



ICPA Federal Conference 2026 – Gold Coast QLD

Thursday 30 July 2026

Day 2 of the 55th Annual Federal Conference of **The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (ICPA)** concluded two productive, supportive and sometimes robust days of advocacy, collaboration and discussion, with delegates from across Australia reaffirming the organisation's commitment to achieving equitable education outcomes for geographically isolated students.

The day commenced at 8:00am sharp with the ICPA Federal Annual General Meeting, where all 13 AGM motions were passed. Federal Council positions were all officially declared vacant before delegates elected the incoming Federal Council, who will lead the organisation over the coming year.

The newly elected Federal Executive includes Amber Driver (Northern Territory) as Federal Vice President and Britt Anderson (New South Wales) as Federal Secretary. Bernadette Maxwell, Jessie Persse, Ellen Fitzgerald and Anna Cochrane were also elected to the Federal Council. ICPA also extends its sincere thanks to outgoing Federal Councillors Nikki Mahony, Kelly Ostwald and Jill Greenfield for their significant contribution and dedication to the organisation.

A highlight of the morning was the presentation of an ICPA Federal Life Membership to longstanding volunteer and advocate Wendy Hick in recognition of her exceptional service to the organisation. Wendy served as Federal President from 2015 to 2019, Immediate Past President from 2019 to 2023 and continues to support ICPA as Federal Communications Advisor. Her tireless commitment and decades of advocacy have made a lasting contribution to improving educational outcomes for geographically isolated students and their families.

ICPA Federal President, Louise Martin is appreciative of Wendy's longstanding contribution to the ICPA,

"Wendy's commitment to ICPA has been extraordinary. She has devoted countless hours to advocating for isolated families across Australia and has helped shape the organisation into the respected national voice it is today. This Life Membership is a fitting recognition of her selfless service and lasting contribution."



Conference proceedings then turned to policy, with delegates debating motions across early childhood education and care, boarding, communications and tertiary education.

Discussions within the Early Childhood Education and Care portfolio reinforced the ongoing challenges many geographically isolated families face in accessing quality early childhood services, with limited availability, lack of meaningful government assistance, choice and workforce shortages continuing to impact communities across rural and remote Australia.

Delegates also heard from Richard Stokes, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA), who acknowledged the strong attendance of boarding schools at the Conference and provided an update on the collaborative work underway between ABSA and ICPA to develop nationally consistent boarding school standards through Standards Australia.

One of the day's most significant debates centred on the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme Geographically Isolated – and whether a loading or tiered approach should be implemented. A motion from the Broken Hill Branch proposing a significant increase to the loading generated considerable discussion among delegates before a procedural motion from the Dirranbandi Branch, a motion that ultimately was not carried.

Delegates also debated a similar motion from the Northern Territory State Council proposing a tiered Geographically Isolated Loading structure based on levels of remoteness. Following discussion, the motion was also not carried as it was more related to Travel.

Throughout the afternoon, delegates continued debating motions spanning boarding, communications and tertiary education, while also hearing from valued conference partners including NBN Co and Telstra on connectivity initiatives supporting regional and remote Australia.

Telstra announced their new STM program, meaning that customers can now access a range of Select Satellite Apps, including navigation, messaging and weather apps, when connected to satellite and beyond the range of our mobile network. Following the launch of satellite messaging in June 2025, the capability provides Telstra customers with an additional connectivity option, particularly in regional and remote areas across the country.

NBN Co provided delegates with an update on its partnership with Amazon Leo, highlighting how the future low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite service is expected to improve connectivity for geographically isolated families and support better access to education.



The Conference concluded with a formal vote of thanks to the Chair, presenters, sponsors, volunteers and the Queensland convening committee. Special acknowledgement was also given to St Hilda's School and The Southport School for their support in hosting the 2026 Federal Conference.

ICPA Federal President Louise Martin thanked delegates for their passion, commitment and willingness to work collaboratively on behalf of geographically isolated families.

Louise Martin reflects on a successful 2026 ICPA Federal Conference,

"Over the past two days we've seen passionate, respectful and solutions-focused debate from families who live these challenges every day. The outcomes of this Conference will guide our advocacy over the coming year as we continue working with governments and stakeholders to ensure geography is never a barrier to a child's education."

At the conclusion of the formal Conference program, the newly elected ICPA Federal Council will meet to begin planning its advocacy agenda for the year ahead. The Council will establish its key advocacy priorities and develop a coordinated plan to progress the motions carried during the Conference, ensuring the issues raised by geographically isolated families continue to be advanced with governments, education providers and key stakeholders throughout the coming year.

For more information, including motions, conference imagery and case studies, please see the [ICPA conference media kit](#).