



14/07/24

ICPA TO TACKLE RURAL EDUCATION ACCESS AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN ADELAIDE

- National NFP education advocacy group, The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) brings its National conference to Adelaide. Placing the spotlight on the stark and growing education divide for rural and remote families
- More than 200 delegates and guests expected in **Adelaide 30-31 July**, including families from the most isolated parts of the country
- SA education leaders and policymakers to hear directly from affected families

Australia's peak voice for rural and remote education, The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA), will hold its annual Federal Conference in **Adelaide on 30-31 July**. The two-day event will bring together more than 200 delegates and guests, including families from across South Australia and the nation, to share lived experiences and shape the organisation's advocacy priorities for the year ahead.

From crippling boarding costs, the continued lack of recognition of work by distance education supervisors, to unreliable access to digital connectivity, the conference will reveal *the daily realities* of accessing quality education in the bush, and the growing disparity between rural and city-based students.

ICPA Federal President Louise Martin says Adelaide is a fitting host city, surrounded by rural communities whose students often face the most significant barriers to learning.

"Whether you live in Oodnadatta or outback NSW, the challenges are remarkably similar. Too few local options, long travel distances, patchy connectivity, and exponentially rising costs associated with education," said Ms Martin.

"Our message is simple; rural and remote children deserve the same educational opportunities as their city peers. We're calling for immediate investment in the policies and support systems needed to make that a reality."

"The 2025 Federal Conference is a chance for our most isolated families to be heard directly by those in power; and an opportunity for governments of all levels to act to improve access and outcomes for our most remote families."

This year's conference theme, "**Education for the heart and the mind**", calls for national solutions to longstanding inequities that continue to disadvantage rural students.



Conference Highlights:

- **Opening address from Federal Education Minister, Jason Clare and Regional Education Commissioner Fiona Nash**
- **Notable guests and speakers include** SA Education Minister Blair Boyer, NBN Co Chief Development Officer Gavin Williams, and eSafety Commissioner representative Kellie Britnell.
- **Robust grassroots advocacy** as ICPA members table and debate motions covering key issues such as:
 - Soaring boarding school fees and lack of financial support
 - The early childhood workforce crisis in rural areas
 - Inadequate connectivity and the 3G shutdown
 - Barriers to equitable digital and distance learning access

Ms Martin says the time for piecemeal fixes is over, the gap is widening, and what's needed is **bold, national reform.**

"For too long, rural and remote students and their families have been expected to make do. The education divide in this country is growing, and it's unacceptable," she said.

"We need action that goes beyond words. That means closing the digital divide, funding equitable access to early learning and boarding – both critical for our communities, and ensuring rural families aren't punished by their geography. We don't need another inquiry; we need leadership and change, and we need it now."

The conference is supported by key partners including Telstra, NBN Co, the Minderoo Foundation, BHP and the Australian Department of Education.

EVENT DETAILS

ICPA Federal Conference

Dates: 30–31 July 2024

Time: From 9:00am daily

Location: EOS SkyCity Ballroom, Adelaide

Media RSVP as ICPA's guests is essential to ensure access

For those unable to make the conference, please sign up for daily conference updates here

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Additional Information:

The ICPA's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held Thursday 31st July 2025 at 8:00am at the EOS SkyCity Ballroom. The second day of the conference will commence at approximately 9:30 am.

About the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA):

Established in 1971, ICPA is a voluntary, not-for-profit, apolitical parent body dedicated to ensuring equity of access to education for all students who live in rural and remote Australia.

To find out more, visit the [ICPA website](http://www.icpa.com.au).