



# Submission

**to the**

**National Schools Food and Fibre Education Strategy  
from the  
Federal Council**

**of the**

**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Inc.**

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ICPA (Aust) is a voluntary, apolitical parent body dedicated to ensuring all geographically isolated students have access to the services required for an equitable, affordable high-quality education, from early childhood through to tertiary and training. The member families of The Association reside and work in rural and remote Australia and all share a common goal of achieving access to an equitable education for their children, despite their geographic location. They often live great distances from services required to support the education of their children and therefore need specifically designed rural and remote programs that allow these children to learn, develop and thrive.

ICPA (Aust) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft National Schools Food and Fibre Education Strategy. With our foundations set in rural and remote Australia where food and fibre is a strong contributor to the local and regional economy and the majority of members having links both directly and indirectly, with food and fibre industries, it is ICPA's firm belief access to robust and engaging agricultural curriculum offerings is vital to a strong and sustainable future – to our member's livelihoods and communities.

ICPA (Aust) firmly believes the vision, long term outcomes and areas of change outlined in Section 4.1 within the Strategy encapsulates clearly and concisely what is needed and desired in food and fibre education.

A career pathway in agriculture needs to be seen as valued and valuable by students and their families, by educational institutions (both compulsory and post compulsory), by government and by the nation itself. Food and fibre is fundamental to health and wellbeing of all and a career in this field needs to be given the same respect and dues as one in other fields such as medicine, business and technology. This raising of the status of an ag based career must be integrated into the foundations of this strategy.

ICPA (Aust) would encourage the involvement of industry groups in the steering committee as well as regular collaboration and cooperation with stakeholders to ensure the strategy remains relevant, agile and capable. It would also encourage the involvement of grassroots organisations such as itself due to our strong, combined lived experiences and ability to tap into these to ensure that the planning, development and rollout of the strategy will actually realise the aims and intents of the strategy in realistic, relevant, tangible and accessible ways.

In the Strategic Principles section, on page 11, we particularly welcome the inclusion of equitable access to services and opportunities. Anecdotal evidence from our broad rural, remote and geographically isolated membership base highlights that, too often, due to the tyranny of distance and the increased costs and practicalities that come with providing access to metro comparable offerings and services, students in these locations miss out on opportunities to develop, diversify and improve skillsets. Additionally, due to these same costs and practicalities, as well as a lack of access to familial support, rural/remote and isolated students often do not fulfill their potential or realise their aspirations when learning is only offered in urban scenarios. Policies, processes and appropriate supports, including fiscal and human, must be put in place to facilitate equitable access to educational opportunity.

It is acknowledged that those from rural and remote areas are more likely to return to these areas, post education, to grow and develop their careers. Therefore, it is paramount that they be afforded equitable opportunity to education. Given that for many regional areas in Australia, agriculture is a foundation of local communities, strong, relevant and robust food and fibre curriculum must be readily available and accessible to facilitate an ongoing strong economic foundation.

Anecdotal evidence and lived experience of our membership highlights the parlous state of dedicated agricultural departments and specialist subject educators within our compulsory educational facilities. ICPA (Aust) is heartened by the recognition of the need for this in the Strategy and commends effort made to redress this as noted in Sections 6.1 through to 6.3. It is one of the key seeds to success.

In closing, given how food and fibre, and therefore education in these areas, is essential to the lives and livelihoods of the majority of our members, ICPA (Aust) welcomes the development of this strategy and looks forward to seeing it, once finalized, implemented and embedded into places of learning nationwide.

