



“The key is to keep company with people who uplift you, whose presence calls forth your best”

Epictetus, Greek Philosopher

While for many of us, geographic isolation is certainly not a new thing, the move to even less interaction than normal in the past 18 months has been especially challenging. For many of us, those once in a blue moon social occasions, the local show, the local races, minischools, the school sports day and anything else that was brought to a standstill during the pandemic, are where we get our inspiration, motivation and encouragement, where we know we will be understood and where we have the opportunity to remember that while we are isolated we are not alone. And so, the impacts of pandemic induced isolation were far more reaching than anyone could imagine.

Missing our regular face to face Federal Conference last year was most certainly another event that the loss of had far more ramifications that anyone may have thought. While we battled on through the new online format, it just wasn't the same as being in a room full of likeminded people whose energy is catching. And so, in a few short weeks the opportunity to be back together in a single room at a Federal Conference, the 50th ICPA Federal Conference, will be so much more than just another event. Instead it will be an opportunity for many of us to come together for the first time in two years, to inspire, motivate and encourage each other. To keep on keeping on as we reflect on all that has been achieved over 50 years of ICPA and anticipate and embrace what is to come in the next 50 years.

It will certainly be a welcome change from all the Zooming (I have been on so many Zoom meetings that my husband actually named a pup Zoom so he could remember that she was born in 2020) and how gratifying it is to be able to come back together in person. The return to some resemblance of normalcy has meant that over the past few months we have



Federal President Alana Moller meets with representatives from the National Farmers Federation

had Federal Councillors at all State Conferences this year.

Finally, after 19 months, ten councillors have been able to come together for face to face meetings and delegations in Canberra. A welcome opportunity to work together as well as attend 23 meetings with Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators along with departmental meetings to reiterate the needs of our geographically isolated students.

These meetings were productive, positive and served as a great reminder of why we do what we do. It was particularly pleasing

to be in Canberra during Budget Week and to build upon some of our key advocacy on early childhood education, the Rural Hardship Education Fund and, of course, the Distance Education Teaching Allowance off the back of the educational shifts during the pandemic.

Federal Council have been kept busy otherwise during the past months with submissions completed including the Inquiry into Adult Literacy and its importance and the National Quality Framework (NQF) Review in April. I have also participated in several events on behalf of Federal Council, including the Regions Rising Summit in Canberra and a Beef Week event in Rockhampton, Queensland.

Perhaps the most exciting news of the past few months though is the development of the new ICPA website. This was an enormous undertaking involving hundreds of volunteer hours, immense commitment and amazing collaboration by representatives from all ICPA Councils. The result is an engaging and dynamic online presence for our organisation that I am confident all members will be proud of. My absolute gratitude and admiration goes to the group of wonderful weavers who worked on this project together, but especially to Nikki Macqueen and Sue Shotton, for without their steadfast dedication to the project it would not have been possible. I hope you have all had the opportunity to take a look by now and if you haven't already, I urge you to!

The next time I will be conversing with members will be at

Federal Conference in Longreach in a few short weeks. Oh how I look forward to seeing you there. While I feel a little apprehensive about my first face to face conference, it is heartening to know I will be surrounded by many of you, just like me, coming together from every corner of the country with the common goal of achieving equity for our children and I certainly know you will all uplift me, bring forth my best and my confidence will be boosted by the enthusiasm and encouragement resonating around the room. I only hope I can do the occasion justice. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your support this past twelve months and for trusting Federal Council with representing you and being a voice for our children. To the current Federal Council my sincere gratitude to you all for what we have achieved this past twelve months.

It is an honour and a privilege to be on Council and work with you all. I wonder if any members reading this have considered joining Federal Council? We would love to have you on board and I promise you won't regret it.

Between now and conference though, let's not forget that, whether face to face, virtual or anything in between we are all here to support each other and this is no more obvious than when we come together at conferences because, as I have said before, being isolated does not mean you are alone.

Alana Moller
Federal President

Week of Networking

ICPA Federal President, Alana Moller, had the opportunity to spend the week of 15 March 2021 in Canberra meeting with several organisations including Outback Alliance, the National Farmers Federation and the National Rural Health Alliance. She also met with representatives from the Department of Education Skills and Training followed by a visit to Parliament House with Kristy Sparrow from the Better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote (BIRRR) team and Trent Geddes from the Regional Tech Hub. They met with Minister Coulton, Minister Gee's Chief of Staff, Peter

Fraser, Senator James McGrath, Minister Paul Fletcher, and Senator Bridget McKenzie.

This was followed by the opportunity to participate in the Regions Rising Summit for two days with thanks to nbn.

Having not had the opportunity for face to face meetings in Canberra since October 2019, the week was a great opportunity to put faces to names, network and ensure the ICPA message was heard.

Trent Geddes, Regional Tech Hub, Alana Moller, ICPA Federal President, Kristy Sparrow, BIRRR and Senator James McGrath discuss all things communication

