that boarding school is often the only reasonable option for students from these areas to attend secondary school. This comes at a significant cost to rural and remote families and ICPA (Aust) advocates on behalf of these families for adequate assistance to be available for geographically isolated students to have equitable access to secondary education opportunities similar to their urban counterparts.

ICPA (Aust) believes such a fund should include:

- A supplementary payment made to the Assistance for Isolated Children allowance (AIC) for families

identified as being in rural hardship. For example: living in drought affected areas/states.

- Funding for Rural Schools, Early Learning/Long Day Care Centres in affected areas.
- Itinerant and specialist teachers made available to enable more support for Distance Education students and Rural Schools, including home visits in remote classrooms and other localised support resources.
- Adjusted rate/additional subsidy to assist affected families to access In Home Care for young children.
- Tertiary Access Allowance for rural and remote students enrolled in university, training courses, or an apprenticeship.

ICPA (Aust) has published a Rural Hardship Education Fund paper which details further the background and recommendations for the establishment of such a fund. This paper can be found [here](#)

The establishment of a permanent/long term Rural Hardship Education Fund is urgently needed and should be included in Future Drought Fund programs to address the unique educational needs and additional costs associated with educating children in rural and remote communities for families affected by drought conditions to contribute to the future resilience of the communities they reside in.