



Progress Report 2023 Federal Conference Motions Training Portfolio

Compiled March 2024

Following an informative presentation at the 2023 Federal Conference on the capability and resilience of rural and remote students as lifelong learners, four motions were presented and carried in the Training Portfolio. The 2023-24 Council year has been focused on the current and previous motions, which continue to highlight the difficulties rural and remote students face when choosing to continue with their post school education as apprentices and trainees.

Tertiary Access Payment (TAP)

ICPA (Aust) wrote to the Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP with recommendations for the expansion of the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) criteria to include Australian Apprentices who must relocate from a rural or remote location to access their apprenticeship. Australian Apprentices relocating to undertake training face similar relocation and set up costs (travel, bond/rent, uniforms) as students relocating to undertake tertiary study. It is imperative that apprentices are well supported financially to attract rural and remote students to take up apprenticeships and to increase retention and completions rates.

Our letter was forwarded to the Assistant Minister for Education and the Assistant Minister for Regional Development the Hon Anthony Chisholm to reply.

The Assistant Minister's response to ICPA (Aust) cited the government's commitment to a 12-month review of Australia's higher education system, the Australian Universities Accord (the Accord). Further that one of the Terms of Reference for this review focused specifically on supporting greater access and participation for students from underrepresented backgrounds, including students from regional and remote areas.

The Accord Panel held a consultation facilitated by the Regional Education Commissioner, the Hon Fiona Nash to hear directly from regional voices on the unique challenges of regional higher education delivery. ICPA (Aust) participated and highlighted that the eligibility criteria of the TAP can be a barrier to some regional students, specifically, flagging that eligibility for TAP should not include parental income, and should extend to students who choose to take a gap year, and who are undertaking an apprenticeship.

TAP for Australian Apprentices remained unaddressed in the Assistant Minister's response but has continued to be raised by ICPA (Aust) at every opportunity.

It was pleasing to see in the February 2024 release of the Australian Universities Accord Final Report that the many of the unique needs of rural and remote students have been considered in the recommendations, although it did not address the eligibility of Australian Apprentices to the TAP

Australian Apprenticeship Support Networks (AASNs)

ICPA (Aust)'s advocacy following the 2023 conference combined Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) issues in a letter to the Minister for Skills and Training, the Hon Brendan O'Connor MP, making the following recommendations:

- The implementation of regular comprehensive audits of AASNs to ensure that the delivery and support intended by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) is actually received by rural and remote apprentices/trainees.



- That DEWR mandate specialist support structures for regional, remote and rural apprentices and trainees from within the AASNs.

It was also requested that there be trained rural and remote specialist support staff within the AASNs who are contactable by employers, trainers and apprentices/trainees (and their families if the contract is signed before the apprentice is 18 years of age) in rural and remote areas, and for those who must relocate and live independently from their family to undertake their on and off-the-job training.

ICPA (Aust) has recommended that assistance for the rural and remote apprentice requires mandatory actions from the AASNs including (but not limited to):

- visits to the workplace and/or training facility to check that the apprentices are being suitably trained, educated and supported.
- documented semester reviews on all parties involved.
- knowledge and assistance with state and federal support programs.
- knowledge and assistance with state and federal financial support such as the Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA).
- follow-up contact and interviews should the apprentice/trainee or employer terminate the contract prior to its completion.
- knowledge and documentation of the residential addresses of apprentices - it is concerning that some employers and trainers do not know and subsequently do not support apprentices who have relocated vast distances from family and supports to undertake the working and training aspects of the Australian Apprenticeship.

ICPA members expressed concerns that in their rural communities there are many examples of minimal AASN support, contact or follow-up for apprentices, trainees and their employers once they commence a training contract.

To date ICPA (Aust) has not received a response from the minister.

On the back of the 2022 Skills Summit the government reviewed the non-financial supports available to Australian Apprentices during 2023, focusing on apprenticeship supports from contracted ASSNs. It is pleasing to see the 2024 ASSN Contracts which commence on July 1, include focus on four new key client groups:

1. Women in male-dominated trades,
2. First Nations Australian Apprentices,
3. Australian Apprentices with disability and
4. Australian Apprentices located in remote Australia.

As part of the above review, ICPA (Aust) lodged a [submission to the Australian Apprenticeship Services and Supports Discussion Paper inquiry](#) and also consulted extensively with the department on the Future Directions consultation process.

A much-awaited Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System has recently been announced by the government. We encourage members to view the terms of reference [here](#) and to individually submit or offer case studies to support ICPA (Aust)'s submission. ICPA (Aust) will be making a submission to the Review containing the 2023 and previous motions.

Trade Support Loan Scheme

ICPA (Aust) wrote to the Hon Brendan O'Connor MP, Minister for Skills and Training recommending an increase to the discount of Trade Support Loans on trade completion from 20% to 30% for rural and remote-based



Australian Apprentices. This adjustment to the criteria would not only be of benefit to apprentices but would also assist in the attraction and retention of apprentices in rural and remote areas thus boosting local economies. Minister O'Connor responded with the following:

"While we are not considering changes to the 20% discount at this time, additional support will be available to Australian Apprentices through the upcoming Trade Support Loan legislation changes, (up to \$5,000) which are intended to increase access to the scheme for important cost-of-living support, including for those living in rural and remote locations.

From early 2024, ... more apprentices and trainees will be able to access... Australian Apprenticeship Support Loans, with the program expanding eligibility to include non-trade apprenticeship critical skills areas, such as aged care. The Australian Skills Priority List will be utilised as the source for occupation eligibility, ensuring relevancy and timeliness in the identification of current and future demand areas.

In addition to the loans themselves, available supports relevant to rural and remote apprentices include:

- *The New Energy Apprenticeship Support Payment which provides up to \$10,000 over the course of an apprenticeship for those training in an eligible occupation in the clean energy sector.*
- *The Australian Apprentice Training Support Payment which provides up to 2 years of direct financial support to Australian Apprentices commencing an Australian Apprenticeship in priority occupations experiencing national skills shortage.*
- *The Living Away From Home Allowance*
- *In-Training Support Services*

For further detail on the above, please see www.apprenticeships.gov.au

We recommend rural and remote apprentices, trainees and their families look carefully at the government's Australian Apprenticeships site to ensure they are familiar with the Australian Apprenticeship Priority List and the updated Incentives System. Australian Apprenticeship Support Network Providers are tasked with establishing assistance but may need prompting for specific rural and remote supports available.

All issues within the Training Portfolio continue to be raised through every avenue available to ensure all rural and remote young Australians have the opportunity to pursue a VET pathway, apprenticeship or traineeship of their choice, regardless of their geographical location.

Portfolio Leader- Anna McCorkle

To view the full 2023 Federal Conference Motion Update Report click [here](#).