
Rural Schools Report

Madam President, Fellow State Councillors, Federal President and Councillor, Members and Guests,

Moree Branch held our 51st annual conference in 2023, thanks to Phoebe Watts and her team we enjoyed another successful conference.

After our conference, a letter was forwarded in conjunction with Distance Education, Rural Schools, Early Childhood, and allowances as these motions are all directed to the Deputy Premier of New South Wales the Hon. Prue Car.

ICPA-NSW has continued to have monthly meetings with the RRREP unit (Regional, Rural and Remote Education policy unit.) It is an opportunity for ICPA-NSW to bring up specific motions and have meetings with the appropriate people to help with these requests.

All motions that are carried at conference are put into the Rural Schools Policy Report, if your branch has had any feedback from the Department regarding a particular motion and still do not feel completely satisfied it has been answered, if possible, change the motion and explanation the following year to reflect the response.

The RuralCONNECT Child and Family Day was held at Louth on the 17th May 23. Thanks to Sue Kingwill and her team. Jane Carroll a children's author attended the day, Jane delivered a workshop to the children of the Louth Public School. Emily Armstrong organised yoga and relaxation techniques for the school children and in the afternoon to parents and visitors. Hearing Australia conducted their hearing checks throughout the day on students, mobile children, and the adults. As the Flying Doctor were in attendance it was a fabulous day for Hearing Australia to attend, if any follow up treatment were needed the children were able to obtain a referral or antibiotics. Hearing Australia said it was an excellent day as they did assist some children with ear infections and early hearing problems. Hearing tests for the adults was also beneficial as many would not normally have the testing done.

State Councillors attended the annual deputation to Sydney in June. We once again met with many politicians and groups relating to our portfolios. This is generally very positive to meet face-to-face with the politicians that directly relate to our portfolios. Our motions are discussed at these meetings in the hope that we may get some positive feedback in return.

Unless some of these rural school's motions are made into policy, when there is a change of directors or principals even though some of our motions have been implemented it maybe that they are not continued and thus the need for motions to be continually brought to our conference will continue. Many motions are supporting the incoming principals which can only be beneficial to everyone concerned.

A report from the Auditor-General – Regional, rural, and remote education was handed down on the 10th of August 2023. I have listed the link below which has the full report.

<https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/regional-rural-and-remote-education>

There was another report in November 2013 Rural and Remote Education – A blueprint for Action. As a person who has educated their children in rural and remote, I find this quite disturbing as it has been 11 years since the last report and clearly there has been minimal progress.

In the Portfolio Committee No 3 – Education on 24th October 2023 this was discussed with Deputy Premier Prue Car, and she stated, “as the result of that damning report,” Murat Dizdar Secretary for NSW Department of Education also stated “I don't take great delight in its reading. It's pretty sobering and says we've got a long way to go to get things right for rural and regional.”

On a brighter note the Secretary NSW Department of Education said in the Portfolio Committee meeting that in the last seven months he has been leading the agency to look at what policies teachers really use as currently they have around 350, they are hoping some of these can be removed with zero impact, the polices remaining will be more accessible and as an example the excursion policy instead of being 18 pages will be reduced to a maximum of 2 pages. They realise that reducing policy and improving policy will not be the whole solution to the teacher workload, but it will be very welcomed.

The workload of teachers particularly in our TPI and TP2 schools has been a concern of ICPA-NSW for some time.

ICPA-NSW was invited with other stakeholders to have a roundtable with the Secretary NSW Department of Education and in the Portfolio Committee No 3 it was stated that some 25 per cent of our students are in rural and regional and remote contexts and that the stakeholders at the roundtable are very passionate about this topic. ICPA-NSW believe this would be very beneficial for both parties if we could continue to meet with the Secretary when we have our deputation to Sydney.

I would like to thank all our councillors who do such a fantastic job volunteering their time to hopefully achieve some great outcomes for our rural and remote children. Thank you to our branches and members for taking the time to come to conference.

Annabel Strachan
Rural Schools Convenor