

SPECIFIC NEEDS PORTFOLIO CONFERENCE REPORT – June 2023

At the 2022 ICPA State Conference held in Blackall there were three motions carried in relation to the Specific Needs portfolio. The motions related to improved support for students with learning disabilities, fiscal support to private organisations delivering allied health to rural and remote students with specific learning needs and to liaise with Queensland Health to extend the services of School-Based Youth Health Nurses (SBYHN) to primary school students in rural and remote areas.

ICPA QLD State Council have worked with the Department of Education and other key stakeholder organisations during the lobby year to speak to the motions, create awareness and ensure that due consideration was given to all the motions as carried by members on the conference floor.

Following discussions and questions during delegations in Brisbane with the Department of Education it was reiterated that since the establishment of the Autism Hub in 2016, the number of regional Principal Advisors along with the Autism advisory phone line supporting not only schools but families has doubled. The Department also updated council on the new Reasonable Adjustments Resourcing (RAR) model that provides resources to schools based on the adjustment needs of students to access education programmes. This model is different from the former model – the Education Adjustment Program (EAP) as the resourcing is no longer tied to a diagnosis but the needs of the student.

Upon meeting with the Department of Education, State Schools – Disability, Inclusion and Student Services team we were advised that in regard to financial support to private organisations that provide allied health to students with specific learning needs and where government supplied service providers are unable to provide a sufficient service that the policy for schools is that it is a Principal based decision regarding engagement of private providers delivering services in their schools. Principals' decisions will take into consideration the safety and learning of all students and whether the service or observation could reasonably be provided after hours.

Discussion with the Department of Education, the State Schools, Disability, Inclusion and Student Services (DISS) sector, explained that the current School-Based Youth Health Nurses (SBYHN) programme will not be extended to primary schools. The main contributing factor is that they cannot get staff to fill positions to deliver the program as it stands. The current vacancies are due to the health sector being so stretched with staffing; therefore, it would be untenable to further extend the program to include primary schools.

Through the Student Wellbeing Package, every state school will receive an additional allocation for a mental health and wellbeing professional. Currently there are 97 schools receiving support with 41 of these in rural and remote areas. Further information on the Student Wellbeing Package can be found <https://education.qld.gov.au/students/student-health-safety-wellbeing/student-wellbeing-package>.

The Department would like to ensure that members are aware of the role of the Autism Hub in supporting not only students but also schools and families. Further information can be found - <https://autismhub.education.qld.gov.au/>

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all branches that put motions forward at the 2022 conference, these motions now are a part of the Specific Needs Policy and will continue to be a part of the ICPA QLD lobby.

Wendy Henning
Special Needs Portfolio Leader
councillor13@icpaqld.com.au