

## ODE TO ICPA A TALE OF 50 YEARS



The despair of drought hung lowly on the dislocated town  
An air of doubt that deepened when the Bourke Hostel closed down  
But defeat was not an option on account of cloudless weather  
And she knew that they'd be stronger if they all stood up together  
So she commandeered a meeting and a rightful thing was done

The mighty Mrs Edgley back in Nineteen Seventy One...  
Yes she rose amongst that gathering and made a declaration  
"The one thing that we must protect... our children's education"  
And a seed of hope was watered by a tear of joy that day  
As the birth was crowned and christened in the name 'ICPA'

Four letters proud and worthy in a hard but honest nation  
Children at the forefront, namely those in isolation  
The parents of these children unashamedly invited  
To be vigilant in vision, strong of voice and co-united  
Mothers who were weighted down with far too much already  
Fathers who were breaking backs to keep the home-front steady  
Young Australian families and giving it their best  
They descended on that meeting where the challenge was addressed  
Then, all across the countryside, they gathered to the fray  
And they saddled up that stockhorse with the name 'ICPA'

The message spread like fire and its relevance was burning --  
"Equity of access to the tools of greater learning  
An isolated child - one who for geographic station  
Is compromised unfairly when it comes to education"

The reasoning compelling but the day was far from done  
Every inch was fiercely fought and every classroom won  
They shouted from the rooftops to personify their fears  
Far too often sadly, it would fall on wooden ears  
But the blaze was in their heart now and it wouldn't go away  
So they shouted even louder did the bold 'ICPA'

Finally, a breakthrough and the true believers roared  
For they shouted and they shouted 'til they could not be ignored  
The government responded and in Nineteen Seventy Three  
Persistence was rewarded with the sacred AIC  
Allowances incorporated, supplements secured

The victory was vital and its relevance endured  
Because the fight was one of principle and something had to give!  
No one should be punished on account of where they live  
So the icon was established – it was here and here to stay  
And the letters were imprinted – they were I, C, P & A

Branch by branch, they made their stance - a nation joined the ride  
And everyone who wore that badge, they wore that badge with pride  
Dedicated, passionate and stubbornly tenacious!  
It became a family of its own, hospitable and gracious  
And family was paramount in everything achieved  
From Monaro up to Charleville the signal is received  
From Oatlands to the Alice, Port Augusta onto Broome  
Broken Hill to Lord Howe Isle, from fax machine to Zoom!  
And here we are in Longreach where it honours me to say  
Another Federal Conference flies the flag 'ICPA'

You can almost see their faces when the sun is going down  
Mitchell, Edgley, Jakins and the VPs - Green & Powne  
Pioneers of progress – back when school was in the air!  
Now the sky is being mustered – there's a satellite up there!  
Ain't no doubt about it friends, we've walked a country mile  
But the beauty of ambition fuels the same inspired smile  
To be the best that one can be and 'high' is where we aim  
The bond of child and parent – it's undoubtedly the same  
And the spirit of the people who have gathered here today  
Shines a light towards tomorrow... in the name 'ICPA'

There's a moral to this story and it echoes undeterred  
Believe in what you stand for and your voice will soon be heard  
Success befriends adversity on every worthy track  
When all you really ask for is a fair and decent crack!  
Despite the many hurdles and no matter what the weather  
Strength is better measured by the mob that works together  
There is love and there is loyalty incumbent in your tears  
That's the sum of every heart... a tale of fifty years!  
And beyond this celebration, the horizon's holding sway  
As we ride into the future... and we shout 'ICPA'!

To every proud contributor who somehow lit the way  
Raise your glass in honour - 50 years – ICPA!

Rupert McCall © 2021