

Wow, now they're big shoes to fill. Thank you, Claire, for providing our Members and Guests with an insight into what our first 6 months looked like. With the whirlwind that we encountered in early October 2021, I'd like to take this opportunity to pass on a few words about our outgoing President and now Immediate Past President, Claire Butler. Claire, on behalf of your fellow State Councillors and ICPA – NSW members, thank you for tirelessly and selflessly giving of your time to ICPA – NSW as President over the past 2 ½ yrs. Your leadership, knowledge and commitment has been inspirational to many. We look forward to having you still at the end of the phone and working alongside us; you're not getting out of it that easy!

With that being said, it was all systems go from Day 1. It started out with a couple of days notice to write my first President's report for The Topwire. Our ever so patient and understanding Editor, Kerrie Johnston and I were on first name basis very early. We had very regular contact and Kerrie's gentle reminders of "Kate, let me know when your report is sent" to "how's your report coming along" turned to "Kate, I'm hoping to get a proof out this afternoon and I'm just waiting on your report"...OMG I seriously need to get this done I said to myself.

Kerrie Johnston, our magazine Editor extraordinaire, is a gem in her field. We're extremely grateful to Kerrie for all her gathering and bringing everything together, all so our members can enjoy a great read. Kerrie, you do a phenomenal job each quarter and we'd be lost without your organisation, so THANK YOU!

Which then takes me to our retiring NSW / VIC Lone Members Officer, Irene Lund. Irene works hand in hand with Kerrie on the November edition each year, and this edition helps showcase our Boarding Schools. It's fabulous for Boarding Schools to have the opportunity to advertise, promoting their endless opportunities and programs for whoever may wish to take that path. We thank all the schools that have participated and as always, our Membership Officer, Irene Lund for coordinating this. It's a big job meeting all the deadlines and once again, Irene's done this with precision. THANK YOU, Irene!!

Our border situation has really tested many this time around, with members being affected by hard restrictions again in QLD, VIC, SA and the ACT. The inconsistency between states has kept our State Council Covid committee very busy. We've had Claire Butler looking after the VIC border, Bree Wakefield looking after SA and myself looking after the QLD Border. Claire, Bree & I continued to work very closely on this, navigating these choppy waters. We continued to work hard for our affected members and hoped we were now getting through the worst of it. I'd like to extend my thanks to Claire & Bree. Your support and knowledge have been invaluable whilst we continue working to achieve a nationally consistent approach.

Despite what's been happening around us, State Council have continued to keep their fingers on the pulse all whilst fine tuning their Zoom presence and internet connection patience. I honestly didn't think we'd be in the same place 12 months on, but we are and took to this year's Deputations via Zoom like true professionals. We did have a few 'connection' issues throughout the (2) days of meetings, but we survived.

We had (25) meetings booked in for Deputations this year, which was fantastic, however, there's nothing like an 11th hour change of Premier to have everyone scratching their heads. Our amazing Secretary, Deb Castle, handled these changes with precision and didn't miss a beat with sending out our Zoom links and manning the 'Base Station' from the newly constructed Hay TAFE. Deb, thank you, you're the glue that keeps us all together any my goodness you're going to be missed...So if anyone's up for the gig, State Secretary is all YOURS...come and tap me on the shoulder if this is for you, I'd love to chat LOL.

The relationships and reputation that ICPA – NSW has built up over many years, is testament to our ability to secure meetings with key Ministers and stakeholders. Our full schedule meant we had the opportunity to meet a cross section of Government Ministers, MP's, Department Heads, and key stakeholders. Our meetings were met with optimism and willingness to assist our rural and remote students and families moving forward.

As we said goodbye to another year, that's challenged us in ways unimaginable, many of our State Councillors took a well-deserved break over the Christmas period after another exhaustive year. Volunteer fatigue had definitely started to set in, so this was perfect timing.

It's crazy to think that January was all but over, and the Festive season now a distant memory. I'd like to acknowledge the State Council team many of whom didn't get the downtime over the Festive Season like others. Kerrie once again was working on the January Edition of Topwire, We also had our Membership Officer, Irene Lund and Treasurer, Shennah Joiner, tirelessly working through New Memberships and Renewals. This is a big job, but you've both got it down to a fine art and it's best if we leave it up to you, as we wouldn't want to upset our Batman & Robin duo. THANK YOU, Ladies!

ICPA-NSW welcomed invitations to join the newly established Stakeholder groups and continue on existing ones. Of particular note, was the establishment of the NSW Dept of Education's Rural, Regional and Remote Educational Policy Directorate RRREP. With ICPA – NSW being the key rural and remote stakeholder, we value the relationships we have with Minister for Education and Early Childhood Sarah Mitchell and the NSW Department of Education.

Thank you to Conference Convenors Anna McCorkle and Di Ridge and their hard working team for hosting this conference. I'm sure we can all agree that the venue looks fantastic, it is very well presented and we are being looked after beautifully.

I look forward to everyone engaging in hearty debate over the next two days as we come together to further the educational opportunities for rural and remote children.