

NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Claire Butler

Madam President, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present this joint President's report on behalf of ICPA NSW.

It is certainly marvellous to be standing here in Bourke, 50 years after the formation of the ICPA-NSW State Council. I was recently reading through some of the old motions from the very first conference and one that sticks to my mind is the Distance Education motion in 1972: "that the Education Advisory Commission be requested to press for the provision of a Booster Station to assist education by television" It really strikes me how forward thinking our founders were, when they themselves are thinking about future technology before the internet was even thought of! Thank you to you for setting the bar for those of us who follow in your footsteps.

It is pleasing that as a result of the 2020 conference in Hay, the Minister for Education requested monthly telephone meetings with the President to try to tick off the many items that were on the agenda at conference. The implementation of the new Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy Directorate now gives ICPA-NSW a direct line of two way communication and will play a key role in continuing to keep the ICPA conversations at the top of the pile.

Two key motions that have finally come to fruition are the implementation of the Preschool Drive Subsidy Pilot making it easier for children in remote NSW to access early childhood education. This targeted per kilometre subsidy is available for eligible families to offset part of their transport costs. The second milestone in the expansion of the mobile communications footprint for areas that have small rural schools, with an announcement from Telstra and the Minister for Education that the final 12 Satellite schools in NSW will be transferred to Fibre Optic by early 2022 and this is nearly completed with only 1 school in its final stages of installation.

On another positive note, the Country University Centres have expanded across Australia and provide a pathway for rural and remote students to study closer to home. Past President of ICPA-NSW Duncan Taylor played a key role in the CUC's and his words will always stick in my mind: "Bush kids have heaps of ASPIRATION, they WANT to be all the things that OTHER children want to be. BUT in many cases they simply DON'T EXPECT to get there because they don't have as many EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. The CUC's now have

And are funded permanently

Some of you in this room will recall the Balranald branch motion back in 2013 at Federal Conference asking for improved mobile coverage for areas that have schools in them, that motion was initially lost, but the following year it was carried, so please do not get disheartened if you lose a motion today, as this is what can be achieved if you stay focused and not take no for an answer. Many thanks to Federal ICPA for their advocacy for these small remote schools.

Mini Deputation 2021

To follow up from the Hay conference and keep the momentum going, on 21 June our State Secretary Deb Castle and Treasurer Shennah Joiner represented State Council in Sydney for mini deputation. They furthered the conversation with Transport about School Drive Subsidies and also met with NSW Education officials, the Minister for Mental Health Bronnie Taylor, the Minister for Education Sarah Mitchell and Roy Butler MP. There are a few key priorities that ICPA-NSW would like to see fixed as a matter of priority, issues that continually come to conference:

- Better internet technology for DE students
- School Drive Subsidy for Preschoolers
- Mental Health for Youth
- Early Childhood education in remote areas

The solutions offered by ICPA-NSW are pragmatic and discussions have been positive, however it is a continued frustration for our members that things take years to be implemented and that means that for many children, the gaps in their learning and development remains.

A special mention must go to Deb and Shennah who, as a result of attending NSW parliament on 21 June, found themselves having to isolate for 14 days on their return home due to the COVID-19 restrictions affecting Sydney. I would like to publicly acknowledge both Deb and Shennah for their voluntary efforts amid yet another random outbreak. It really is testament to the commitment that they have to ICPA.

On the topic of COVID-19, with NSW sandwiched between three states, for a second year in a row we found ourselves continuing to assist members who, due to border closures, find themselves anxious about their children's access to interstate boarding schools. The outbreaks last year again highlighted the need for a national framework for the movement of boarding school children and we thank ICPA (Aust) for the work done on this and for the National Code that has been implemented as a result. The standout for us is that we surveyed members to find out where they lived so that we were armed with information to give authorities. The information we collected was invaluable as we knew that at some point the authorities would ask how many children? Where do they live? What school do they attend? And whilst the list produced is by no means exhaustive, it gave a very good indication to authorities that we knew our members and we knew what we were talking about, especially in the context of Isolation and Social Distancing due to these children living on remote properties.

Current memberships for NSW are 615 families. Our challenge is finding ways to keep members staying on whilst new ones join. With limited resources as volunteers, we need to do some thinking around how to keep members once their child's education is completed. We have designed some new flyers and are encouraging branches to take them to local preschools and schools – and if time permits do a small presentation to parent groups, however we are mindful of the time this takes for our volunteer branches to do. There is a sense of volunteer fatigue and on the back of COVID-19 and natural disasters in NSW the toll on our branches is evident. We welcome any creative solutions branches may have to encourage memberships, because the work we do benefits the whole community.

At the end of last year, ICPA NSW focused on Wellbeing. We held online zoom sessions with families affected by covid and as a result, we held wellbeing webinars with parenting expert Dannielle Miller, a roundtable with HSC students and the NSW Minister for Education and we have just finished weekly online zoom wellbeing sessions with the RFDS, who were supporting Western Division families affected by the SA border closures. Deputation was held online this year too and was in the same week that the NSW Premier and Deputy Premier resigned. With only 5 Councillors who could travel, they convened at the new TAFE in Hay and our other State Councillors in lockdown zoomed in from home. 22 meetings were held in total and even though NSW Parliament had a few changes that week, our meetings still went ahead, with not too much shuffling.

The highlight of deputation is always that of meeting The Governor of NSW our Patron, her excellency Margaret Beazley AC QC who is very keen to hear the members issues. I would like to take this opportunity to thank—Alana Moller and her Federal team for being supportive mentors to us throughout what has been a very interesting time. The unwavering support from ICPA (Aust) has been such an incredible strength to us in NSW.

In October 2021 I made the very difficult decision to step down as President due to work commitments. I thank Kate Warby for filling the casual vacancy, Kate has shown tremendous leadership during these past few months and NSW is in good hands. I will now hand over to Kate to finish the President's report.