

2022 State Conference Secretary's Report

Patron Mrs Patricia Mitchell, State President Mrs Louise Martin, Federal Vice President Mrs Lisa Slade, Fellow State Councillors, QLD Past Councillors and Branch members, it gives me pleasure to present my Secretary's Report for the 2021/2022 year. This is my first report to Conference and what a year of rapid learning it has been! They say learning is lifelong and I have to say, I still have much to learn about ICPA!

I was delighted to be nominated to be a part of the ICPA family and to be able to contribute to its all-important work in advocacy for equality of access, opportunity and support in education for rural and remote children and families, in a different way than my previous life in boarding schools. I have certainly had big shoes to try to fill as I followed Kelly Ostwald with her amazing organisational skills, and I would like to recognise Kel for her work as Secretary and thank her sincerely, for such an organised handover.

When initially approached to ascertain my interest in the role of Secretary, I felt both deeply honoured and filled with trepidation at the same time! I wondered if I could contribute in a meaningful way. Branch members and State Councillors have shown me just how passionate they are, how hard they work, and how fearless they are in their advocacy. My understanding of rural and remote life, along with its joys and challenges has certainly deepened and my admiration for ICPA as a respected organisation has been confirmed.

I thank Louise, Wendy, Kate, Tammie and Amanda on Executive for your unswerving support, training and welcome for this "newbie". Your encouragement, forgiveness, graciousness and support has been truly appreciated and has been peppered with senses of humour and good fun – so essential in effective teams. I want to record and sing the praises of Assistant Secretary, Sonia Spurdle. Sonia deserves our recognition for her quiet work, very much "behind the scenes" – she produces *Qld Compass* and keeps us on task, keeps wonderful records and certainly works above and beyond requirements of her role. Sonia has also been a constant source of encouragement and good humour and I love her unfailing "can do" approach to life. She is also the master of the gif!! This helps us all keep issues in perspective and to have a good laugh! Sonia, you are a wonderful representative of ICPA.

My thanks also to Melissa Iland for her support in all things technological, social media and publicity. She is a whiz! To State Councillors, thank you for welcoming this rookie into your term, for your support and patience and for the opportunity to get to know you all. What a great bunch of people you are, and how much I have enjoyed your enthusiasm and company.

What a 12-month period we have experienced – these months have seen us on social and emotional rollercoasters with the insecurity of living with Covid in Queensland, the on and off lockdowns and "freedoms". The lonely challenges for those with families overseas, interstate and in boarding schools have been enormous and tested our resilience and reserve. The uncertainty of getting children home and then back to school really took its toll. Finally, our borders opened and more certainty for our interstate and international families came to be. Now, we see many infected with Covid and influenza, as we learn to live with these illnesses.

As if Covid wasn't challenging enough, this past year has also seen drought followed by rain and floods for many. Some have been isolated and others have lost crops, or at the very least, had quality affected. And, all the while, families want to provide the best possible opportunities for their children.

I have discovered that life in ICPA and on State Council is extremely busy – in fact it is almost a full-time job and is certainly a way of life! Unfortunately, I was not in attendance at State Conference in Cunnamulla, nor at Federal Conference in Longreach as arrangements for these were made prior to my nomination and then position on State Council. However, I was able to join the post-conference meeting in Cunnamulla briefly, with Kel kindly continuing to cover the Secretary position for me. Thank you, Kel.

I was also able to join Federal Conference in Longreach virtually for Day 2. Federal Conference was postponed from August to November due to border closures, much to the disappointment of the organisers. However, in true resilient style, they re-grouped and a fabulous Federal Conference finally went ahead.

2021 State Conference saw a changing of the guard with Kelly Ostwald and Michelle Freshwater stepping down after wonderful committed service to ICPA Qld State Council. Dianne Meikle, Loretta Goodwin, Jocelyn Freeman and I were welcomed to State Council for 2021-22. New Councillors were guided by their mentors and embraced their roles with enthusiasm.

Annie McGill took on the important role of Fundraising Officer for the year, and has now handed the reins to Christy Bredhauer who has “ hit the ground running!” Lisa Southern and Jacque Hemming have been kept busy producing fabulous *News and Views* editions for us all to read. Louise Winten has worked as Membership Officer, overcoming a number of challenges with the new database as she and Amanda worked on membership.

Judy Treloar flew the ICPA Flag with Hospital Schools and I had the joy of meeting Judy at Bush Christmas as she helped sell ICPA Raffle tickets.

Jeff Little has concluded his role as IT Adviser and his contributions to ICPA and to Conferences will definitely be missed.

Sadly, Rob McArthur and Jocelyn Freeman have decided to step down from Council due to their own work commitments and Tammie Irons is also stepping down, after many years as one of the stalwarts of ICPA Qld. Fortunately, Tammie will still be assisting and active in ICPA in a number of ways. We wish these three Councillors, the very best for whatever lies ahead and thank them for their service.

Following State Conference, Delegations were held in mid-August 2022 in Brisbane – due to Covid concerns and last-minute relaxing of restrictions, only five Councillors were able to attend our Face 2 Face Meeting and Delegations in person, with others attending meetings virtually. Whilst we would have preferred to all be together, this was a good compromise and worked very well. We were grateful to the stakeholders with whom we met for accommodating this format. Whilst it was a surreal experience, the interests of rural and remote families were very well represented.

State Council Mid-Year Meeting was held in Chillagoe – and what an event it was! We heard face to face about the joys and challenges of educating children in FNQ and saw first-hand the fabric of community and support of others in small communities. FNQ members, under the wonderful leadership of Karen Muccignat travelled huge distances to facilitate our stay and everything ran ever so smoothly and a great deal was achieved. It was a challenging time for these ICPA members, but they did themselves proud, particularly with an extremely successful Saturday evening function and Branch fundraiser, attended by folks from near and far. It was truly a community effort.

State Councillors enjoyed learning about Chillagoe and surrounds. One highlight had to be the Cave Tour along with FNQ Branch members; this allowed us to get to know FNQ Branch members and our Vice-President Wendy to bravely conquer her fear of bats! We delighted in our interactions with local Chillagoe

folk and being able to spread the ICPA word and information about the role in advocacy of ICPA. Our Face 2 Face meeting was the first time most of us had been together in 2021 and was extremely successful with some councillors joining virtually.

Mid-Year Meeting led to Mini-delegations in November in Brisbane as Councillors further represented the issues members had debated at State Conference. Borders and the borders continued at the forefront of State Councillors' activity as this highly emotionally charged issue had enormous implications for families and mental health – parents and children alike.

The uncertainty surrounding interstate students being able to return to Queensland for the 2022 School Year prompted a large campaign on the part of ICPA Qld with 93 letters being sent to all Queensland State politicians urging them to implore the Queensland Government to endorse the *National Code for Boarding School Students*. As things transpired, the borders opened, creating greater certainty for families and schools.

Delegations set for February were postponed to March in Brisbane (again the victim of Covid, with school commencing later due to outbreaks and then of course, the floods!). If anything has built our resilience over the past years, nothing else has! We are certainly adaptable!

The Department hosted us for a day of meetings with representatives from Department Branches and we were grateful for robust and informative meetings as well as generous hospitality. Catholic School Parents Queensland hosted our Face to face meeting and we were welcomed with great support and generosity. Executive Director, Carmel Nash met with three Councillors to brief us on current issues and developments in Catholic Schools.

Other meetings included:

- P&Cs Qld's – Scott Wiseman and Board Member Sally Whelan
- Independent Schools Queensland
- Catholic Education Commission
- DEBST
- The Hon. Grace Grace MP, Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing
- New Director General of Education, Michael De'Arth who replaced Tony Cook in August
- Queensland College of Teachers

Post conference, as per usual, many letters were written and emails sent to various stakeholders regarding the motions passed at our conference. Meetings with Federal and State Presidents and Secretaries were virtual and then finally, in person in Canberra last month! These meetings provide the opportunity to share ideas, happenings and updates, as well as to discuss issues which arise from time to time.

The Secretary receives and sends numerous emails each and every day! These can relate to the organisation of Delegations, contact with stakeholders, State Conference, members' issues, monthly meetings, mid-year meeting and campaigns, and communication between State Councillors. There is no rest for the wicked! Thank you letters have been written to our wonderful donors, and letters have also been written to politicians and other stakeholders. Our communication is especially important in developing positive relationships with others, so that we are able to have worthy conversations in the interests of our members and their families.

Blackall Branch Conference Committee members have been working extremely hard to organise conference this year. They have done a superb job in delivering this wonderful conference. Our thanks must go to Anita and Susie, Sarah and Marcelle and all the hardworking members of the committee. Thank you also to Wendy for her constant work in liaising with the Committee and State Council.

ICPA was asked again to be on the judging panel for the Showcase Awards for Excellence in Schools (Rural and Remote category). Kate was the Councillor who volunteered to assist in this role. Other Portfolio Leaders attended meetings and committees in person or virtually – issues included but were not limited to: OSHC, travel and school buses, DE accommodation, financial assistance/allowances, and communication/technology, and of course, Boarders and Borders!

The 2021-2022 Council year saw branches recognising Members who have contributed significantly to ICPA Qld over the years.

Branch Life Membership - Winton Branch: Mrs Emma Brodie

Queensland State Council - Queensland State Life Membership: Mrs Margaret Greenway

Queensland Certificates of Appreciation will be awarded during Day 2 of Conference.

Off council positions this year were held by Fundraising Officer, Annie McGill; News and Views Editors, Lisa Southern and Jacque Hemming and our IT advisor, Jeff Little. Thanks must also go to Natalie Slack for putting together all the new member's packs. Tammie Irons has been our Conference Registration Officer and she has been kept very busy with all the registrations and questions around conference this year. It is certainly a busy time!

Last year Bush Christmas raised over \$13,800.00 to support the work of ICPA. ICPA Qld would like to express our heartfelt thanks to Liz McClymont for the huge effort that she has put into raising funds for ICPA over the years. We hope to continue this relationship with the new owners of Bush Christmas as this is one of our major fundraising events. Please visit Bush Christmas this coming year. The craft and other merchandise are simply a sight to behold and visiting Bush Christmas from the Gold Coast was a wonderful day out with friends.

Once again, Conference Minutes were most ably compiled by Di Selby. This is a task which takes many hours to ensure accuracy and professionalism. We certainly appreciate your organisation and hard work, Di. Noela Wilson is also to be thanked and recognised for proof reading the minutes and other ICPA material.

One large project undertaken by Mary Killeen and Christine McLean is the 50 Year Book, a wonderful record and celebration of the work of ICPA Qld since its inception. This work has taken many hours and great commitment and we urge you to purchase a copy for your own enjoyment.

Rose Philip continues to be our Archivist. This is such important work for the history of ICPA.

Branches are reminded to send a copy of their AGM minutes and Branch Executives forms to the Assistant Secretary, assistantsecretary@icpaqld.com.au. Please also send any updates to membership records to the Membership Officer, membership@icpaqld.com.au, or you can log onto the database to change personal details, yourself. This is essential to keep the member data base current and ensure those who join are included and receive all information relevant to them.

In conclusion, I would like to assure members, that State Councillors work extremely hard to represent you and your issues. Please be sure to participate as you can – this can include completing surveys, responding to requests for information, preparing motions, updating information and supporting each other. Thank you for allowing me to present my Secretary's report for adoption.

Annette Boyle

ICPA Qld State Secretary