

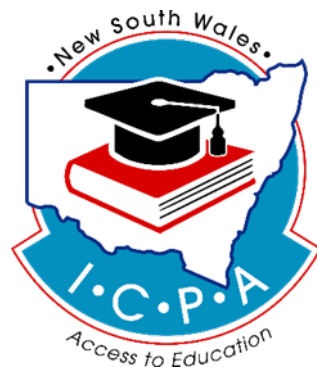
**Isolated Children's Parents' Association
of
New South Wales Inc.**

**MINUTES
of the
50th ANNUAL CONFERENCE
30th and 31st March 2022**

Held at

BOURKE

Hosted by Bourke Branch



**Convenors: Anna McCorkle and Di Ridge
Bourke Branch Convening Committee**

This is a transcript of the 2022 Annual Conference of ICPA-NSW Inc.

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2022 Bourke Conference Participants

JOINT PATRONS

Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of New South Wales,
and Mr Dennis Wilson

STATE COUNCIL

Kate WARBY	President
Deborah CASTLE	Secretary
Shannah JOINER	Treasurer
David BUTLER	Vice President & Travel Convenor
Libby McPHEE	Vice President & Communications Convenor
Claire BUTLER	Immediate Past President
Gabie LE LIEVRE	Publicity/Webmaster
Irene LUND	Lone Members Officer and Membership officer
Tanya MITCHELL	Committee & Allowances Convenor
Monique WATKIN	Committee & Boarding Schools, Ag High Schools & Hostel Convenor
Laura STALLEY	Committee & Distance education convenor
Deborah NIELSEN	Committee & Early Childhood Convenor
Bree WAKEFIELD	Committee & Health and Wellbeing Convenor
Annabel STRACHAN	Committee & Rural Schools Convenor
Kellie TURNBULL	Committee & Special Education Convenor
Tim FLETCHER	Committee & Tertiary Convenor
David SHRIMPTON	Merchandise Manager

FEDERAL COUNCIL

Alana Moller	ICPA (Aust) President and
Suzanne Wilson	ICPA (Aust) Publicity Officer

FEDERAL LIFE MEMBERS

Wally Mitchell AM	and Life Member Bourke Branch
Rory Treweeke	and State Life Member and Life Member Walgett Branch

STATE LIFE MEMBERS

Toni Ridge	and Life Member Bourke Branch
David Cameron	and Life Member Namoi Branch

BRANCH LIFE MEMBERS

Rona Davis	Bourke Branch
Vivian Slack-Smith	Brewarrina Branch
Michael Davis	Brewarrina Branch
Helen Rogers	Hay Branch
Bill Stephens	Monaro Branch

Lindy Kitto	NSW/VIC Lone Member
Jenny Caughey	Rankins Springs Branch
Ellen Walker	Rankins Springs Branch
Margot Church	Walgett Branch
Judy Sinclair-Newton	Walgett Branch
Jane O'Brien	Walgett Branch
Nyelva Carnegie	West Wyalong Branch

There are 34 delegates representing 16 branches to participate in conference.

BRANCH DELEGATES

Kirsty Wilson	Balranald Branch
Amanda Bell	Bourke Branch
Scott Mitchell	Bourke Branch
Terissa Angel	Brewarrina Branch
Kathryn Hertslet	Brewarrina Branch
Nikki Pearce	Brewarrina Branch
Britt Anderson	Broken Hill Branch
Sally Nevill	Broken Hill Branch
Pip Ryan	Hay Branch
Carol Huggins	Hay Branch
Kate Treweeke	Lightning Ridge-Goodooga Branch
Michael Treweeke	Lightning Ridge-Goodooga Branch
Rachael Nielsen	Louth Branch
Tegan Barton	Louth Branch
Emma Boede	Louth Branch
Pam Fletcher	Monaro Branch
Nicole Piper	Namoi Branch
Bruce Paynter	NSW/VIC Lone Member
Myfi Kellahan	NSW/VIC Lone Member
Lindy Kitto	NSW/VIC Lone Member
Gordon Dunlop	NSW/VIC Lone Member
Jodie Stewart	Nyngan Branch
Laughlin Ross	Nyngan Branch
Kate Yabsley	Nyngan Branch
Kerrie Johnston	Rankins Springs Branch
Ellen Walker	Rankins Springs Branch
Bernadette Maxwell	Tibooburra-Milparinka Branch
Fiona Hotchin	Tibooburra-Milparinka Branch
Robin Beckwith	Walgett Branch
Tracy Grant	Walgett Branch
Karen Ricardo	Walgett Branch
Tegan Douglas	Wentworth Branch
Nerida Healy	Wentworth Branch

OBSERVERS

Jess Bottom	Bourke Branch
Prue Ritchie	Bourke Branch
Ros Davis	Brewarrina Branch
Jill Fessey	Brewarrina Branch
Suzanah Palmer	Broken Hill Branch
Christine Harvey	Broken Hill Branch
Juarne Reynolds	Broken Hill Branch
Melissa Job	Hay Branch
Anne Milliken	Hay Branch
Joan Treweeke	Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch
Ros Manns	Louth Branch
Jocelyn Cameron	Namoi Branch
Sue Stephens	Monaro Branch
Jim Caughey	Rankins Springs Branch
Geoff Walker	Rankins Springs Branch
Phillipa Beckwith	Walgett Branch
Cath Deshon	Walgett Branch
Lara Hawke	Walgett Branch
Liz Powell	Walgett Branch
Louise Martin	ICPA Queensland President
Amanda Clark	ICPA Queensland Treasurer

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ben Ballard	Laura Paine
Julia Mitchell	Jacynta Moylan
Helen Parker	Lisa Alonso Love
Rosalind Walsh	Chloe Read
Martin Dickens	Garth Bolwell
Louise Del Popolo	

ORGANISATIONS

Lachlan Ford	Deputy Mayor, Bourke Shire Council
Mark Riley	General Manager Bourke Shire Council
Richard Stokes	Australian Boarding Schools Association
Jared Daunt	Australian Boarding Schools Association
Amanda Ferrari	Boarding Schools Expo Australia
Richard Dougan	Bush Children's Education Foundation NSW
Sue Kingwill	Contact Inc.
Sarah Barton	Department of Regional NSW
Polly Doran	NBN Co.
Nicole Fosteris	NBN Co.
Tanya Jackson	NSW Outback Division of General Practice
Tim Danaher	NSWTF
James Cleaver	Office for Regional Youth, DRNSW
Adam McLean	Office for Regional Youth, DRNSW
Julia Ryan	Office for Regional Youth, DRNSW
Vicki Olds	Outback Mobile Resource Unit

Ellen Day	Resilience NSW
Jenny Stevenson	Royal Far West
Danielle Taylor	Royal Far West
Mike Marom	Telstra
Josh Fullwood	Telstra
Chris Donnelly	Telstra
Lewis Clark	Transport for NSW
Holly Davies	Transport for NSW
David Wilson	Transport for NSW
Douglas Melrose-Rae	The Association of Independent Schools NSW
Gillian Bale	NSW Centre for Effective Reading
Lynne Young-Dwarte	NSW Centre for Effective Reading

SCHOOLS

Christina Prendergast-Fay	Ballarat Grammar
Courtney Coe	Calrossy Anglican School
Sue Lancaster	Kincoppal-Rose Bay
Nathan Short	Kinross Wolaroi School
Hannah Whittemore	Kinross Wolaroi School
Brian Sullivan	Knox Grammar
Kate Kovacs	Loreto Normanhurst
Lyn O'Neill	NEGS
Kathy Bishop	NEGS
Carolyn Burgess	Pymble Ladies' College
James Metzeling	Red Bend Catholic College
Luke Morrissey	St Gregory's College
Anthony Begg	St Ignatius' College
Sean Cox	Wesley College Melbourne

Special Thanks

ICPA-NSW also extends a special thank you to the following: -

Sam and Jenny Bailey
Bourke Convening Committee
Brian Cox, Rentfast.

Introduction to Conference.

Kate Warby, ICPA-NSW President.

Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land on which our meeting is being held and pay my respects to the elders, past, present and emerging. On behalf of ICPA-NSW I would like to welcome all Life members here to conference. We have Branch, State and Federal Life Members present so I extend a very warm welcome to all. I feel honoured to be standing here at this our 50th Annual State Conference and back where it all began here in Bourke. We have a very fitting theme of Fifty Years On. Fifty Years Strong, remembering all that has been done by those who stood before us continuing on this wonderful legacy. A recent quote by former Wallaby, David Campese struck a

chord with me being so very relevant to our organisation. “You don’t build a house from the top down. The development of grass roots is the foundation of the future.” And the wonderful wisdom of Nelson Mandela who once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” That is why we are here today. To work through and develop great grass root foundations so that future generations of rural and remote children can continue to have access to equitable educational opportunities and we are advocating on their behalf taking one step at a time. ICPA-NSW over the past twelve months have been working tirelessly on many issues around 13 portfolios in State Council and we have managed to stay very active considering the challenges that Covid has continued to bring us during this time. It is great that we now starting to see a sense of normality return and we can discuss our concerns and issues surrounding access to education with ICPA members, ministers and members of parliament, guests and representatives from various NSW departments. It is time for us to really put the challenges on the table. That can be confronting and at times it can be very overwhelming so please remember all the successes to and the positive reasons why we live where we live and why we are so passionate about these rural areas and how important our communities are in providing a future for the children of regional and remote NSW.

I am pleased that we have sixteen branches represented here at conference. I welcome all delegates and, in particular, those who are attending for the first time and thank those who are returning. Over the next two days you will learn from our guest speakers as well as from each other so I encourage all attending to take the opportunity to engage in hearty, robust and passionate debate and informed conversation even off the floor and well into the evening. On the conference agenda there are portfolio reports to be presented and due to time constraints, many of the reports you will hear from our councillors will be condensed but the full reports will be printed and are in with your conference documents. These reports will also be published on the ICPA-NSW website after conference. We are very fortunate as we are every year, to have representatives from the Department of Education and the Department of Transport. Some of our Department of Education here continue their work alongside ICPA-NSW through the Rural Regional and Remote Education Policy Directorate known as RRREP and the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Group known as REAG, and the Disability Strategy Group, just to name a few of the many groups that ICPA sits with at Department level. There are many other organisations and schools here this week that ICPA-NSW often work closely with and are great supporters of our organisation. Some local schools and boarding schools are in attendance, not just from NSW but we do have some visiting from interstate. Your support in striving for equity for access to education for rural and remote students is very much appreciated. Thank you to Federal President, Alana Moller and Federal Publicity Officer, Suzanne Wilson for attending. Your perspective on all matters and particularly those of a federal nature are greatly appreciated. Thank you also to Queensland President, Louise Martin and Queensland Treasurer, Amanda Clark for making the journey south and we are very appreciative of your attendance and support.

Although all motions will be debated and voted on at this conference, any that are of a federal nature will be addressed to the Federal Government and will go unaltered and be presented at federal conference in Perth on the 3rd and 4th August, 2022. The reason that state council leaves them on our agenda is so that you, the members, get to hear all comments and debate to understand and, hopefully, come up with some fresh ideas in progressing the issues. To date there are close to 90 conference motions to be debated and decided upon. We therefore have a very firm programme to get through over the next two days so we do ask that you are prompt in returning to the conference floor after our scheduled breaks. Floor motions can be handed to the ICPA-NSW secretary, Deb Castle, until lunch time tomorrow. Only delegates to the conference can vote on the motions but we do encourage guests and observers to take any part in discussions and debate. State council has found over the years that guests might have some knowledge or experience that, when shared with the conference, will enable better decision making for State Council and this is one of the many reasons it is good to have so many of you here today.

A reminder that delegates are given three minutes to read out the branch's explanations for motions. At the two-minute mark a bell will be rung by the secretary and again at the three-minute mark. If you have a changed explanation that is different to the one printed, please make sure your explanations are handed to Tanya Mitchell and Kellie Turnbull before the end of each day or after you have read your explanation. All conference proceedings are recorded to assist in the creation of our conference minutes so please use the microphones provided by Brian Cox, our audio specialist from Rentfast, whether you are presenting a motion or commenting. Please also clearly identify yourself for the recording with your full name and your branch or your organisation before you move the motion or comment. For example, you would say, "Kate Warby. Moree Branch. I move that..." I know our host the Bourke Branch and the convening committee have been looking forward to this day for quite some time. State Council congratulates you on your preparations for this 50th Annual State Conference which have had the added challenges of incorporating Covid-safe procedures but you have all taken on the challenges with such enthusiasm and good nature and this is the heart of ICPA. I wish you all an enjoyable and exciting conference.

Welcome to Country.

Pat Canty.

I'm Pat Canty a proud Barkindji woman who gets to live and work in this beautiful town of Bourke. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Barkindji and the Ngemba people, that this significant ICPA-NSW conference is meeting on today and tomorrow. I pay my respects to all our elders, especially my father, a proud Barkindji man, all the past and present elders and also welcome to any other aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people here today. There are over twenty language groups here in Bourke and I want to acknowledge them as well. I also pay respect and acknowledge all our aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children who are educated on the lands that you all come from across our beautiful country. Thank you for ensuring that our children get an education. Bourke has so much beautiful aboriginal history and history in general, both orally and visually and I hope you get an opportunity to experience it. Thank you again for this opportunity and also for having this significant event in our beautiful land and welcome everybody. Just a quick thing. I'm not a good public speaker as both Kate and Luke, from where my kids went to school will know, but I left my phone in the car last night, and I get in the car at ten to eight this morning and there is a text to me saying, "Can you please do this as Bruce can't make it?" Oh no! I got grey hairs. I'm not dressed. I'm in the car. I joined ICPA two days ago. I don't have proper clothes. I'd seen Kate in her dress and I thought that these were a bit similar so I feel OK about that. So, I was madly plucking these white hairs out of my chin out the front and a car came past and I'm like, oh no! I can't even put my head down. They've seen me! So, I do apologise but thank you for the honour to do this Welcome to Country at such a significant event and I thought that CWA was easy – just wash it up.

Welcome to Bourke Shire

Lachlan Ford, Deputy Mayor

Thanks Kate and thank you for the beautiful Welcome to Country, Lolly. It was wonderful. Her Excellency, the Hon. Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of NSW and Mr. Dennis Wilson who haven't arrived yet but they shouldn't be too far away. President of ICPA (Aust) Mrs Alana Moller. President of ICPA-NSW, Mrs. Kate Warby. ICPA Life Members which include former Mayor and inaugural president of the Bourke Branch of ICPA-NSW, Mr. Wally Mitchell. Conference delegates, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Lachlan Ford. I'm the Deputy Mayor of the Bourke Shire Council and apologies are extended for today's opening from Mayor Barry Hollman who is away from Bourke

attending a family funeral and our thoughts are with Barry at this difficult time. I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to the elders, past and present and I extend that respect to the aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today. It gives me great pleasure to welcome each person here today to the Bourke Shire. The Bourke community thanks you for making the effort to travel to the west of the state and I'm sure you will enjoy your time within the area. It is most fitting for the 50th State Conference of the ICPA to be held in Bourke and it was back in 1971 when Mrs. Pat Edgely called a meeting of parents on Bourke to form an organisation to fight for a subsidy to save the local hostel. On the 16th April, 1971, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association was born and the fight for access for education for isolated children began. Much has been achieved since these early days and 2022 is the fourth occasion that the ICPA has convened the state conference in Bourke. In the fifty years since the formation of the association the economic structure of the Bourke Shire has changed considerably. Whereas Bourke was once very much built off the sheep's back and was Australia's premier wool growing area, today there is still wool and sheep meat but also cotton, cattle, wild goats and tourism. What hasn't changed is the ongoing need for our rural and remote children to have access to quality education. I applaud the ICPA for its continued efforts in the pursuit of this need. After years of debilitating drought, it is fantastic to see the Darling River continuing to flow for an extended period and providing a significant boost to the Shire's economy. To the Governor and Mr. Wilson, a most warm welcome to you both. Her Excellency and Mr. Wilson are certainly no strangers to Bourke and I would particularly like to acknowledge the heartfelt letter that the mayor received from the Governor which was shared with the Bourke community following the destruction by fire of Diggers on the Darling in Bourke last year. The letter was very much appreciated. I look forward to meeting up with some of you at tonight's conference dinner and I trust that you will enjoy the conference. Thank you for choosing Bourke and enjoy your stay.

Kate Warby, President ICPA-NSW.

Thank you, Deputy Mayor Ford. Your community certainly have made us feel very welcome and for those who had pre-conference dinner at the Back-O-Bourke Exhibition Centre last night I know you will all join me in saying what a wonderful venue that was and our compliments must go to the Bourke High School which catered for the event last night. It was absolutely fabulous.

Bourke High School Captains

Britteney Knight and Kobie Lollback

Robyn Gillon, Bourke High School Vice-Captain.

Good morning everyone and it is nice to see you all here today. I saw many faces last night and I hope you guys enjoyed the food as I put all my time and effort into that. (Laughter and applause) I would just like to welcome you all here today to Bourke as it is such a nice place and to many people who haven't been here there are many things that you will see. Many people coming together as family, as a community and it's nice to see people come here today as a community and as family. So, thank you all for that. I started off at Bourke High School in Year Seven and my time there wasn't that well so I then went to boarding school in Bathurst from Year Eight to Year Eleven. My time there was really good. I enjoyed meeting new people and connecting with different cultures and languages but what I most of all missed was my family and my parents. That is one of the main reasons why I have come home I guess because being away from your family you do disconnect from them quite a lot and many people can relate to that because you guys have young children who are away, family members and so on and it is quite tough. Many of my years in boarding were educating the people of my culture. I'd faced a lot of racism and backlash to my education. I was glad enough to have the teachers to support

me through that and everything just went all thumbs up for me and I'm glad I'm back now where I can really connect with my family and have a great time. So, thank you all.

Kate Warby, President ICPA-NSW.

Thank you, Robyn, and as we can tell from your welcome today you are an outstanding representative for Bourke High School and your people. Thank you for your time.

Opening of Conference

The Hon. Margaret Beazley AC QC Governor of NSW and Mr. Dennis Wilson. Joint Patrons of ICPA-NSW.

The Hon. Margaret Beazley AC QC Governor of NSW

I acknowledge the traditional owners of this beautiful, beautiful land on which we meet and I pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging and to the traditional owners of all the lands across NSW. Until last year I had never been to Bourke so within six months it has been so fantastic to come back. Two and a half years ago I had never heard of the ICPA and can I tell you that after a number of interactions, you are a fabulous group. I'm not going to say that you are the most fabulous group because there are a few contenders out there but you are truly an inspirational group and it really is a very significant honour for myself and Dennis to have been asked to be your patrons. To be, then, part of this occasion, this historic occasion, your 50th Annual State Conference at Bourke, your birth place. Could I just say, thank you for rolling out the welcome mat and for rolling up your sleeves to bring the ICPA back to Bourke.

Shortly it is going to be our honour to unveil the plaque that refers to the three historic occasions which are really the genesis of what you are today. The forming of the Bourke Branch on the 16th April, 1971. Then the Federal Council on the 2nd October, 1971 and fifty years ago almost to the day, the forming of the NSW State Council on the 15th April, 1972. So, this conference binds together a celebration of history, an acknowledgement of achievement and a recognition of the ongoing work that is needed to ensure access to education for isolated young people. It is your unwavering commitment to and advocacy for the improved educational experience of generations of our kids from the bush over these past five decades that has been pragmatic and it has been life changing. We come across people all the time in all different sorts of situations and the number of times someone has made a comment to me to the effect that they couldn't have managed the education their children had where it not for you, were it not for ICPA. Adding to the nostalgia, to say nothing of the pride the ICPA has in bringing the 50th Conference back to Bourke, delegates, I know, have travelled from far and near, although I haven't quite worked out what passes for "near" in Bourke. I understand that a number of our founding members are here which is wonderful and including at least one who made that rather famous road trip to Sydney and Canberra in 1971 but I'll come back to that. I am acutely conscious that a great deal of preparation has gone into this conference, as is obvious from your programme, to make it a meaningful and successful one. In particular you will be giving attention to the 87 motions that have been prepared ranging from allowances to travel. These are all very significant for you and those resolutions are really going to set the path upon which you will travel forward in the ensuing year. Knowing the professionalism and dedication with which you pursue your objectives, I could suggest that you actually could have had a slightly different conference theme this year. I don't wish to be critical. I hope I'm going to be constructive because I thought, looking at your programme and knowing the work that you do, that your theme for this conference could have been "Fifty years on. Fifty years strong. In fifty years still strong." I have no doubt that that will absolutely be the case.

I was sworn in as Governor on the 2nd May, 2019 and, as Governor, there is a handover process of existing Patronage arrangements. So it is that existing ones cease and organisations have to, in effect, elect to apply for Patronage again and it is within the will of the Governor to accept the Patronage or, indeed, not. Now, ICPA. What did they do? They were in a hurry. The ICPA is always in a hurry to get things done it seems to me. They didn't wait for May. In fact, they didn't even wait for Governor Hurley, now the Governor General, to leave. They were there in April when they submitted their application for continuing Vice Regal Patronage. How could we resist? Absolutely not. Goodness gracious. Six months later we had, what I would consider one of the more important meetings certainly early on in our time as Governor but certainly all the way through, because we met a number of your members including Irene Lund at Cobar Bowling and Golf Club. I say that was very important because what we have found is that to speak to people on the ground makes the difference. You hear the story. You hear the concern in the voice and you can read the body language and you really get to understand things at a level that doesn't quite come through in a letter or an email. A well written letter can be very impactful and plays its own very important part but just to sit and talk but more particularly to sit and listen, really makes a huge difference to us who are Patrons in enabling our understanding of, not only what it is that you do but also why you need to be doing the things and why you need to have that direction that you do have. Cobar was really that opening chapter for us with and for ICPA. That actually brings me back to the written word because your publications and your annual reports are actually of an exceptional quality. I get a lot of these reports and I always acknowledge all of them but yours are of an exceptional quality. But, like I said, it is nothing compared to hearing those stories from the ground. Shortly after Cobar the executive team came to Government House and they, again, just took the story a bit further and on that occasion focussed on the strategic direction of ICPA. Were we hooked? Well, there is a bit more to the story but at that point your patronage application, having been made so efficiently, the informative discussion at Cobar and that formal round table meeting at Government House, there was no doubt that ICPA was a force to be reckoned with and I have to say, an honour with which to be associated.

Then came the rub. During one of the early lockdowns in Sydney and I have to say that Sydneysiders were really struggling with isolation, because they could only leave their home for essentials. That is to go to the supermarkets, to go to the pharmacy, to go to the doctor or go out for a walk. During the course of the lockdown, I was reading an edition of Pedals and it really did strike me the way that communities in regional and remote areas of the state live the daily challenges of isolation and they do so with a lot of grit, much good humour and such big hearts. That really made me think and to get a publication that makes you think is really quite an achievement in itself. It is not just flip over the pages of information and so I wrote a piece back to Pedals on the importance of the way you handle isolation and the lessons that it has for all of us in the city. Then I was reading another article in a later magazine I think was TopWire, about the culinary and medicinal values of mint especially mint chocolate biscuits. Now the erudite author of this piece was seven years of age. I've been a lawyer; I've been in a tough competitive profession. Do you think I was going to stand by and let a seven-year-old write such a fantastic article about mint unless I responded? That wasn't going to happen I can tell you. So, that spurred me on to write another article and thank you by the way for publishing my articles. So that time I wrote an article about Government House's menus for our royal visitors over the years. Closer to the celebrations today I penned an article which took me back to the 70's and to those important informative years of the ICPA and the challenges then for those who live and continue to live in the bush. Just run your mind back. The costed telephone calls. Internet still a thought bubble. Zooming was something you did when taking a corner. Following hard on the Flower Power of the late 60's fashion had become a schizophrenic choice between a maxi or a mini skirt to say nothing of hot pants. Is anyone admitting them? Men in safari suits. This, to me has to be the zenith of the fashion industry and I don't think it has come down to earth ever since. In 2021 with much of NSW not long having come out of serious drought, researching for that article made me acutely conscious of the tough cycle of life that is lived by our regional and remote families. So, going

back to the early 70's, that was a time when regional NSW and Queensland were again in drought. Rural incomes had fallen dramatically and people were leaving country towns in droves. Of course, the reverse of that is that people are coming back to country towns in droves for various reasons. But in terms of that tough cycle of life, at the moment we are having the School Leaders Programme at government House and some of you may have participated in that over the years, or your children may have. In the one room, at the moment, I'm having kids from Nyngan and kids from the northern Rivers. At this moment in history the kids from Nyngan are saying that things aren't too bad. The kids from the northern rivers are telling me stories about water and sewerage running through their lounge rooms. So, it is a tough, tough life and like I said, you live it with such grit and such good humour.

As Winston Churchill said in those dim dark years of World War II, "Never let good crises go to waste." Although, as I have been indicating, I think the crisis in the bush are really chronic problems and it was in this tough environment in the 1970's, of the drought, of the local prices, that pivotal meeting held on the 16th April, 1971 here in Bourke to discuss the closure of the student hostel, and don't they always hit the easiest thing? That bore the beginnings of the ICPA. One of the stories coming out of that time that I particularly love related to your very own Pat Edgley, MBE, and affectionally known, as I understand it, as the mother of ICPA. Because she used to go down and badger the members of parliament one senior cabinet minister described her as abrasive. Now, my own recollection of that era, when I was beginning out as a law student, was that men were determined, smart and able and so you were and so you are. Trouble was women with the same characteristic were, as that senior minister said, abrasive. As you know, Pat had a knack of wearing away obstacles and opposition. If you'll indulge me to tell one more story there was that first ICPA delegation car trip to the National Capital. Pat was in the car with Wally Mitchell, who is here today, and Bob Ridge. They set off at daybreak a bit unsure if your old car would even get to Canberra but you encountered your first hurdle at the very first ramp that you went across where you literally took out a sheep on your way to Canberra. Fortunately for this intrepid trio they survived, the car survived, but sadly the sheep was no more. Now memorialised in ICPA history as the sacrificial lamb at the beginning of what turned out to be that very important and very first highly successful trip because they knew in Canberra that ICPA was on the map and was going to stay on the map. You commenced as a group of committed volunteers here in Bourke who knew something needed to be done. For fifty years you have remained a committed group of volunteers who have steered what started as this little outback organisation and brought it to this present position as an organisation which, and I really say this with my own respect, it is an organisation which commands attention and it commands respect. Understanding only too well that that old acronym, "out of sight is out of mind", ICPA with its advocacy, its publications including Pedals and TopWire which I love, and its responsiveness to changing needs and changing times, continues Pat Edgely's abrasive tradition of wearing away obstacles and opposition to ensure access to education for our young people in regional and remote areas. I listened to our very committed Minister for Education and the proposals that she is putting forward and these are all fundamentally important. I've just been down to a little local St Ignatius Primary School and I have been meeting with primary school kids from the bush and they are all loving maths and science so something is being done by the teachers and leaders of education in the bush for the kids in the bush because we all know our future is going to be about not only education but also science in education. One thing we cannot let pass; the Minister referred to it at the end but I see this as fundamentally important. You need teachers and you need more teachers and I am sure that that is part and parcel of your very, very strong advocacy. So, along with your 87 agenda items I think that advocacy and those items are testament to the enduring need for your work for generations to come. We are really delighted to be here with you. We are going to be very honoured to unveil the plaque in a moment. Dennis is going to say a few words then I will formally declare this meeting open.

Mr. Dennis Wilson. Joint Patron of ICPA-NSW

The words, “Dennis is going to say a few words”, is more of a directive rather than a request. I do hope you understand that and I do hope you understand my position. Thank you for the mirth. Sarah Mitchell does have a reputation for being an excellent Minister. Excellent because she also has a reputation for caring so take advantage of her. She is there to listen and her reputation is one of listening. Her reputation is that of an enquiring mind and she will listen to you in the way you communicate with her. When I came in the room I hung around in the back of the room and I hung around in the back of the room for a reason and that was I noticed many of the tables at the back were occupied by the departments. The Department of Education. The Royal Far West. NBN. Telstra. Transport for NSW. Can I personally thank you for coming? It is an effort. It’s crucial and it shows that you care. It shows also your strength in being able to hear the myriad of issues that arise that directly affect your associations, your groups, your ministries and it’s important, once again, for those in the room to take advantage of them. They all seem to have smiles on their faces so, do that.

Her Excellency, who I welcome, as well as the President, mentioned our first communication with this group in Cobar. That was an interesting time for me as a joint Patron and I think I was the only male in the room and the women in the room other than Her Excellency, had a heap of kids who were, in fact, interfering with the process of discussion and conversation between Her Excellency to whom these women wanted to talk. They didn’t want to talk to me. So, I asked if they thought it would be an idea if I took the kids outside to play? Well, the kids came flying across the room as if thrown like little footballs and as I was walking out with the children I heard more “good lucks” than “thank you’s”. So, we went outside. The first thing was that we noticed that the golf course was across the road. The golf course in Cobar has sand greens. The particular green upon which we played was more like a sand box than a green and when we left it you would never ever dare to try and putt. You would chip every stroke even into the hole. But we did have fun and, on the way back, of course, the car which has a siren, blue and red lights were put on for the kids and they liked that. So, we came in and we saw that there had been a successful meeting and then I left exhausted. And the kids were there remaining happy. The Far West is an interesting organisation.

My first communication with The Far West was many years ago and I was told a story, perhaps apocryphal but it explains the situation of isolation. A young boy was at Far West in Manly. He was suffering from some illness. Low and behold this guy liked cricket and, low and behold, there was a cricket match on in the playground at Far West. He fancied himself as a fast bowler so he sent up running as fast as he could a ball and, indeed, it was a fast bowl. He took the ball, went back to his mark and ran up in slow motion. The umpire asked him what he was doing? He said that that was the way I see it on television. That’s the way we play cricket. Isolation is indeed an issue which you have so admirably addressed and I wish you all the very best for this meeting and for the next meeting as well to which I hope you will invite us because, at that time, we will still be around. As I say, take advantage of those government departments and organisations in the back of the room. I can see them all smiling. Waiting for you.

The Hon. Margaret Beazley AC QC Governor of NSW

Well, departments of state and other agencies, you’re not going to be able to sit there and resist that invitation but it is the stories from on the ground that you need to listed to. They are huge and they need to be addressed. Don’t just say that you will see what you can do. These will be issues that will be brought to your attention which actually need to be addressed. That’s your challenge and I’m sure we know what your response is going to be. They will be addressed. So, with that and that invitation and exhortation I formally declare the 50th Annual State Conference of the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of NSW, an organisation that has truly hooked us in, open. Thank you.

ICPA-NSW President's Joint Report

Claire Butler, Immediate Past President, ICPA-NSW

Madam President, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present this joint President's report on behalf of ICPA-NSW.

It is certainly marvellous to be standing here in Bourke, 50 years after the formation of the ICPA-NSW State Council. I was recently reading through some of the old motions from the very first conference and one that sticks to my mind is the Distance Education motion in 1972: *"that the Education Advisory Commission be requested to press for the provision of a Booster Station to assist education by television."* It really strikes me how forward thinking our founders were, when they themselves are thinking about future technology before the internet was even a thought. Thank you to you for setting the bar for those of us who follow in your footsteps.

It is pleasing that as a result of the 2020 conference in Hay, the Minister for Education requested monthly telephone meetings with the President to try to tick off the many items that were on the agenda at conference. The implementation of the new Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy Directorate now gives ICPA-NSW a direct line of two-way communication and will play a key role in continuing to keep the ICPA conversations at the top of the pile.

Two key motions that have finally come to fruition are the implementation of the Preschool Drive Subsidy Pilot making it easier for children in remote NSW to access early childhood education. This targeted per kilometre subsidy is available for eligible families to offset part of their transport costs. The second milestone in the expansion of the mobile communications footprint for areas that have small rural schools, with an announcement from Telstra and the Minister for Education that the final 12 Satellite schools in NSW will be transferred to Fibre Optic by early 2022 and this is nearly completed with only one school in its final stages of installation. Those have been key motions of ICPA-NSW at a state and federal level for many years.

On another positive note, the Country University Centres have expanded across Australia and provide a pathway for rural and remote students to study closer to home. Past President of ICPA-NSW Duncan Taylor played a key role in the CUC's and his words will always stick in my mind: *"Bush kids have heaps of aspiration. They want to be all the things that other children want to be. But, in many cases, they simply don't expect to get there because they don't have as many educational opportunities."* So, the CUC's play an important role in bridging that gap.

Some of you in this room will recall the Balranald branch motion back in 2013 at Federal Conference asking for improved mobile coverage for areas that have schools in them, that motion was initially lost, but the following year it was carried, so please do not get disheartened if you lose a motion today, as this is what can be achieved if you stay focused and not take no for an answer. Many thanks to Federal ICPA for their advocacy for these small remote schools.

Mini Deputation 2021

To follow up from the Hay conference and keep the momentum going, on 21st June our State Secretary, Deb Castle and Treasurer, Shannah Joiner represented State Council in Sydney for mini deputation. They furthered the conversation with Transport about School Drive Subsidies and also met with NSW Education officials, the Minister for Mental Health, Bronnie Taylor, the Minister for Education, Sarah Mitchell and Roy Butler MP. There are a few key priorities that ICPA-NSW would like to see fixed as a matter of priority, issues that continually come to conference:

- Better internet technology for DE students
- School Drive Subsidy for Preschoolers

- Mental Health for Youth
- Early Childhood education in remote areas

The solutions offered by ICPA-NSW are pragmatic and discussions have been positive, however it is a continued frustration for our members that things take years to be implemented and that means that for many children, the gaps in their learning and development remains.

A special mention must go to Deb and Shennah who, as a result of attending NSW parliament on 21st June, found themselves having to isolate for 14 days on their return home due to the COVID-19 restrictions affecting Sydney. I would like to publicly acknowledge both Deb and Shennah for their voluntary efforts amid yet another random outbreak. It really is testament to the commitment that they have to ICPA. On the topic of COVID-19, with NSW sandwiched between three states, for a second year in a row we found ourselves continuing to assist members who, due to border closures, find themselves anxious about their children's access to interstate boarding schools. The outbreaks last year again highlighted the need for a national framework for the movement of boarding school children and we thank ICPA (Aust) for the work done on this and for the National Code that has been implemented as a result. The standout for us is that we surveyed members to find out where they lived so that we were armed with information to give authorities. The information we collected was invaluable as we knew that at some point the authorities would ask how many children? Where do they live? What school do they attend? And whilst the list produced is by no means exhaustive, it gave a very good indication to authorities that we knew our members and we knew what we were talking about, especially in the context of Isolation and Social Distancing due to these children living on remote properties.

Current memberships for NSW are 615 families. Our challenge is finding ways to keep members staying on whilst new ones join. With limited resources as volunteers, we need to do some thinking around how to keep members once their child's education is completed. We have designed some new flyers and are encouraging branches to take them to local preschools and schools – and if time permits do a small presentation to parent groups, however we are mindful of the time this takes for our volunteer branches to do. There is a sense of volunteer fatigue and on the back of COVID-19 and natural disasters in NSW the toll on our branches is evident. We welcome any creative solutions branches may have to encourage memberships, because the work we do benefits the whole community.

At the end of last year, ICPA-NSW focused on Wellbeing. We held online zoom sessions with families affected by covid and as a result, we held wellbeing webinars with parenting expert Dannielle Miller, a roundtable with HSC students and the NSW Minister for Education and we have just finished weekly online zoom wellbeing sessions with the RFDS, who were supporting Western Division families affected by the SA border closures. Deputation was held online this year too and was in the same week that the NSW Premier and Deputy Premier resigned. With only five Councillors who could travel, they convened at the new TAFE in Hay and our other State Councillors in lockdown zoomed in from home. 22 meetings were held in total and even though NSW Parliament had a few changes that week, our meetings still went ahead, with not too much shuffling.

The highlight of deputation is always that of meeting The Governor of NSW our Patron, her excellency Margaret Beazley AC QC who is very keen to hear the members issues. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Alana Moller and her Federal team for being supportive mentors to us throughout what has been a very interesting time. The unwavering support from ICPA (Aust) has been such an incredible strength to us in NSW.

In October 2021 I made the very difficult decision to step down as President due to work commitments. I thank Kate Warby for filling the casual vacancy. Kate has shown tremendous leadership during these past few months and NSW is in good hands. I will now hand over to Kate to finish the President's report.

Kate Warby, President ICPA-NSW.

Wow, now they're big shoes to fill. Thank you, Claire, for providing our members and guests with an insight into what our first six months looked like. With the whirlwind that we encountered in early October 2021, I'd like to take this opportunity to pass on a few words about our outgoing President and now Immediate Past President, Claire Butler. Claire, on behalf of your fellow State Councillors and ICPA-NSW members, thank you for tirelessly and selflessly giving of your time to ICPA-NSW as President over the past two and a half years. Your leadership, knowledge and commitment has been inspirational to many. We look forward to having you still at the end of the phone and working alongside us; you're not getting out of it that easy!

With that being said, it was all systems go from day one. It started out with a couple of days' notice to write my first President's report for The TopWire. Our ever so patient and understanding Editor, Kerrie Johnston and I were on first name basis very early. We had very regular contact and Kerrie's gentle reminders of, "Kate, let me know when your report is sent." to "How's your report coming along?" which turned into, "Kate, I'm hoping to get a proof out this afternoon and I'm just waiting on your report." I seriously need to get this done! Kerrie Johnston, our magazine Editor extraordinaire, is a gem in her field. We're extremely grateful to Kerrie for all her gathering and bringing everything together, all so our members can enjoy a great read. Kerrie, you do a phenomenal job each quarter and we'd be lost without your organisation, so thank you.

This takes me to our retiring NSW / VIC Lone Members Officer, Irene Lund. Irene works hand in hand with Kerrie on the November edition each year, and this edition helps showcase our Boarding Schools. It's fabulous for Boarding Schools to have the opportunity to advertise and promote their endless opportunities and programs for whoever may wish to take that path. We thank all the schools that have participated and as always, our Membership Officer, Irene Lund for coordinating this. It's a big job meeting all the deadlines and once again, Irene's done this with precision. Thank you, Irene.

Our border situation has really tested many this time around with members being affected by hard restrictions again in QLD, VIC, SA and the ACT. The inconsistency between states has kept our State Council Covid Committee very busy. We've had Claire Butler looking after the Victorian border, Bree Wakefield looking after South Australia and myself looking after the Queensland border. Claire, Bree and I continued to work very closely on this, navigating these choppy waters. We continued to work hard for our affected members and hoped we were now getting through the worst of it. I'd like to extend my thanks to Claire & Bree. Your support and knowledge have been invaluable whilst we continue working to achieve a nationally consistent approach.

Despite what's been happening around us, State Council have continued to keep their fingers on the pulse all whilst fine tuning their Zoom presence and internet connection patience. I honestly didn't think we'd be in the same place 12 months on, but we are and took to this year's Deputations via Zoom like true professionals. We did have a few 'connection' issues throughout the two days of meetings, but we survived. We had 25 meetings booked for Deputations this year, which was fantastic, however, there's nothing like an 11th hour change of Premier to have everyone scratching their heads. Our amazing Secretary, Deb Castle, handled these changes with precision and didn't miss a beat with sending out our Zoom links and manning the 'Base Station' from the newly constructed Hay TAFE. Deb, thank you, you're the glue that keeps us all together and you're going to be missed. So, if anyone's up for the gig, State Secretary is all yours. Come and tap me on the shoulder if this is for you and I'd love to chat.

The relationships and reputation that ICPA-NSW has built up over many years is testament to our ability to secure meetings with key Ministers and stakeholders. Our full schedule meant we had the opportunity to meet a cross section of Government Ministers, MP's, Department Heads, and key

stakeholders. Our meetings were met with optimism and willingness to assist our rural and remote students and families moving forward.

As we said goodbye to another year that has challenged us in ways unimaginable, many of our State Councillors took a well-deserved break over the Christmas period after another exhaustive year. Volunteer fatigue had definitely started to set in so this was perfect timing. It's crazy to think that January was all but over and the Festive season now a distant memory. I'd like to acknowledge the State Council team, many of whom didn't get the downtime over the Festive Season like others. Kerrie once again was working on the January edition of TopWire and we also had our Membership Officer, Irene Lund and Treasurer, Shennah Joiner, tirelessly working through new memberships and renewals. This is a big job, but you've both got it down to a fine art and it's best if we leave it up to you, as we wouldn't want to upset our Batman & Robin duo. Thank you, ladies.

ICPA-NSW welcomed invitations to join the newly established stakeholder groups and continue on existing ones. Of particular note, was the establishment of the NSW Department of Education's Rural, Regional and Remote Educational Policy Directorate RRREP. With ICPA-NSW being the key rural and remote stakeholder, we value the relationships we have with the Minister for Education and Early Childhood, the Hon Sarah Mitchell and the NSW Department of Education.

Thank you to conference convenors, Anna McCorkle and Di Ridge, and their hard-working team for hosting this conference. I'm sure we can all agree that the venue looks fantastic and it is very well presented and we are being looked after beautifully. I look forward to everyone engaging in hearty debate over the next two days as we come together to further the educational opportunities or rural and remote children.

ICPA (Aust) President's Report

Tim Fletcher, State Council.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce Alana Moller, the President of ICPA (Aust). Alana comes from central Queensland where she has a cattle station near Clermont and Alana fell into that well known trap that farmers set for young teachers and nurses where they think they are only coming out here for twelve months on prac. and are still here 30 years later. Please welcome Alana.

Alana Moller, President. ICPA (Aust)

Thanks everyone and since it is after lunch on the last afternoon, if you would like to have your afternoon nap you have fourteen and a half minutes. ICPA-NSW President, distinguished guests, Federal Life Members, NSW State Life Members, fellow ICPA members and friends it is with great pleasure that I present the 2022 Federal council update. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands on which we meet today and I pay my respects to elders, present, past and emerging.

Greek philosopher, Epictetus, once said, "The key is to keep company with people who uplift you, whose presence call forth your best." There is no better company than at an ICPA conference and I feel proud and uplifted to be speaking at the 2022 NSW State Conference celebrating a most momentous milestone. 50 Years of ICPA. "50 Years On, 50 Years Strong". To be able to be here today back where it all started is such an honour and a privilege. I feel truly humbled to be in the presence of Mr. Mitchell and on behalf of all of ICPA members I express my gratitude and admiration for his and others foresight and tenacity that led us to be standing here today celebrating 50 years of ICPA. Many thanks also to the State Council and conference convenors for making this event possible. Last year's federal update concluded with, "Let's not forget that we are the face-to-face

virtual or anything in between, we are all here to support each other.” and with ongoing pandemic impacts across the country this continues to ring true. While we still need to hold conferences, meetings and other get-togethers virtually and some uncertainty remains, we continue to stand together and soldier on.

This solidarity was on proud display at the 2021 50th Anniversary Federal Conference held as a hybrid event in an effort to include as members and guests as possible both face-to-face and online after having to postpone from its original dates in July. To save putting off this event was a challenge to say the least and thanks must go to the Australian Boarding Schools Association, the Queensland convenors, the Federal Council team and all who attended online or in person getting behind our new hybrid concept. The online voting platform meant so much more. The race to be first to vote certainly became a novelty in the room. With Federal Conference postponed due to the pandemic conditions the 2020/2021 Federal Council year was prolonged and the phenomenal amount of work undertaken and ongoing dedication of federal councillors amidst so much uncertainty and tribulation is admirable. Despite the pandemic related problems, delegations were able to be held in Canberra in May, 2021 for the first time since 2019.

This was a terrific opportunity for us to, once again, walk the halls of Parliament House and share our message with over 23 Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators. We were especially privileged to meet as a whole group in a lengthy two session round table with the then Minister for Regional Education, the Hon. Andrew Gee MP. May 2021 also saw the official launch of the new look dynamic ICPA website. Our membership database, a source of pride for our wonderful web weavers and magnificent membership magicians across all states who contributed in making this happen. A particular shout out to Nikki McQueen and Sue Shotten for their steady hand in making the new website and database come to fruition. Shout out also to designer Mark, who continues to bear the brunt of a sometimes feverish ICPA team. Not only has he built our Federal and State websites and database but he has also built conference websites for state conferences and our conference along with designing and perfecting the online voting platform which has proven vital in conducting conferences impacted by the pandemic. Of course, it is impossible to report on activities of Federal Council this past year without referring to work around the pandemic and its fluid impacts. I know it is difficult to predict what is ahead we continue to ensure that our geographically isolated students are remembered and supported.

Boarding has been at the coalface of the impact that Covid had on our children. While 2021 saw issues around the plight of interstate boarders which ICPA (Aust) worked on in conjunction with former Minister for Regional Education, The Hon. Andrew Gee MP, and since July 2021 new Minister for Regional Education, Senator, The Hon. Bridget McKenzie, also state councils and the Australian Boarding Schools Association, 2022 has commenced heartbreaking and confronting stories of unfair and inequitable directives imposed on already geographically disadvantaged and isolated boarding children as the country continues to negotiate the pandemic. There has been a concerted effort to work towards alleviating these challenges. What is more heartbreaking though, as you all know, is that this is just one story of an equity experience by GI kids not only in boarding situations and not only because of a pandemic. It also epitomises and reiterates why ICPA continues to be so important 50 years on. If not for ICPA who else will ensure our children are considered and their inequities are addressed? For ICPA it is all about our kids and all that we do is because they are who matter. Thus, while we have to work fervently to address the impacts of the pandemic, we are also focused ongoing barriers for GI kids emphasising that they are a unique disadvantaged group who need specialised and targeted assistance and support across all portfolio areas.

The AIC continues to be a core focus sitting across the boarding, hostels, second home, distance education and early childhood education and care portfolios and including the need for the allowance to be increased to truly reflect the exponential growth in educational expenses particularly in boarding

situations along with requests for a separate category for geographically isolated students within the AIC to ensure that their unique needs are recognised and met. We have also been strongly advocating for an expansion of eligibility criteria to better support rural and remote families and this includes eligibility for three to four-year-olds accessing improved distance education programmes and the inclusion of fares allowance. We are encouraged by our recent interaction with both the Minister for Families and Human Services, Senator, The Hon. Ann Ruston's advisors, Services Australia and the Department of Social Services and look forward to enhancing these relationships in order to effectively raise our members concerns in relation to AIC. In communications we participated robustly in the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee consultations and welcomed their report released recently. We look forward to positive outcomes from this review. The government's full response was actually released yesterday and there have been some quite positive outcomes from that and, in the next couple of hours, we will be putting out a budget statement because it was done within the budget. That is going on our social media as I speak so keep a look out for that.

Federal Council has also been focused on sourcing internet connection solutions for our transient families working in remote areas whose children undertake distance education and are seeking governmental support to achieve this. We were thrilled with recent announcements of upgrades and enhancements to the NBN fixed wireless and the SkyMuster satellite systems. In the Curriculum Portfolio focus has been on the Australian Curriculum Review which allowed us to raise key concerns in this space including the need to consider providing specialised curriculum in unique rural and remote educational context. More recently we have proposed changes to NAPLAN delivery and have requested consideration for the unique circumstances and context rural and remote students when education ministers meet to discuss possible variations. The education ministers recently announced changes to NAPLAN in 2023 with NAPLAN now being held in Term I not Term II, and it will all be held within a two-week window. Federal Council have continued to build geographically isolated distance education awareness with the launch of a longer term and dedicated campaign for further recognition following our second GIDE day on the 1st December last year.

I'm especially pleased to report the positive response we have received from our open letter to members of parliament and other education stakeholders advocating for the need for a distance education teaching allowance to remunerate families who dedicate themselves in providing tutor when their children must be educated by distance education because of where they live. We know there is support out there, especially off the back of many families experiencing the challenges of teaching their children at home while also working during the pandemic and we believe strongly that this momentum needs to be captured. Watch this space for more to come and don't forget to help us build this campaign through sharing your own insights.

Long term advocacy for more adequate rural and remote early childhood education and care is also continuing especially in regard to the need for in-home care to be modified to better assist families and for guaranteed future funding for mobile playgroups. Federal Council are heartened to have representatives from the Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment In-home Management Team attend conference and hear in person, the arduous stories of our families in challenging early childhood education and care situations. We have been able to build on this connection over the past months and encourage members who have a story to let us know so we can pass it on to those people who make the decisions. Telehealth advocacy within the Specific Education Needs portfolio has been buoyed by exciting examples of the use of telehealth during Covid boosting calls to this service to be more widely available for GI children. Mental health concerns have also been at the forefront of this portfolio and Federal Council have collected a range of resources and links which are on our Specific Education Needs webpage.

Tertiary and training have also continued to be busy areas with time spent on topics relating to the Tertiary Access Payment, Youth Allowance and the Living Away From Home Allowance. The

Tertiary Access Payment was a welcome development in 2021 and following an evaluation of the programme towards the end of the first year which we were involved in, some benefits were improved. These include eligibility being extended to inner regional students and the application and payment process is now being solely administered by Services Australia. ICPA (Aust) encourages members who have a student who has completed Year 12 in 2021 to investigate the Tertiary Access Payment further on the Services Australia website. Another welcome development in the tertiary field is the new identity information options whereby now proof of identity can be completed online or over the phone and not necessarily in person as has previously been the case. While these have been welcome developments the need for further assistance to ensure our GI students can access a tertiary or training opportunity is clear and this is especially so for young apprentices for whom very limited support is available despite often having relocation costs equal to tertiary students along with considerable living expenses which they struggle to meet on low apprenticeship wages.

Across all portfolios ICPA Federal Council continue to participate in consultations, meetings and submission opportunities. A number of submissions have been lodged and most recently we have completed our 2022/2023 pre-budget submission raising long term requests with costings and highlighting that the small investment in education in rural and remote Australia will go a long way. The budget was handed down on Tuesday night and if you have seen me busily working and Suzanne Wilson as well, it's because we have been punching numbers and going through everything and we can report that there were some positive outcomes within the budget for our families and our statement will on social media very soon to cover those things. There are a couple of really important announcements within for boarding families and within early childhood, communications and a number of areas. Obviously, the full detail isn't available on all those new things but there could be some good things to come and I think Richard referred to the new scholarships that are being trialled for boarding students so we look forward to giving more information to our members about that when it comes to pass.

We feel really positive about the relationship we have established with the office of the Minister for Regionalisation, Regional Communication and Regional Education, and the minister for Emergency Management and National Recovery and Resilience and Senator, the Hon Bridget McKenzie, the Minister for Everything. We spend a lot of time talking to her. We also welcome in December 2021, the appointment of the Hon Fiona Nash to the role of Regional Education Commissioner and we have already had the opportunity to connect with her. This is a really valuable development for ICPA and Federal Council look forward in anticipation to working closely with her. It has also been encouraging to maintain and build links with all the departments and, with regular meetings, schedules and direct lines of contact established, we can ensure member messages can be relayed to those who are at the front line to address them. It is gratifying that our organisation is seen as a key educational stakeholder in these spaces and we wish to show our appreciation for a recent grant assistance we have been allocated to assist us to continue on our advocacy. Federal Council also maintains relationships with many other organisations, stake holders and groups who support our cause. I especially thank those who generously assisted by sponsoring our 2021 Federal Conference and, most importantly, once again the Australian Boarding Schools Association and, in particular, Richard, Tom and Jarrad. While the days have been short the task list has been long since our postponed 2021 Federal Conference, much like this report, and Federal Council has hit the ground running with all motions having been actioned. This was no mean feat. The statistics show just how much was achieved by Federal Council in such a short time frame.

At conference we farewelled four councillors who time and efforts on Federal Council certainly did not go unnoticed. But we welcomed a number of new faces to our team including Julia Broad who was co-opted prior to conference, Ali Allison, Wendy Henning, Laura Stalley, Anna McCorkle and Naomi Obst from Western Australia. All new councillors have brought a wealth of knowledge, passion and dedication to add to an already outstanding team and I feel grateful and honoured to, once again,

to be trusted in the role as President to help guide our ship. I could not have managed this role without their support, encouragement and friendship and I am really excited for what is ahead for Team Federal Council. ICPA would not be the incredible organisation it is today with all of our State Councils who continue to be dedicated in advocating for our members behalf and I feel a tremendous amount of pleasure when I have the opportunity to work closely with them. To the 2021/2022 NSW State Council I salute your efforts this past twelvemonths and look forward to working with the new council. What a ride the last six months have been for you. You should be so proud to have stepped up as you have and I wish you appositve yea ahead with, hopefully, a little less Covid. To close I would like to, once again, thank all of you, our members, who make the work we do so worthwhile and rewarding. It is such a pleasure to get to join you all at events and particularly conferences. There are a few months to go and we can't be sure what is to come in regards to how it will occur however, I do encourage you to consider joining us for our 2022 Federal Conference in Perth, Western Australia on the 3rd and 4th August, 2022. However, between now and then remember, we all have each other's back being isolated doesn't mean you are alone. Thank you.

Portfolio Reports

ALLOWANCES

The last twelve months have continued to challenge all of us in ways we never thought imaginable. Just as we started to accept the new normal, we were once again hit with a COVID-19 resurgence to outweigh any previous waves. It was part 'well here we go again we know what to do' and part 'we've been here before but it also comes with a whole new set of challenges. Of particular note, this time was that it hit our own rural and remote communities and we felt the full effects of lockdown. With border crossing issues our ICPA members have also had to deal with the effects of border closures on work, schooling, tertiary study, health, family connections and businesses.

Rural and remote students continue to be under-represented and this disparity adversely impacts these individuals and their communities. The myriad of issues resulting in this disparity include financial, cultural, personal, educational and social support factors and the Australian education system must strive to deliver excellence and equal opportunity for all Australian students. The rural and remote cohort is more likely to be willing to return to their rural and remote communities ensuring viability, economic development and resilience of these communities. Despite the restrictions and uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, there have been some positive happenings for rural and remote tertiary students in the last 12 months. While not only benefiting rural and remote tertiary students, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was pleasing to note that tertiary students and apprentices in receipt of a student payment through Centrelink, may have been eligible for extra payments: Economic Support Payment and Coronavirus Supplement. During the pandemic, if students remained enrolled and plan to return to study even if self-isolating at home or their education provider temporarily closed or reduces their study load, they still receive their payments. As is the case at any time, students were reminded to call the Students Line (132490) if any of their circumstances change. Applicants can use their myGov account to confirm their identity, receive a Centrelink Reference Number (CRN), create a Centrelink online account, link their Centrelink online account to myGov and make their claim online. Additionally, the personal assets test was removed for Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY and Austudy and the liquid assets test waiting period was removed for Youth Allowance and Austudy.

Tertiary Access Payment of \$5000 for all school leavers who relocate for full- time higher-level tertiary education of at least one-year duration from an outer regional or remote area. However, this is only for students who study in the year immediately after finishing Year 12.

Independent Youth Allowance - allowing greater flexibility in pathways to qualify for independent Youth Allowance. This recommendation enables rural and remote students who successfully undertake their first year of tertiary study externally, including at a Regional Study Hub, to access independent Youth Allowance or independent ABSTUDY.

Independent Youth Allowance Concessional Workforce test - recommends reducing the earnings requirements and a review of the recent changes to the parental means test cut-offs.

Fares Allowance - recommends expansion of the Fares Allowance to enable students who have relocated to return home during their first year of study.

Tertiary Access Allowance (TAA)

The introduction of a Tertiary Access Allowance remains a high priority. The Tertiary Access Allowance amounts are aligned with the Relocation Scholarship payments, and we continue to advocate for the Tertiary Access Allowance for rural and remote students irrespective of eligibility for Youth Allowance.

Youth Allowance

Liquid Assets Waiting Period – The Department of Families and Social Services reinforced that the Liquid Assets Waiting Period is applied if liquid assets are over \$5,500 for a single student and is tapered up to \$11,500 meaning there is a maximum 13-week waiting period

Centrelink staff and misinformation - ICPA (Aust) has been assured once again that Centrelink staff manning the 132490 phonenumber have extensive training, have the resources to answer all queries efficiently and where a Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY or Austudy enquiry is complex, staff have access to specialist staff. While we cannot contact Centrelink on behalf of a member because of Privacy Laws, we can contact them with the issue generally.

We continue to be contacted by members and receive motions about wait times and misinformation, therefore we continue to advocate for these issues on behalf of our members.

Proof of Identity - ICPA (Aust) has been told the reason a student is required to present to a Centrelink office, access point or agent to prove their identity is to protect individuals from identity theft and other forms of identity fraud. We do still however understand that due to distance from a Centrelink office this can lead to delays in applications and our students being able to attend in person.

Relocation Scholarship - ICPA (Aust) is continues to push for the Relocation Scholarship to extend to independent Youth Allowance recipients to address the continued disparity in the level of financial assistance provided to help with relocation costs for rural students who have qualified for independent Youth Allowance compared to dependent Youth Allowance assistance. Aligning the Tertiary Access Allowance with the Relocation Scholarship amounts will benefit the Youth Allowance students qualifying as an independent as well as students' ineligible for Youth Allowance.

The Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships Program (RRESP) has supported students in rural, regional and remote areas with the costs of studying at university or a vocational education and training institution.

I want to thank you all for attending conference and your presence reinforces the need for us to continue all the hard work that we do as members and State Councillors. ICPA members are the policy makers of the Association. This means that branches bring their issues to our Annual State Conference for other guests to hear the passionate debates. These issues are then taken further, usually to politicians and department advisors to be acted on. ICPA advocates to ensure that ALL students throughout rural and remote areas have equity of access to an education appropriate to their needs - whatever the educational/learning institute. Allowances are not designed to cover all the costs associated with

educating our children, but they can and do provide an opportunity of support to families that may never have been able to access these educational opportunities. The difference in educational outcomes between rural and remote students compared to those students in metropolitan areas is well documented. The Allowances that ICPA-NSW advocate hard for, go a long way to bridging the educational gap in providing greater equity and access to educational institutions for rural and remote children. However, we always need to do more, especially when we still have so many rural and remote students unable to access any financial support.

Sometimes we present motions for a long time before finally seeing progress. Sometimes we need to review what we are asking for and see how we can word it differently to change the way a situation is viewed by those with the power to approve or make policy changes. Personal stories make great case studies to present on deputation and help to give real life experiences to our motions. Each year both State and Federal ICPA Councils bring your issues to respective state and federal governments for increased financial support through various allowances to assist with educating rural and remote children.

On behalf of all ICPA-NSW members, I would like to thank our Federal Council colleagues and NSW State and Federal governments in working together to increase the financial support offered to our rural and remote families. ICPA families are truly grateful. When applying for any allowances, families are encouraged not to self-assess their eligibility, but are encouraged to provide all the information that is required and allow the assessment processes to occur. ICPA-NSW continually updates and provides an annual allowance spreadsheet as a summary of what allowances are available, eligibility criteria, closing dates and contact details. It is available in editions of Top Wire, on the website, Facebook posts or by contacting the allowances convenor.

In closing I would like to thank my fellow State Councillors for all their assistance and for all the time you give voluntarily in providing assistance to our members.

Tanya Mitchell
Allowances Portfolio

BOARDING SCHOOLS, AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOLS AND HOSTELS

Attending schooling online has had an impact on families, it has been a very long, emotional and financial toll on all families trying to educate their children - a basic, necessary and essential need. A big thankyou again to all the schools which have worked so hard during this time to try and minimise disruption to our children's education in so many ways. On behalf of ICPA-NSW, I would like to welcome and thank the Boarding School representatives for attending this conference - your ongoing support is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank Richard Stokes, Thomas Dunsmore and staff from ABSA for everything you have done, especially during these unsettled times. I would also like to thank those on State Council, Claire Butler, Bree Wakefield, Kate Warby and Libby McPhee for all your hard work regarding boarding over these past 2 years, it has greatly been appreciated. ICPA-NSW has also been lobbying hard on behalf of families with children boarding interstate, who have been affected by border closures.

Last year we were lucky to hold our annual conference in Hay, but of course, not long after that COVID-19 hit once again throwing things into uncertainly. The Boarding School Expos were affected once again, fortunately we were very lucky to be at both Griffith and Wagga Wagga despite many schools being unable to attend, both days were well attended by the public.

Currently plans are in place for the Boarding Schools Expos to be held in 2022.

Dates for the Boarding Schools Expos for 2022 are:

Dubbo Expo 13th - 14th May

Wagga Expo 3rd - 4th June

Moree Popup 21st July

Tamworth 22nd - 23rd July

Monique Watkin

Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools and Hostels Portfolio

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication issues have been at the forefront for ICPA-NSW, and thankfully we have been able to meet virtually to continue our meetings with our communication stakeholders, primarily being Telstra and NBN Co. In many ways, communication and the ways in which people communicate has reached a more accelerated level because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Members have had to utilise many forms of communications to get the job done, or to have children continue with their schooling from home. This was particularly evident with NSW Schools operating with students learning from home in Term 3 of 2021.

The “digital divide” is still very apparent; however, the gap has shortened due to COVID-19 and the need for people to explore and become accustomed to doing business via connectivity. As an organisation, ICPA-NSW looks forward to this gap shortening even more as Australia gets back to business. In some ways the closure of the 3G connectivity will play into the hands of the digital divide or digital literacy problem. The average age of Australians owning a 3G device is 75 years and older. Back in August 2021, there were 700,000 3G devices needing to be upgraded. Some of these devices are connected to telemetering and security equipment, or telephone handsets that are used infrequently. Telstra did embark on a campaign to try and educate these users of the need to upgrade, however the campaign did not achieve marked results, so similar campaigns will need to be continued, so that people become more informed, as we move closer to the shutdown date of June 2024.

Telstra have reported that switching from a 3G to 4G connection provides a noticeable improvement in your download speeds and call quality and reliability. It is very important for customers to understand that 3G and 4G will co-exist until 3G is switched off in June 2024. Telstra will be there to help customers and have given an assurance that they will make the changes as seamless as possible. It is hoped that the lunchtime information session has been or will be beneficial to those members who attend. Telstra is assuring customers that maintaining existing coverage is important for all customers and their communities as well as visitors to regional areas, so no 3G service will be shut down until a comparable 4G service is in place.

There is not only a lack of understanding around devices, but also with the types of connections available such as with the NBN Sky Muster products. NBN Co are very keen to enhance members knowledge about the Sky Muster products. If you are keen to utilise an NBN Sky Muster plan and your current provider does not offer it, you should seek further information as this will be the issue rather than an NBN Sky Muster connection not being available to you. The Better Internet for Rural, Remote and Regional Australia (BIRRR) is also a good website to browse for information. All service providers recognise the digital literacy problem that exists across the Nation. Therefore, NBN Co have created OSCAR (Online Skills Check and Resources), to assist Australians to measure their level of online literacy and find the resources to become more capable and confident online. A digital survey using OSCAR is currently circulating amongst members. Members are being asked to complete the survey to give NBN Co a clearer picture of where our members skill level and confidence sits in the

digital/online world. I would encourage you all to complete this survey. The link can be found in the February Top Wire. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for assisting NBN Co with collecting such information. For your information the link is here too.

<https://surveyv8.humanlistening.com/survey/08578e09-5cc0-44ff-915d-72fad9e2b848/?ambassador=LOCAL-NSW-ICPA-NSW>

In March 2020, the Namoi Branch requested ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) to contact the relevant Ministers to provide a rebate for rural and remote customers who will need to upgrade equipment such as aerials and boosters to change from a 3G to a 4G connection. As our members can have many boosters and aerials attached to sheds, houses, school rooms, farm equipment and vehicles to even get a connection and in some cases, not even a great connection, it was felt that this expense should not be borne completely by the owner, as this upgrade is being forced upon them. During the year this issue was taken to Deputation and letters written seeking such a rebate, however a result has not been achieved yet, so it will continue to be taken forward.

Congratulations to Telstra who are bringing all call centres back to the shores of Australia. The pandemic certainly started rolling this ball, much quicker than it would have happened otherwise. By June 2022 we should have all call centres operating from within Australia and members will notice a more consistent and hopefully a greater understanding when approaching Telstra to have their troubleshooting issues resolved. In recent years the Namoi and Collarenebri-Mungindi Branches have been calling for a more direct line for customer service telephone assistance, that effectively assists rural and remote students and their families, to troubleshoot their communication issues.

There are also big changes happening in the ownership of Telstra stores. These stores are coming back under Telstra ownership and staffed by Telstra employees rather than being owned by a third party. Hopefully those members who can access a Telstra store will find these stores much more helpful with customer service. Telstra is keen to build relationships, and more digital skill education and training with their customers, hence their drive to take on the ownership of these stores again. Telstra is committed to maintaining their role in connecting regional and remote communities with much ongoing investment and co-investment programs with an aim to boost connectivity.

2021 saw the rolling out of the Fibre Optic (FO) connection to the 12 remaining satellite schools in NSW. The schools that are now connected have reported the improved difference with their ability to effectively engage and utilise educational resources using an internet connection, and the school administration staff are able to achieve a full and rewarding day's work recording student and financial data for the school and the NSW Department of Education. The Balranald and Rankins Springs branches have been vigilant in bringing this issue to conferences for years. Well done to these members, we celebrate and share your success in never giving up on the fight.

The Clare Public School is the last school to receive this connection. Hopefully it will not be long before this community are enjoying these benefits too, as the connection is now just waiting on Essential Energy to complete an upgrade to the power service. Wanaaring is just waiting on the firewall install at the site before it is switched over.

The following is a table of the Fibre Optic roll out to the 12 satellite schools.

Site Location	Baseline RFU	Forecast RFU	Forecast Cutover
Colo Heights	13/08/2021	COMPLETED 19/02/2021	COMPLETED 02/06/2021
Booligal	12/11/2021	COMPLETED 26/02/2021	COMPLETED 08/03/2021
Weilmoringle	30/08/2021	COMPLETED 19/05/2021	COMPLETED 10/06/2021
Louth	30/09/2021	COMPLETED 14/05/2021	COMPLETED 08/06/2021
North Star	13/08/2021	COMPLETED 13/05/2021	COMPLETED 18/06/2021
Wattle Flat	30/06/2021	COMPLETED 11/06/2021	COMPLETED 29/06/2021
MacDonald Valley	16/07/2021	COMPLETED 16/07/2021	COMPLETED 20/10/2021
Enngonia	12/11/2021	COMPLETED 09/07/2021	COMPLETED 19/10/2021
Upper Coopers Creek	29/10/2021	COMPLETED 28/10/2021	COMPLETED 08/11/2021
Wanaaring	17/12/2021	COMPLETED 29/11/2021	COMPLETED 15/02/2022
Naradhan	12/11/2021	COMPLETED 04/02/2022	COMPLETED 16/02/2022
Clare	29/10/2021	Mar -22	Apr-22

The other important point to note in this rollout of a Fibre Optic connection, is that in many cases these schools are evacuation points in times of emergency and disaster. So, a constant and reliable connection is of paramount importance to these communities. For several years, ICPA-NSW has been calling on the NSW Government to expand mobile service coverage in rural and remote blackspot areas and that rural and remote schools remain a priority in the mobile blackspot programs. I can report that in 2021 we kept on with this call. The NSW Government does not always contribute to these rounds, however during 2021 we did see the State Government contributing. For ICPA-NSW members it is a continuing concern that remote families remain disadvantaged by not having access to mobile connectivity. ICPA-NSW is very grateful for the small cells that have been installed across the State, however we are aware of their limitations and generally because of these limitations, many ICPA-NSW members do not get the benefit of them because they generally only cover a very small distance. To try and assist our members we would like the NSW Government and the Telco providers to continue talking to the Association about where best to install these towers to maximise benefits for our members. It is encouraging that with the 4G upgrade there will be a 200km radius of connectivity from the tower/site. 4G has 10 times the capacity of 3G. There is an urgent need for these gaps to be filled for the safety of our families, the need to educate our students and members requiring a connection on a day-to-day basis. Today, most banking sites and accounting programs require two factor authentication. If you have limited mobile connectivity, it is very hard to get these codes in a timely manner and conduct the required business.

It does give ICPA-NSW and the Balranald Branch great pleasure in thanking Telstra for the installation of the Small Cell Tower located nearby the Clare Public School. Thank you so much Telstra.

During the year ICPA-NSW has attended the Telstra Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) meetings. All of these have been by virtual means. On this platform we can get updates from Telstra on a wide range of services, and issues, as well as provide valuable information from our members. The seven top areas where RAC members have been able to provide feedback are:

1. Closure of 3G network customer anxiety
2. Network congestion
3. Mobile blackspots, unfortunately there will always be blackspots
4. Mobile Resilience particularly in times of natural disasters, when power is interrupted, and backup issues arise
5. Fixed line services
6. Digital literacy and skillset
7. Customer service – particularly the ability to contact a service representative, and the rural and regional needs because of the complexities and challenges that exist for these customers.

Malicious scamming is increasing at an alarming rate. Late last year Telstra was blocking 1300 million scam calls a month.

In 2021 the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC) met across the country virtually to receive feedback on the adequacy of telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote Australia. This was a great opportunity to bring up branch motions and members concerns regarding the current adequacy of telecommunication services. The report is now with the Federal Government who are expected to hand down the findings in the first part of 2022.

nbn™ Sky Muster™ satellite services connectivity guide

This downloadable fully interactive self-help guide is designed to help you troubleshoot connection issues with your satellite service. Designed to be saved and used when problems occur, this handy reference guide includes some of the common issues that you may experience, and the steps you can take to improve your nbn™ Sky Muster™ satellite service connection.

Download and save it to your desktop to ensure it is readily available if you need it. <https://www.nbnco.com.au/content/dam/nbn/documents/support/satellite/nbn-sky-muster-troubleshooting-guide.pdf>.

This report is an opportunity to remind members that the Regional Tech Hub is a resource for members which offers independent advice and support and helps regional Australians navigate often confusing phone and internet options and technical issues. The Hub can be contacted by telephoning 1300 081 029. All the best for the ensuing year and stay connected.

Libby McPhee

Communications Portfolio

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Firstly, I would like to thank the Bourke Branch convening committee for hosting such a special milestone in ICPA's history, your hard work is greatly appreciated. Here we are at the 50th conference of ICPA, what an achievement! I would like to acknowledge all the past and present members and Councillors of ICPA for all their hard work, dedication, and time away from loved ones, which has guided us to the place we are at now. Around 12 months ago we gathered in Hay and were told that by this time next year Geographically Home Isolated Distance Education students would be connected onto the NBN Sky Muster system. This was music to our ears for many families who have been waiting

for this day for years and struggling with the bad internet resulting in outdated technology and constant issues with the video conferencing platform REACT. Sadly, this has not happened to date, due to many things including COVID-19.

Since Hay, Bree and myself have had many meetings with the NSW Department of Education (DoE) regarding the roll out of the NBN Sky Muster. We would like to thank the NSW Department of Education for allowing us to have this interaction and communication around the roll out. During these meetings we have discussed a range technology issues and what we feel are requirements for an interactive home classroom. Sadly, with the restructure of NSW Department of Education, Mike Tom, who was our main contact has been reassigned, and we would like to thank him for his commitment and correspondence regarding not only NBN Sky Muster but other issues that came about throughout the year.

On a positive note, we are excited to have new contacts within the newly formed Regional, Rural and Remote Educational Policy Team. We have already been meeting with them regarding the NBN Sky Muster and hopefully our members got some answers at the Distance Education session on Tuesday. In terms of NBN Sky Muster, currently on the Optus network only Primary students have access to NSW Department of Education provided internet, but when we get this new system, it is going to also be available to Preschoolers and Secondary students. We will also be receiving upgraded desktop computers and the REACT program will be upgraded with more availability for student/teacher interactions. We are very excited about this addition and will continue to advocate for our Distance Education students to have more interactive home classrooms.

During 2021 we were contacted by a family as Distance Education students were unable to apply for Aurora College. We were informed that this was due to our Optus network being unable to support the program needed to attend lessons. Unfortunately, any children accepted for 2022 had to decline. Once Distance Education rolls out onto NBN Sky Muster these children will be able to have this opportunity. We have had a few wins this year in the Distance Education space which include the introduction of the Preschool Drive Subsidy and the new roll out of Distance Education Preschool Programs into small schools such as in Ivanhoe.

On the 1st November, 2021 we celebrated the 2nd Geographically Isolated Distance Education (GIDE) Day in which ICPA Australia launched their Geographically Isolated Distance Education Campaign. They are hoping to raise awareness of the sacrifices families make to educate their children due to their isolated location.

I hope that everyone has an enjoyable conference at the Bourke 2022 “50 years on, 50 years strong.” I will end my presentation with a video we created to celebrate the GIDE Day

Laura Stalley

Distance Education Portfolio

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Firstly, I would like to take this chance to thank ICPA-NSW State Council for having me as Early Childhood Portfolio leader. I have been so beautifully included by Claire’s and now Kate’s committee, despite not attending physically events. This has worked well for me, and I appreciate your patience. An extremely warm welcome to the Partnerships and Engagement Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy (RRREP). This was my second note in preparing this report because ICPA-NSW has enormous confidence and hope that the common-sense solutions, which it can provide for some of the issues I am going to outline, are *really* being listened to.

Over successive years ICPA-NSW has met with both sides of NSW governments and the opposition and in by far most cases have had a receptive audience who are in complete agreement.

However, when the delegations leave the city, the two-way conversation slows and sometimes ceases as we all assume our busy lives.

ICPA-NSW has benefited in a strange way from COVID-19 as we have been able, through the uptake of zoom and teams, to meet more frequently with authorities to understand how the motions are being actioned. This has led, I believe, to an immediacy which has been profitable to both parties...ICPA-NSW as advocates and those with the authority to enact the mechanics of creating beneficial change. There is now a team mentality allowing expression of ideas both ways. An exchange which together 'nuts out' the most sustainable and sensible way to do things.

The NSW Department of Education has established Partnerships and Engagement Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy with Ben Ballard as Executive Director and Helen Parker as Director. Helen has invited us recently to fortnightly meetings which, from ICPA-NSW's perspective, have been invaluable. This is so much the case that in drafting this report I realise the information may have changed by the time it is tabled.

The following are some of the long-term issues in Early Childhood which ICPA-NSW has taken to delegations and conferences. These, in the twelve months from last conference have not resulted in further progress. ICPA-NSW continues to advocate for the following and as mentioned above, ICPA-NSW feels optimistic that they will be resolved soon.

Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) salary and incentives' parity. Attracting *any* teachers to the profession is topical currently. It has always been a struggle in isolated situations. The fact that Early Childhood teaching positions outweigh the amount of trained early childhood teachers compounds the difficulty of attracting staff in regional areas. ICPA-NSW would like to know that in trying to attract an ECT to a remote job, at least a salary equalling that of a four-year trained teacher is on offer. Similarly, that appropriate accommodation and any incentives which a primary or secondary school four-year trained teacher is entitled to, is available to an ECT.

Governance and fiscal management in Early Childhood Services are a problem in remote NSW. Complying with training of volunteer management committees is difficult as there are few training opportunities. Practical access to preschool in remote schools is an issue close to my heart...we simply must provide a way for remote children who do not have a workable practical way of having six hundred hours of pre schooling. How otherwise can they hope to be on an equal footing with other four-year-olds in NSW?

In 2014 ICPA-NSW began the long road of explaining, chiding, and cajoling the NSW Department of Education to recognise a scary gap in their delivery of education. ICPA-NSW asked for the capacity to establish Distance Education preschools in remote schools where there are children without access to a supervisor who could deliver it to them. The NSW Department of Education must provide all NSW children's schooling. That is beginning at providing mandatory *access* to preschool to attendance in a NESA approved schooling pathway from kindergarten to the age of seventeen.

The model ICPA-NSW recommended is simple and not expensive. ICPA-NSW recommended a 'pop up and pop down' approach in 2014 because the student numbers are obviously exceptionally low and volatile. We welcome the adaptation of Distance Education. Quality is assured by the four-year trained ECT Distance Education teacher collaborating with a supervisor within the infrastructure of the school. This model is further enhanced by the fibre optic cable in some of these schools. This was to be actioned in the form of establishing small preschools in remote village schools. Minister Mitchell announced this at ICPA-NSW's Mudgee State Conference in 2017.

At the recent opening of the Ivanhoe preschool Minister Mitchell reiterated her belief that:

“It is important that every child in NSW has access to a quality early childhood education, no matter their background or location, Minister for Education and Early Learning. The flexible learning programs are part of the Rural and Remote Education Strategy we established to ensure that all children in rural and remote communities have access to quality early childhood education in the year before school.” Freya Lucas- The Spectator

We thank Minister Mitchell for understanding how difficult it is for a three or four-year-olds to organise, for themselves, practical access to preschool.

Minister Mitchell has always agreed with ICPA-NSW that there needs to be a pathway and now as part of the Rural and Remote Education Strategy, finally four schools do have the possibility of Distance Education or School of The Air preschool programmed by a four-year trained ECT and delivered to their school. Louth, Pooncarie, Ivanhoe and Weilmoringle (although currently Weilmoringle does not have the children). There are several remote schools and their communities still to be informed of this possibility, staff to be found and there will be issues specific to each remote place to be worked through. ICPA-NSW certainly wishes to work with RRREP to ensure the roll out happens in a timely fashion so that no child is without the access to quality early childhood education, which all Australian children are guaranteed to have.

I would like to recommend every member to consider joining state council at some point in time. I say this because we, as isolated educated families, are so very privileged. We are the ones who need to make sure that the absolute best sustainable and quality assured systems are there for all bush kids. Opportunities are afforded for wholesome communities, wherein *everyone* is privileged, through caring, thorough, positive, quality education.

Deborah Nielsen

Early Childhood Portfolio

HEALTH and WELLBEING

How fantastic it is to be here celebrating 50 years of ICPA-NSW, “50 years on, 50 years strong”. After two years of cancelled events, countless online meetings including two Deputations and such a deviation from the norm, it feels so great to be here together, face to face for such a significant milestone. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges to boarding since its commencement and 2021 has been no exception.

ICPA-NSW families with children boarding interstate were given somewhat of a reprieve for the first few months of the school year and then once again faced border closure issues, particularly those attending schools in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria. ICPA-NSW renewed its advocacy for interstate boarders, with their mental health and access to not only their education but also their homes and families as major concerns. Once again, we came up against State governments that showed little empathy nor understanding, regarding the effects of border closures on the wellbeing of interstate boarding students. Countless letters were written and phone calls made, in attempt to get State governments to understand that our interstate boarders from rural and remote areas posed little threat of bringing COVID-19 across borders and needed to be recognised amongst the Essential Travelers traversing our nation.

In July 2021, ICPA-NSW surveyed our members, namely with boarding students asked to urgently gather information. There were 205 responses and we were able to ascertain the location of families,

whether they were in a border bubble / zone, information about the schooling status of their children and any issues that border closures were causing. The data collected, allowed us to see that some children had been required to quarantine several times since the beginning of the pandemic, undertake long periods of remote learning and unreliable internet. The survey also confirmed our concerns that the ongoing border closures and uncertainty were causing immeasurable anxiety and other mental health issues. These were also heightened as children were unable to return or see their families for months at a time. 89% of respondents lived remotely and 54% of these were able to guarantee that their children could return home and be completely isolated from community transmission of COVID.

For NSW families with children boarding in South Australia, fears were realised in late June, when the NSW/SA border was closed once again. Parents were faced with the difficult task of getting their children home and wondering if it was best for them to stay in South Australia in case they were required to quarantine if they left the state. Luckily, many members lived in the 'instated' border bubble and were granted exemptions, but not everyone was so lucky. One Year 12 student made a mad dash from Orange to the South Australian border and had to sleep in their car overnight. Another two families fought for over a week before the South Australian Government granted them an exemption. ICPA-NSW explored all possible avenues including the regular communication with the NSW Cross Border Commissioner and South Australian Ombudsman.

Families with children boarding in Victoria, not only had to deal with border closures in 2021 but also continuous long periods of remote learning due to reoccurring lockdowns and harsh restrictions. Some students completing around 200 days in 2020 and 2021. This had a significant effect on their learning outcomes, social wellbeing and added unnecessary stress for families amidst a global pandemic.

During these periods, some interstate boarders had to stay at school to complete remote learning due to border closures and others were stuck at home unable to return when school resumed. In July, ICPA-NSW fought to have a rule overturned which stated that when NSW children from NSW/VIC cross border returned to their boarding houses, they were not allowed in the community for 14 days. Common sense prevailed and these children who posed little to no risk, were not segregated from the rest of their schools. The overturning of a ruling that the CHO and Premier signed off on does not happen lightly. This highlights the power of the connections and relationships that ICPA-NSW has, for them to make a little mark with the bureaucrats and Ministers in Victoria. The ICPA-NSW survey data proved invaluable, as it was passed onto the Victorian government to show locations of the affected children and how little a threat they posed.

When NSW schools moved to remote learning in August. Victorian students boarding at Yanco Agricultural High School found themselves homeless when their school closed, as they were not able to travel back to their homes due to border closures. The only way that these six students, one only 14 years old, could return to Victoria, was if they completed hotel quarantine in Melbourne. Each child could have completed home quarantine on their rural properties with daily police checks and required testing, but their commonsense requests were denied by Victorian Authorities, despite exhausting all avenues extensively, with absolutely no compassion for these vulnerable adolescents with no home to go to.

To quote the NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Sarah Mitchell, *"This is not an impossible task, we have been trying to find a solution with the Victorian government and I call on them to come to the table to find a resolution for these students"*.

There was indeed a very possible, risk averse solution, but unfortunately a resolution was never found, despite numerous attempts by ICPA-NSW to contact relevant authorities and some families were forced to complete 14 days hotel quarantine in Melbourne. This was an extremely dark day, how did Australia become so divided and allow this kind of deplorable treatment. The many hundreds of New South Wales children who board in Queensland also faced endless issues with border closures throughout 2021 and fellow State Councillor and current President, Kate Warby, made incredible

headway with the Queensland government. After continuous phone calls and emails across many areas within departments, Kate, on behalf of ICPA-NSW, was invited by Queensland Health to a seat at many stakeholder meetings and in turn provide important feedback to QLD Health – something we had failed to achieve in other states, where our attempts at communication were often ignored. Having reliable contacts within the Queensland Health Authority, allowed ICPA-NSW to provide up to date and correct information to our members and help individuals with concerns, rather than attempt to ring QLD COVID-19 hotlines along with thousands of other people affected by the endless issues that border closures were creating.

The sheer number of helpless families meant that ICPA-NSW were often inundated with families desperate for answers and needing assurance that they would be able to have access to their children in QLD. There definitely were not always favorable outcomes though, as the Queensland government remained steadfast on protecting its state from the worsening COVID-19 situation in NSW. A private Facebook group that was set up for members, proved invaluable in providing up to date information on the Queensland border and feeding relevant advice to parents.

In late August, the Queensland government released a Class Exemption for interstate boarding students with families in the ‘Non-Restricted Border Zone’. The rules were strict, however, it was great that we finally had a pathway for those children boarding in QLD. The Class Exemption saw families in the ‘Non-Restricted Border Zone’ given commonsense access to their boarding children in Queensland, but those families outside of this area were left in despair. ICPA-NSW continued to lobby relevant Queensland government departments, our message remained the same, our members needed a clear and consistent approach for interstate boarders to cross borders and access education and their families. To quote New South Wales Senator, Perin Davey, who was instrumental in her continued supported for our children. *“We shouldn’t be talking about this 12 months on”*.

Media once again featured heavily in ICPA-NSW’s advocacy for #nobordersforboarders. State Councillors and our members did countless TV and radio interviews, featured in news articles across NSW, QLD, VIC and SA. The Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) also collected stories from hundreds of affected families across Australia and provided these to Senator Bridget McKenzie’s office. A big thank you must be extended to those families that were happy to share their stories privately and publicly, for some families it was not once but several times. We really did feel like broken records at times.

At the end of Term III, the ‘National Code for Boarding Students’ was endorsed by National Cabinet. ICPA were fortunate to be asked to provide feedback on the draft proposal put together by Senator Bridget McKenzie. ‘The Code’, aimed to provide nationally consistent arrangements to help boarding school students and their families, travel across borders between school and home, while also allowing states to take a risk-based approach to health and safety. Unfortunately, we never saw this fully implemented in states, as was intended. At the time, it was gratefully welcomed by ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust), following our strong advocacy. We hoped that it was a step closer to achieving the national consistency that we had been pleading for, allowing rural and remote children equal access to education, no matter where they lived in Australia.

Regardless of this positive announcement, families faced another round of school holidays whereby they had to make difficult decisions about bringing their children home. Being a critical time for Year 12 students and with many children already having completed numerous quarantine periods, quite a few families made the difficult decision to leave their children in their respective states where they attended school, so they didn’t have to encounter another quarantine period or encounter troubles at border checkpoints. On a personal note, we went five months without seeing our son 14-year-old son Angus, which had a huge impact on our whole family and we were not alone in this harrowing experience.

As the border closures continued, ICPA-NSW felt quite hopeless at times, as our advocacy to State governments seemed to fall on deaf ears, countless emails were left unanswered, and our members became more and more distressed as the days went on. At times as State Councillors, we were not only advocating for these people, but also acting as counsellors with countless phone calls and emails back and forth, providing a listening ear and words of support. 18 months of the pandemic and border closures, the uncertainty around when and if interstate borders could be with their families was exhausting and our members were feeling fatigued, disheartened and anxious.

ICPA-NSW held three Zoom sessions with members whose children boarded in Queensland, South Australia and Victoria. We offered support, advice and a platform for parents to ask questions and voice their concerns. The unfortunate reality at that time was that with the worsening COVID-19 situation in NSW, other states were not willing to listen, let alone make allowances for our children, but we wanted our members to feel heard and assure them that we were doing all we could in the difficult space. Some families with children boarding in South Australia participated in Wellbeing Support Zoom sessions with a Psychologist and Mental Health Worker from RFDS South Eastern Section. A space where we could share our stories, vent, cry and laugh. A catch-up BBQ was also organised for all the interstate boarders in South Australia at Westminster School at the beginning of Term IV. Boarders enjoyed feasting on lamb chops, toasted marshmallows and hung out with other kids who had all been on the same border closure journey. Many of these kids had not returned home for the school holidays, so it was perfect timing and gave them a much-needed boost to get through the remainder of the school year. A big thank you to the RFDS for supporting our families during their time of need.

For the 2021 Year 12 cohort, nearly their entire last two years of schooling was affected by the pandemic. We heard from many members and their concerns for their children attempting to complete their secondary years in such a difficult climate. In September, we held a Zoom meeting, where we listened to the worries of Year 12s in NSW, we then collated them and shared these with New South Wales Education and Health Authorities. We then offered online workshops with Danielle Miller OAM, “Supporting Your Teen to Make Term IV Count”. Danielle is a guru in the wellbeing of teens and offered incredible advice for parents and Year 11 and 12 students on navigating the final years of learning during a pandemic.

At the Federal ICPA conference in Longreach in November, with most NSW delegates attending virtually due to border closures, so through our only representative, President Kate Warby, ICPA-NSW successfully moved the following motion “*That ICPA (Aust) work with the Minister for Regionalization, Regional Communication and Regional Education, to request the respective State Governments implement in an expeditious manner, a clear and consistent pathway for the Right of Appeals process under the current National Code for Boarding Students*”. Frustrations were being felt by federal and fellow state ICPA councils around the ongoing uncertainty and inconsistency. We all needed ‘The Code’ to be implemented as intended on a national level. A joint media statement was released imploring all governments to implement ‘The Code’ as a matter of urgency.

As the end of 2021 was drawing near, we finally saw most borders open across Australia and restrictions ease. The relief that parents of interstate boarders felt was enormous. Could this nightmare be really coming to an end? Many boarding students were elated to be reunited with their families in New South Wales and were able to enjoy the summer holidays, spending much needed time at home to charge their batteries. 2022 has brought different challenges, as boarding houses navigate strict COVID-19 guidelines and regulations from State governments and managing outbreaks of positive cases and close contact rules in a boarding setting. Although it appears that border closures are long gone, now our children are facing recurrent isolation as close contacts or furthermore are contracting the COVID-19 virus. ICPA-NSW together with ICPA (Aust) and fellow State Councils, have been working closely with Richard and the team from the Australian Boarding Schools Association, to relay

the concerns of members to relevant government departments. COVID-19 is the gift that keeps giving, but let's hope that the future months will bring positivity and dare I say a sense of normality for our boarding students. ICPA-NSW sends our heartfelt thanks to Richard, Tom, Jared and the ABSA team for always being at the end of the phone when another issue presented and for their continued support throughout the past two years. The issues our members faced and we dealt with, in regards to COVID-19 and boarding, have been challenging to say the least, but you never shied away and were always available.

ICPA-NSW would particularly like to thank NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Sarah Mitchell and her advisor Sally Taylor; Senator Bridget McKenzie, Minister for Regional Education, Senator Perin Davey, Senator for New South Wales; Bronnie Taylor, NSW Minister for Women, Minister for Regional Health and Minister for Mental Health; NSW Cross Border Commissioners and ICPA State Presidents for being available to answer our queries and quickly responding to some urgent situations as they arose.

To the public servants, especially those who made themselves available outside normal business hours, even during the highest moments of frustration, ICPA-NSW holds the deepest respect for the commitment you had to attempt to resolve situations as they arose. I note, there are some truly professional people out there who genuinely care. My biggest thank you goes to fellow State Councillors, Kate Warby, ICPA-NSW Queensland parent representative, and Claire Butler, ICPA-NSW Victorian parent representative. Their incredible knowledge, dedication and support through the crazy times last year kept me sane, just, and fueled me to persist through the most difficult of days. Personally, a silver lining for me is the close connection I have developed with these two ladies and the knowledge I have gained from working alongside of them. We have had some wins along the way, and for that we should all be very proud.

To my fellow NSW boarding parents, it blows my mind and brings tears to my eyes when I recount what our families have endured since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Your endless commitment and willingness to battle through the constant barriers we have faced, is completely admirable. Looking forward, I sincerely hope that the worst of the pandemic is behind us and *#nobordersforboarders* becomes a distant memory. A chapter in the history of ICPA-NSW, where our country was divided, but our mission remained the same as four fellow State Councillors over the past 50 years... to strongly advocate for equity of access to education for all students who live in rural and remote Australia. Thank you for your time today.

Bree Wakefield

Health and Wellbeing Portfolio

RURAL SCHOOLS

We were extremely lucky to have had our 2021 state conference in Hay at a face-to-face meeting, as the rest of the year has been in and out of lockdowns for most of the state. Since conference, I have sent a letter to Minister Mitchell with all our older and updated motions from the Hay conference. We decided at our post conference meeting in Hay to have a mentoring program and each State Councillor would mentor a branch. My branches are Boomi and Lightning Ridge/Goodooga and thanks to Gabie, I used her template and sent letters to both branches. I felt slightly overwhelmed sending to Lightning Ridge/Goodooga knowing full well Kate Treweeke is a very knowledgeable participant of that branch.

I was contacted by Kimberley Taylor who was hoping to get the Premer School reopened. After some advice from Nerida Healy, Kimberley put articles in papers, on television and radio. ICPA-NSW sent

a letter to Minister Mitchell on the 22nd April supporting the reopening of Premer School. On the 4th June it was announced Premer School would be reopening.

Sue Kingwill has been involved in RuralCONNECT Child and Family Days in Wanaaring, Louth and Tilpa. I attended the family day in Wanaaring on the 22nd April and again on the 9th of June in Louth along with Deborah Nielsen, we met lots of families and their children from the areas. Bourke Mobile and the children from Louth Public School attended the Louth Day. On the 8th of June, I attended the hook up of the fibre optic cable at Louth Public School. In attendance was Iva Dumanjic – Senior Client Executive, NSW Government Team, representatives from Iva’s team in Sydney, IT team in Dubbo and NSW Department of Education in Dubbo. This was an exciting day at Louth Public School, the teams included the students as much as they could and made the process educational by explaining to the children how it all worked. Iva was very keen for ICPA-NSW to be represented and involved so a big tick for us and our members for being relentless regarding better connectivity for the small satellite schools.

Many zoom meetings have been on the agenda, I have attended the following:

- Thrive by Five attended with Deborah Nielsen in October and December
- NESA curriculum reform parents’ roundtable - Curriculum Review 20/08/21
- NSW Department of Education – Kieran Morgan – The complaint handling process – Claire Butler and myself attending – 14/9/21
- Rural and Remote Education Advisory Group (RREAG) 16/9/21 & 9/12/21
- Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy Unit – attended by Deborah Nielsen, David Butler and myself – 10/02/22, 15/02/22 & 24/02/22

Many of the very old motions were discussed with the Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy Unit including:

“That ICPA NSW urges the Minister for Education Minister Mitchell, to ensure that there is always a 'hand over' between principals in TP1 schools, particularly in the program.”

“That ICPA—NSW requests the Executive Director of Public Schools NSW to ensure that the regional directors actually physically attend the rural, remote and very remote TP1 schools in their area, at least twice a year.”

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Department of Education directors responsible for isolated schools monitor their principals to ensure that the communities are being thoroughly included in any school decision process.”

“That an ICPA-NSW representative meets annually with each educational leadership director overseeing rural and remote schools and that these meetings become embedded into the directors’ calendar.”

“That ICPA—NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to ensure that teacher housing is maintained to a high standard in a very remote schools by insisting the relevant authorities respond immediately to any reasonable requests”

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to include an appropriate vehicle in the incentive package for the Louth and Wanaaring Principals.”

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education that procedures are followed before sending a complaint to Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate (EPAC).”

As an example, the handover between principals in TP1 schools will not cost the government any funding but needs to be embedded into policy so that when there is a change of Director, Educational

Leadership (DEL) or new principal this will continually happen. This will allow the children to start their work in Week 1 Term 1.

After meeting with the Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy unit, ICPA-NSW feel very confident that some of the older motions may finally be taken off our motions list. We are having fortnightly meetings with the unit with the hope of reducing the number of motions. I would just like to conclude by saying what a remarkable effort everyone puts in to ICPA and I feel very proud to be part of a great team.

Annabel Strachan

Rural Schools Portfolio

TERTIARY

This past year has been hailed as the “Year of the Apprentice”. Nationally there were 490,000 people are enrolled in job training and apprenticeships – the highest number on record. There are currently around 102,000 apprentices and trainees in training in NSW, a 19.8 per cent increase from 2020.

Federal Government.

In the last budget the university sector is notable largely for the absence of new expenditure. The previous budget tipped an additional \$1 billion into research funding. The thrust of the Australian Government appears to be its commitment to higher education delivering job-ready graduates, including through short courses and innovative delivery. However, larger uncertainties are confronting universities such as keeping Australia’s border closed for an extended period due to COVID-19. Recently the National Cabinet has come together to develop a plan for the safe return of international students.

Job training.

- \$2.7 billion to extend the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements, which is a wage subsidy that will reimburse businesses up to \$7,000 per quarter for 12 months for taking on new apprentices and trainees.
- \$500 million extension of the JobTrainer fund, conditional upon state and territory governments matching contributions.
- Next Generation of Women in STEM received \$42.4 million allocated over 7 years.

New South Wales Government.

Headline budget items were an announcement to attract more teachers with \$125 million to develop a *Teacher Supply Strategy*, which was a recommendation in the Productivity Commission. The Budget also provides \$2.9 million to attract more high achievers into teaching, particularly in regional NSW. The Skills sector will benefit from a \$2.6 billion investment to support new and innovative training for the jobs of the future and transform the vocational education and training (VET) sector to make skills training more accessible. The Skills funding component will provide more than \$2 billion for TAFE NSW. This includes \$19 million in technology upgrades at campuses across the state, \$5.9 million for 16 undercover trades training facilities* and \$11.4 million to complete or continue the construction of seven Connected Learning Centres** in regional NSW.

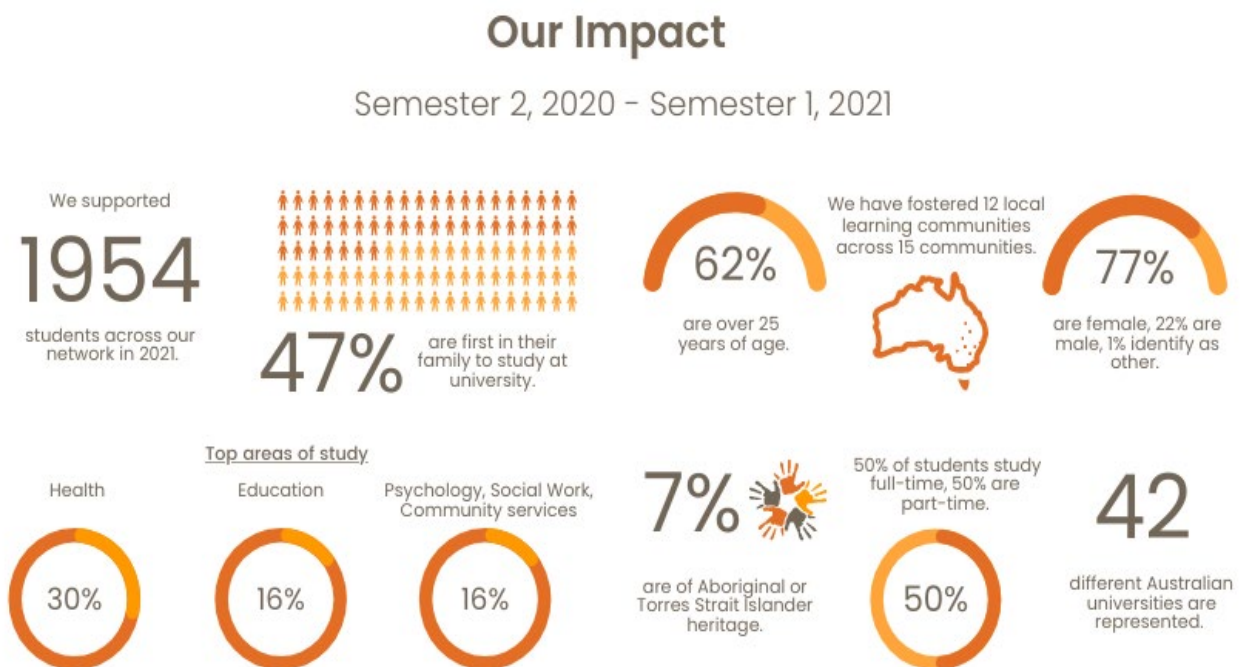
***Undercover trades training facilities** to help meet the booming demand for skilled trades including in Broken Hill, Kingscliff, Moruya and Western Sydney.

****Connected Learning Centres** already exist in Bega, Bourke, Coonabarabran, Corowa, Deniliquin, Glen Innes, Grenfell, Murwillumbah, Narrandera, Quirindi, Singleton, Tenterfield and Yamba. The ones to be completed are in Bateman’s Bay, Cobar, Jindabyne, Hay, Tomaree, Nambucca Heads and Byron Bay. CLC’s are state-of-the-art facilities providing regional areas with greater access to skills training and employment outcomes.

\$318.6 million over 2 years to continue investment in the Skilling for Recovery program to help job seekers retrain or upskill, and support school leavers to enter the workforce. Despite this TAFE and the skills portfolio saw an overall reduction in funding from last year’s Budget. It was also required to update 250 training and assessment material as a result of changes to national training packages. The Government did confirm \$11.4 million funding for Careers NSW, a pilot scheme for dedicated careers support service which has been a previous conference motion.

Country University Centres:

I nicked this from their website(www.cuc.edu.au) – it is much more neatly organised than what I could put together.



Micro-credentials:

On-the-job training and short courses are growing as employers target specific skill sets for their staff outside of university and trade qualifications. Think business, hospitality, retail, and aged care.

Thank you to my fellow councillors, especially Deborah Castle for her role as State Secretary.

Tim Fletcher

Tertiary portfolio

TRAVEL

State Council were unable to go to Sydney for their annual deputation in October due to the COVID-19 restrictions but were able to hold zoom meetings and those we had meetings with regarding travel issues were;

- Minister for Regional Transport and Roads
- Transport for NSW (TfNSW)
- Bus NSW
- Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Regional NSW, and Western NSW.

Transport for NSW and the NSW Department of Education have been working together to develop and run a Preschool Drive Subsidy pilot trial. The trial will test the potential expansion of the current School Drive Subsidy to children three years and older accessing early childhood education services in rural and remote areas. Early childhood education services that have an ARIA classification of either remote or very remote and Broken Hill School of the Air, have been invited to opt into the trial. Services located in outer regional areas that cater to families who live in remote and very remote areas will also be invited to join the trial. The trial will run for the full school year of 2022 and will be capped to two days per week (86 days per annum) and the families will be reimbursed for up to 50kms of their travel.

At present, consideration may only be given to establishing a new non-commercial school bus service where at least 15 school age students reside 3.2 kilometres or more by the shortest most practical route to their school or the local route bus service and the majority live beyond eight kilometres from the school. ICPA-NSW will continue to ask the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and Transport for NSW to lower the number of students required to start a bus run from 15 to 12, (the seating capacity of a category 1 bus).

The installation of seat belts on school buses in rural and remote areas commenced in 2013, and on 10 March this year, seatbelts had been installed in every dedicated school bus in rural and regional NSW. The program is now completed.

Subsidies and free travel available to students.

The School Drive Subsidy (SDS) is administered by TfNSW and is available to NSW residents. The subsidy is for driving school students to school or to the nearest transport pick up point and is only intended to partly offset the cost of using a private vehicle.

Students from Kindergarten-Year 6 are eligible if:

- they are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education
- aged 4 Years 6 months, or older
- from their home address:
 - The distance to school exceeds 1.6 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.3 km walking distance, **and** the distance to the nearest transport pick up point (where available) exceeds 1.6 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.3 km walking distance.

Secondary school students from Years 7-12 are eligible if:

- they are a resident of NSW or an overseas student who is eligible for free government education
- from their home address:

- The distance to school exceeds 2 km (straight line distance) or 2.9 km walking distance, **and**
- The distance to the nearest transport pick-up point (where available) exceeds 2 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.9 km walking distance.

TAFE students are eligible if:

- they are a resident of NSW or an overseas student eligible for free government education
- they are under 18 years of age at 1 January of the year of application
- they are enrolled in a full-time TAFE course for a minimum of 16 hours per week
- they are not employed
- from their home address:
 - The walking distance from home to TAFE exceeds 3.2 km, **and**
 - The distance to the nearest transport pick-up point (where available) exceeds 2 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.9 km walking distance.
- they attend the closest TAFE where enrolment is available.

Boarding school students and weekday boarders attending day school:

Students who board away from home to attend school may be eligible for the SDS. If no public transport is available, boarding school students are eligible for subsidised travel between the family home and school at weekends and school holidays.

- Students that are weekly boarders are entitled up to 22 trips per semester
- Students that are term boarders are entitled up to nine trips per year

Students who board in town and attend a day school during term may also be eligible for subsidised travel between the family home and the place of boarding at weekends and school holidays.

There is no subsidy cap on the distance travelled.

Distance Education students attending mini-schools

The NSW Department of Education (DoE) operates a number of face-to-face mini-schools to compliment the distance education program. Distance Education students who are full-time and geographically isolated are eligible for the SDS. To be considered for the SDS, students are required to be enrolled in accordance with section 2.2 of the Distance Education Enrolment Procedures set out by the NSW Department of Education. There is no limit to the number of trips that can be claimed to attend mini schools during term time (subject to school attendance records being checked).

At present, university students may be eligible for Fares Allowance which covers the cost of the least expensive and most available form of public transport in Australia between your permanent home and your place of tertiary study. Where it is not practical to use public transport, you can travel by private transport if you need to move belongings that exceed strict luggage limits or are difficult to move around. To get Fares Allowance you must be a tertiary student living away from home to study and you must also receive one of these payments:

- Youth Allowance as a full-time student,
- Austudy as a full time or part time student or
- Pensioner Education Supplement as a full time or part time student and you must also be one of these:
 - dependent and get a higher rate of Youth Allowance when living away from home,
 - independent and living away from your partner to study,

- a parent living away from your dependent children to study,
- were dependent and living away from home in the last study year and you are now independent due to:
 - turning 22 or
 - supporting yourself through work, or
- are studying a distance or online course and need to do compulsory travel to your institution.

Secondary students and Australian Apprentices cannot get Fares Allowance.

The School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) provides eligible school students with free or subsidised travel from home to school.

The scheme includes:

- Free travel to and from home and school on approved train, bus, ferry, and light rail services during school term.
- Discounted travel on buses between home and school with a School Term Bus Pass.
- Free travel on NSW TrainLink Regional services and long-distance coach services for boarding school students

Students from Kindergarten-Year 2 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- Aged 4 Years 6 months, or older.

No minimum walking distance criteria applies to these students.

Primary school students from Years 3-6 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- The straight-line distance from their home address to school is more than 1.6 km.
- The walking distance from home to school is 2.3 km or further.

Primary school students who live too close to the school to be eligible for free travel may qualify for a School Term Bus Pass which provides bus travel at a discounted price for the whole school term.

Secondary school students from Years 7-12 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW or an overseas student who is eligible for free government education,
- The straight-line distance from their home address to school is more than 2 km, or
- The walking distance from home to school is 2.9 km or further.

Secondary school students who live too close to the school to be eligible for free travel may qualify for a School Term Bus Pass which provides bus travel at a discounted price for the whole school term.

TAFE students are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- They are under 18 years of age at 1 January of the year of application.
- They are enrolled in a full-time TAFE course for a minimum of 16 hours per week.
- They are not employed.

- The walking distance from home to TAFE is 3.2 km or further.
- They attend the closest TAFE where enrolment is available.

Tertiary students studying at TAFE may be eligible for concession travel on public transport.

Boarding school students:

Eligible boarding school students can apply for a free school travel pass for either:

- daily travel to and from school if they reside away from home but do not reside at the school, or
- weekend/vacation travel on NSW TrainLink train and coach services.

Students are not able to apply for both.

The Department of Education Assisted School Travel Program:

This program provides specialised transport assistance for eligible students with disability to travel to and from school. The Program provides travel support services primarily between a student's permanent place of residence and school. The program is targeted towards supporting eligible students who are unable to travel independently and need transport assistance to attend school.

Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS):

This is a NSW Government initiative providing financial assistance towards travel and accommodation cost when a patient needs to travel long distances to specialised allied health clinics. Speech Pathology is an example.

Thank you to my fellow Councillors for their support during the past year.

David Butler

Travel Portfolio Convenor

GUEST SPEAKERS

Laura Stalley, State Council.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our next speaker today at the 50th Conference of ICPA-NSW. It is exciting to be back where it all began. We are fortunate to have a video message from the Hon. Minister Sarah Mitchell, MLC, as she is unable to attend in person due to Parliamentary sitting clashes. A country girl at heart from Gunnedah she has a deep insight and passion into education in rural and remote NSW. Finishing her secondary education at Gunnedah High School and then furthering her education at the University of NSW where she studies politics, sociology and international relations and obtained a Bachelor of Arts. She has built a valuable relationship and respect with ICPA-NSW over the years and this association is appreciated deeply. Please welcome the Hon minister Sarah Mitchell, MLC.

The Hon Sarah Mitchell, MLC. Minister for Education and Early Learning. *(Video presentation)*

Hi everybody. I would like to acknowledge that I am coming to you from Gadigal land but I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that you are all meeting on and pay my respects to elders, past, present and emerging. I'm also really disappointed not to be able to join you in person for, what is such a special milestone as you celebrate 50 years strong of the ICPA in Bourke

back where it all began in 1971. I know there is a strong representation from the Department of Education and a lot of our staff are there to share our commitment to supporting the needs of isolated children and families across regional and remote NSW. Three years ago, when I first took on the role of NSW Education and Early Learning Minister, I knew that we had some work to do particularly for our regional schools. There was a lot of good intention and many great lengths made by my predecessors, particularly in both the infrastructure and funding space. But there was obviously more to do. One of the concerns that I had was that too often the decisions that affect the bush were being made by people from the city and while they might be made with the best of intentions life in regional NSW is never front of mind for those who don't live there. To create the changes that I wanted to see, regional public policy needs to be driven by people who live and breathe country NSW. That is why I was really proud to launch the Regional Rural and Remote Unit led by Ben Ballard who is there with you at the conference today.

After ten years in government, we have made some really significant changes in how we do things in education and the key change has been lifting expectations. We are building a system that expects more of itself for the benefit of our kids. I came into this role understanding firsthand the opportunities and the challenges of being educated in the bush. As many of you know I grew up and went to school and I continue to live in Gunnedah where my eight-year-old daughter attends our local public school and my youngest daughter goes to preschool at one of our local services.

I know that, as a parent, we rightly want the best opportunities for our children and I, as a Minister, want to make sure that our school system is equally aspirational for them. We know that providing students with the best learning opportunities includes teaching students in really inspiring learning spaces and that's why, as a government, we are investing \$7.9 billion dollars over the next four years in school infrastructure. This is the largest investment in the history of NSW when it comes to school infrastructure. We have already invested \$120 million dollars through our Regional Renewal Programme which is all about improving learning environments that benefit students' health, wellbeing and learning outcomes whilst employing local contractors in the regions. Our students, now more than ever, are operating in a digital world so it is crucial that we upskill our teachers and give students access to better internet connectivity, digital devices and also online learning platforms to help address that divide between metro and regional schools. We are investing \$355.8 million dollars in our rural access gap to increase student and teacher devices and smart boards for every learning space in the bush. By upgrading our internet connections and providing these additional devices rural students will be able to access subjects and opportunities that were once unavailable and right across regional NSW we are also moving all of our mainland school sites that currently rely on satellite connection to fibre. Game changing. Not just to these school communities but also for the towns that will now have internet infrastructure delivered to their door step. I know that connectivity continues to be a key issue affecting your members and I thank those of you who have reached out to me and my office with your particular issues. I am very committed to continue to work with you to improve access for our more remote students and families.

Of course, wellbeing and mental support are more important than ever before as our students have had to endure the global pandemic, fires, drought, floods, but also sometimes in the bush we need to make sure that we have a different way of providing these services. That is why we are implementing initiatives like telepsychology, fly-in-fly-out teams of specialists and school nurses to ensure that our remote students have access to support when they need it. Being a mum to young kids particularly during my time in this role, has also really driven home the importance of high-quality early childhood education. I know this is an issue that the ICPA is also really passionate about and we have worked together closely to help improve quality and increase access in the sector. In fact, at the last ICPA conference in Hay I had the opportunity to discuss with some of your members the need for a preschool in Pooncarie on the school site and, excitingly, we are already seeing that delivered through the service safety net. It is all about providing funding stability for small regional and remote preschools and also

the Community Safety Net Programme which is supporting very small remote communities to have access to preschool. So, a big shout out to those at Pooncarie who really pushed hard to have a preschool at the school. It is really exciting to see it open this year. We have also redesigned the system support for communities to help deliver those flexible learning programmes. Both Louth and Ivanhoe have also started this in 2022 which is exciting and more are planned and I can't wait to work with the ICPA to deliver more for our communities. Our Preschool Drive Subsidy Piolet for Transport NSW is also being rolled out and, again, congratulations to the ICPA for your advocacy in this space as well.

We all know that the regions are a great place to live and work and it is really important for me, as minister, that we invest heavily in our staff and our opportunities to make sure our schools are the best that they can be. That is why we have \$125 million dollars for our brand-new teacher supply strategy really making sure that we have the most comprehensive rural incentives programme in Australia. We know that there is more to do in this space but we will continue to work with communities and principals to get more teachers out to the bush. To grow our own. To upskill existing school staff into teaching. This really is an exciting time in public education, particularly in the region and there is an opportunity for us to see that real and lasting change for schools that we want to see in the bush through our NSW Government. I'll continue to work with my Ministerial colleagues, Deputy Premier Paul Toole, to make sure that we secure the funding and commitment for rural and remote NSW and it's not about politics. It's about parity because every student, no matter where they live or what their circumstance may be, deserves the opportunity to thrive in their schooling and beyond. I say to you as members of the ICPA, your advocacy does not go unnoticed by myself or the Department. I really appreciate the strong working relationship that we have and it is all about improving outcomes for students in our communities. So, I really look forward to continuing to work with you to improve outcomes for our students and families across rural, regional and remote NSW. As I said, I am so sad that I am not there with you in Bourke but I hope you have a great conference and please make yourselves known to the Department staff who are there. Raise the issues that matter in your local community and hopefully I will get the chance to catch up with you all again in person very soon.

Ben Ballard, Executive Director, Rural Regional and Remote Education Policy Directorate, Department of Education.

I acknowledge country and as an aboriginal person I would like to acknowledge the local custodians of this land acknowledging the long-held history they have here. I'd also like to acknowledge the lands you have all travelled from including lands that I have travelled from this week. Her Excellency Governor Margaret Beasley, President Kate Warby, former President Claire Butler, Deputy Mayor, Lachlan Ford, the ICPA Life Members and delegates, colleagues from other departments, sponsors, Deputy Secretary Lisa Alosno Love and Chloe Read and my team thank you for allowing me to speak today. It is my honour being here and celebrating with you all. 50 Years On. 50 Years Strong., and what a moment it is to be back in Bourke where it first began in 1971. A celebration of the past, present and the future of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW. I know that organising such a conference is no mean feat. Congratulations to the organising committee and thank you to the delegates here today representing your districts. Your advocacy does not go unnoticed by the Department of Education. By connecting, listening and sharing together we will work towards the vision of ensuring equity of access to education for all rural or remote students so that every child has access to the same educational outcomes as their metropolitan peers. I am extremely passionate about education in regional, rural and remote communities. It is no secret that our country kids don't always have the same access to support their success in education as their city peers and we have to be stronger and more courageous in our approach in lifting our aims and aspirations for our country kids.

My team came about as a result of the introduction of the Rural and Remote Education Strategy. Out of which was developed as a result of extensive consultation with parents, teachers, principals, school communities and education experts right across the state. When the Department thinks about a successful educational system for students in rural and remote NSW, we think about cohorts of students who have transitioned well from early childhood education to school and have had an enriched, inclusive and stimulating experience throughout their time in primary and high school and have felt no restriction in any way when choosing extracurricular activity and who have been supported and inspired to pursue a career in which ever field they choose after finishing school. This means that every child can learn to the best of their ability whilst at school no matter where they are from or what their background is. No child should miss out on any opportunity because of where they live. Outlined in the Rural and Remote Education Strategy are priority areas which will shape the way rural and remote education policies are developed and implemented. This can be viewed and downloaded from the Department of Education website. The strategy will act as a frame work or a guide to schools, a strategy for our school leaders to refer back to when making important decisions and which we will support them in their everyday work. We are proud of the progress we have made in this space so far including a record spend in infrastructure, a huge upgrade in the technology our rural and remote students are using, the significant focus we are putting on mental health and wellbeing and a very important revamp of the curriculum.

So, who is the Rural and Remote Education Strategy policy team? My team are here today and if you could just stand up so all can see where they are in the room. I have the broader team boss's here. Lisa Alonso Love is here today. Chloe Read is here. This is only a small part of my team. We have three main areas and they are: Partnership and Engagement; Policy; and Programmes and Delivery. A little bit about that and I should also point out that there are a number of those roles vacant so we are still recruiting and if you have good people in your areas, please let them know about our recruitment. We are taking people from right across NSW and there is no limit to where you come from. The Partnership and Engagement team connect, listen and share. They are really about working with you here today and working with you throughout the education journey that you are engaged in as well. Our Policy and Insights team is all about doing the right things and making sure that we are connecting right across the world. Connecting across NSW and across Australia to make sure that we are finding out the best things that we can for rural and remote communities and embedding those things into what we are doing. The Programmes and Delivery team is about doing things right. It's about making sure that what we are doing is actually embedded in the everyday work that we actually aim to do and that is one of the things that the Minister raises with me on a regular occasion. Early childhood education is a part of our work and part of the opportunity we have taken on this trip was to drop in and see some of our early childhood centres and we've come from right across the state and we are embedded in communities right across the state so we've taken some different paths to get here but we have taken time to drop in on different centres and different places along the way. Curriculum delivery and we have heard a lot about the way we deliver our curriculum to students in rural and remote communities and we want to improve that whether it is through distance education, whether it is in the school or whether it is in early childhood or whether that is postschool. Resilience. A lot of my team who can't be here today who are caught up in the floods which are occurring on the north coast are working in that resilience space on a long-term focus and supporting communities in rural and remote areas. Unfortunately, a lot of our natural disasters seem to happen but we are also working more broadly across the state in the way that we worked to build ongoing preparation, not only for disasters but also for ongoing changes that might happen in a community and this really tests our resilience. Staffing is one of the key concerns across all of the state for various different reasons and we are working to understand that and working to see how we can work with you all as well as our communities in terms of getting more people employed in country locations. Pathways and as I said before we want to make sure that we can get our students into good paying jobs in our local communities. A couple of weeks ago I was at the CCSA conference in Katoomba and I heard from

all the early childhood providers from the rural and remote area. One of the big things they talked about there was access to that support on the ground in rural and remote communities and it's working with our stakeholders and other agencies in health, in areas such as the Royal Far West who I know are here today and we have connected already with a couple of times.

The flood recovery work, as I spoke to you before, it's being on the ground and making sure that the schools are supported and making sure that our students and communities are supported, liaising with the local recovery centres, bringing the services to the families and to the schools. We are starting to develop some unique opportunities and partnerships with the Office of Sport which, late last year, offered up 1,000 places across their centres for our rural and remote students to access it and to attend free of charge. I know the Office for Regional Youth wanted to be here today and some of the work we are doing there in terms of how we do that with regional NSW. I'm sure there are lots of questions and I won't answer them now but if you want to grab me, I'll be at the dinner tonight and I'll be around today and tomorrow. Thank you.

Dr. Rosalind Walsh. NSW Department of Education. High Performing Students Unit.

Thank you so much for having me here today. I would like to acknowledge that we meet on aboriginal land and pay my respects to elders, past, present and emerging and our aboriginal colleagues who are with us today. I bring greetings from Chris Robertson, the principal of Aurora College who tells me that he has greatly appreciated over the years the support of the ICPA. In fact, he referred to you as a surrogate P&C. My actual association with ICPA began about 20 years ago when I worked at the Gifted Education Research and Information Centre at the University of NSW and we were lucky enough to be given a government grant to conduct 50 workshops for parents of gifted and high potential students across Australia. We travelled to some incredibly remote places and it was a real eyeopener into the fact that we really want our high potential and gifted students to not only have access to education but also have access to an appropriate education and one that meets their particular needs. I currently work at the Department of Education in the High-Performance Student's Programme and we were established to implement the findings of the review into selective education access and the role of myself and my colleague, Garth Bolwell who is up the back there and who is really looking forward to chatting to all of you tonight at dinner, is to action the equity items that come out of the review. So, just to set the context for you, when we talk about selective education, we are talking about opportunity classes that is Grade Five and Six, Stage Three and at selective high schools, Grades Seven to Ten including our three agriculture high schools, Yanco, Farrah and Hurlstone that have the boarding opportunities. We know that there is a strong body of evidence that shows that high potential and gifted students benefit not only academically but also socially from being grouped with like minds. OC and SHS are one of the ways in which the department meets the needs of intellectually gifted and high potential students and, hopefully, offer a choice to parents of these particular students.

One of the things I do in my role is about creating awareness and there are often a lot of myths that surround selective education and gifted education in general. The first one is that gifted education is elitist and I really bring your attention to the department's new policy on high potential and gifted students which recognises gifts in four domains not just the intellectual. We also talk about the creative domain, physical domain and the socio-effective domain. It's a much more inclusive policy that we have had in the past and the department is really committed to meeting the needs and developing the potential of all of our students. The policy covers all of our Department of Education schools and means that your child's needs should be able to be met within any setting that you choose. The other one we come across a lot is that every child is gifted and I have to confess that when I started off as an educator, I sincerely believed that every child was gifted and it was my job to find that gift and make it flourish but I think that is really a misunderstanding of what giftedness means. We know that every child has strengths and every child has weaknesses. When a weakness is such that a teacher needs to

adjust what they are doing and how they teach that child in the classroom, then we call that weakness or disability. Likewise, when a strength is so pronounced that the teacher needs to adjust what she is doing within a class room then that is what we call a gift. I think it is important to recognise that all kids have strengths and weaknesses but not every child is gifted. The other one we come across a lot is that gifted children are one in a million. I have been into class rooms unfortunately, where teachers have told me that they have never taught a gifted child in their life and I think of all the poor gifted children who have gone through the class room of that teacher. So, it is really important that we acknowledge that when we talk about giftedness and high potential, we are talking about children who fall in, roughly, the top ten percent of peers of their age cohort. We are not talking just the geniuses on the mountain top and we certainly do see those kids who accelerate through school and then into university but we are also talking about students who are substantially ahead of their peers.

There is a perception certainly in urban areas, that you need to be coached to get into a selective high school or into an opportunity class. Our research shows that this is probably less of an issue for those of you who are living in rural and remote areas but there can still be a significant perception that a lot of the kids in these classes are coached and you do need that coaching. This is not the case and one of the things that came out of the review is that we recently contracted a new test group provider and the test is now far more based on raw ability than it is on performance that can be coached. We often hear from parents that selective high schools have a high pressure, competitive environment and this is often a concern that parents have if they are sending their child to a selective high school. Again, the research in gifted education tends to suggest that our high potential gifted students do tend to be a little bit on the competitive side but usually more with themselves than with other students and, of course, our selective high schools, particularly the boarding schools, are very much focused on the overall wellbeing of the students. For some students it is the first time they have encountered students of the same ability as themselves and this provides an opportunity for those students to gain a more realistic view of their own abilities. If you are the kid in the little school who is always been top of the class then it can be a really good experience to become a little fish in a big pond.

Some gifted students are high achievers and these are the students we are often more likely to recognise but research has also shown us that gifted students can under achieve. They can hide their abilities and it can be when they don't have access to an appropriate education. They can dumb down to fit in with the peer group. If the peer group is all interested in the footy and the cricket scores and not into discussing whatever particular interest a gifted child might have, you can find that they'll have dumbed down their abilities to fit in socially. By giving gifted students access to like-minded peers through provisions like Aurora we can really help to remedy that under achievement. The last myth that I would like to tell you about is that the idea that gifted children don't have disabilities. It may seem counter-intuitive but intellectually gifted children can also have a disability. In fact, they can have any disability apart from an intellectual disability. We often encounter these twice exceptional students who may have ADHA, they may be on the autism spectrum, they may have hearing impairments or virtually any other disability you can think of. Too often the focus for this type of student may be on the deficit rather than on the gift. In 2017 there was a review into selective education access and there are thirteen action items that came out of the review and the work that Garth and myself are currently carrying out is responding to the action items around equitable access. Of course, equity is based on the acknowledgement that there are barriers to access for particular groups. The particular groups that we are mandated to work on are educationally disadvantaged students, aboriginal students, students with disabilities, rural and remote students and girls. In terms of addressing our barriers for our rural and remote students – our understanding of the barriers that your children may face have come from the review and from our colleagues in the Department of Education, but we really want to tap into your lived experiences. The barriers that we identified are as follows: A general lack of awareness. We are finding that people just don't hear about the opportunities that exist and we really want to find better ways to get the information out to the communities. We need you to be talent spotters for us. Quite often I have come across parents who have said that they didn't realise that it wasn't normal for

a four-year-old to teach themselves to read. It is really important that we work together as a community to help to identify intellectual talent. We recently ran a Facebook marketing trial in one regional town and a single add there managed to increase the applications to the selective high school by 300%. So, I think there is probably a lot more we can do in terms of marketing and getting the information out to parents.

We know that lack of access has been a real issue and I'm sure you will be pleased to know that from the OC entry next year and from 2024 that students studying by distance education will be able to access Aroura's offerings. We also know that isolation and location is a problem and that sometimes parents don't realise that they have high potential or gifted students because they don't have much interaction with other students. We know that lack of infrastructure has also been an issue. The location of the testing sites where students take the opportunity class or the selective high school exam has been an issue and Covid has necessitated that we test students in their own schools rather than travelling to high schools to undertake the testing and there are suggestions that we might make more use of remote proctoring where a test can be administered in your own home. We are looking as to whether this can be used more widely moving forward. We would love to hear your experiences in engaging with selective education if we have parents here who have had children at Aroura or who are currently at Aroura or at Yanco, Farrah or Hurlstone. We would love to have a chat with you today and if you haven't there are reasons why those schools have not met your particular needs, we would love to speak to you about that.

What we are doing moving forward, is that we have a new placement model that will give greater emphasis to our underrepresented group including our rural and remote groups. We are also building a bank of resources that high potential and gifted students will be able to access in order to better prepare for the test and we are also looking at expanding the offerings of Aroura College. So, due to commence in the second semester of 2022 Aroura will be offering an aboriginal OC class as well and my understanding is that distance education will be able to access Aroura as well. Garth and myself will be for the entire conference and we would love to chat to you so please come and talk to us as we are very much interested in your lived experiences. Thank you.

Michael Marom, Area General Manager, Telstra Corporation.

Thank you, delegates. It is not often you get applause when you work for Telstra but it is obviously a better crowd here. A very sincere thank you to all of you. I think it is terrific to be here as a sponsor and as a supporter of the ICPA particularly in Bourke which is the birthplace of the ICPA for your 50th Conference. Our partnership with the ICPA is a very long standing one and one that we value immensely and we work closely with your executive group to actively address core needs of members so, this really is something that we see as extremely valuable to Telstra. Importantly, Telstra has been connected with regional Australia and we are proud of our long history of helping people connect. Delivering best coverage to the highest quality services always has been and always will be absolute priority for us as a company. Telecommunications have come a long way. We've seen 2G to 3G to 4G and now 5G and there is new technology emerging as well as things like ADSL and moving on to things like the NBN and what the government is doing from that perspective to provide greater fixed line connectivity across the country. I know there will be many, many other solutions. Satellite is an emerging technology and one that is very exciting and lots of progress being made around that as well. From our point of view and our investment we are covering an additional one hundred thousand square kilometres every year. A long way to go but certainly something we are very much focused on to continue to deliver. In fact, from an investment point of view, to date Telstra invested billions of dollars to extend and enhance mobile coverage as far as we possibly can and over the last five years alone, we have invested eight billion dollars in our mobile network nationally of which three billion dollars have been invested into regional Australia. During the same period, we have also invested

more than five billion dollars into our fixed network and one point three billion of that has been put directly into regionals. We are also proud in contributing into the Federal Government's Blackspot Programme so we have invested three times more than the other industry partners combined and that means that we have already built 930 new mobile stations across regional Australia and provided coverage that wasn't there before.

In NSW alone we have 271 towers through that programme and 254 of which are already completed. Also, in the budget there is another eight hundred million dollars which will be put towards new programmes. We don't have all the details of those programmes as yet but they'll replace the current Blackspot Programme and also the Regional Connectivity Programme and we look forward to getting more details around that because that is a very exciting proposition as we move forward and certainly a clear indication of the commitment that telecommunications plays and the importance of telecommunications in regional markets. There is also four hundred and fifty million dollars which, I think, has been ear marked for the NBN as well. Certainly, a lot of money to increase connectivity into regional markets.

The other thing is that the company acknowledges that we don't always get it right. I know that some customers are frustrated that coverage and capacity in their circumstances isn't what they need and we are not always easy to deal with which is probably a surprise to everybody in this room. Telecommunications services are always a passionate topic for discussion across regional Australia and it is important to highlight the commitment we make to respond to some of these challenges. We have invested another two hundred and fifty million dollars over the last twelve months to improve regional network and we have also committed two hundred million dollars on co-investment funding over the next three years for regional coverage improvements. Recently we also announced proposed network sharing arrangements with TPG that will see material access benefits for our customers allowing for greater expansion of new technologies into regional communities and we will have a session at 12.30 pm today for those interested to talk about the transition from 3G to 4G. What this will mean is that one of the advantages of the partnership with TPG is that we will have access to more spectrum which, in basic terms, means we will have a better capacity to cover what 3G currently offers.

Another couple of important points is that we are bring back all of our call centres so we are now at a situation where 70% of calls that come from Australia will be answered in Australia and by the end of this year, we will have 100% of our call which come from Australia answered in Australia. I'll just pause there in case there is any applause. (*Applause*) It is good news because we know how frustrating it is sometimes when you are dealing with people who are not familiar with what Australia looks like and some of the challenges we face.

The other thing is that we are also committed to buying back all the licensee stores. We are conscious of having a consistent customer experience and customer service being at the front end of what we do and so to do that correctly we have made a decision to buy back all of our licensee stores. The majority of those will be backed into our own company stores by 2023 so we are well progressed in regional areas and the majority of stores are already back into company hands. That will certainly be a step forward and provide a much better service experience for our customers going into our stores.

There are lots of changes and the company is continuing to change and making sure we are the telco of choice. You may have caught up with the news yesterday that our current CEO, Andy Penn, who has been in the chair for the last seven years and who has really ridden the company through a massive transition period, is retiring and the good news is, and Andy has done a fantastic job and been a great supporter of regional Australia, but the good news is who is taking over is Vicki Brady who is our current financial director. Viki comes from the country and is an incredibly competent financial director and I think he will be a great CEO for Telstra moving forward once we have gone past this current transition period and aiming towards our next milestone which is 2025 and one of the four pillars is regional Australia. I think you will have a great advocate in Viki and I feel confident that we

will be in very, very good hands. So, I would encourage you to come and have a chat to Josh and myself at 12.30 pm when we are going to take you through what it looks like as we transition from 3G to 4G and also answer any questions that you may have. In conclusion I'll just say thank you, once again, for having us. We value this relationship immensely and I think that the ICPA really speaks for what the bush is about and that is making sure that we are providing world's best technology and connectivity as well as opportunity for kids and the future of Australia. So, thanks again.

Richard Stokes, CEO, Australian Boarding Schools Association

I would lie to acknowledge the traditional owners of the country on which we meet and I would like to especially thank Kate and Claire, for your friendship and for your support that you have given to us on the way. Whilst I'm at that, Alana and her wonderful team for the friendship. When I get a text from Alana that says that I am a good egg after we have had a meeting, I think I'm doing OK. We really value the partnership that the Australian Boarding Schools Association has with the Isolated Children's Parents' Association. We are in the same game in so many ways and that's why we work really well together. A special apology from Tom who would have loved to have been here as well, he was in Hay last year. Tom, as a father of an eleven-month-old is also about to become a father again, six weeks away, and so he wasn't keen to travel this far away from Brisbane just in case. On top of that he is also dealing with the fact that, three weeks ago, the bottom floor of his house went under water. So, what I wish I could say? I wish I could stand up here and say that 2022 is a fabulous year with Covid gone away and boarding schools are going really well. Wouldn't that have been wonderful? I do say that I was able to think back in November of last year and I said to the heads of boarding at a meeting we were holding online, that I actually thought the first six months of this year would be the hardest. And that had come true.

We put together an excellent webinar from three principals of boarding schools in the UK which has had about 1,200 to 1,300 views. You are very welcome to view it on the ABSA You Tube channel but it talked about the challenges that the UK boarding schools had in dealing with Covid and many of those things have been what we have had to deal with to. What they didn't have to deal with were the Chief Health Officers who thought they knew about boarding schools but don't. Full stop. I can't say enough about that. They have been quite the challenge for us right through the pandemic but even more so recently. Right at the beginning of this year we put out a very clear set of guide lines to all of the health departments around Australia about how we thought boarding could deal with Covid in the boarding house. We knew what was going to come. We knew what was going to happen. We had very clear concepts of what close contact would be. We knew how to make sure that there would be staff in place as essential workers and gave them a really clear guideline with a Covid safe charter for our boarding schools. Thankfully, Queensland and NSW took that up. It did take a little bit of work in NSW and Kate and I know about that, but once we got onto the right people in the NSW Health Department, they accepted that. I can't believe that we had such success in Queensland, I'll be honest, but we did. We are still dealing with the Chief Health Officer in South Australia who wants to suppress the virus. She was the one who said not to catch the football if it was kicked into the crowd. Our boarding schools in South Australia are suffering and I know that you, as parents of kids in boarding schools in South Australia are suffering because of that. We are trying hard but they won't even invite me into the room to talk. I have had really good discussions with all other health departments around Australia and we are able to give them very clear guidelines about what I think our boarding schools can do and that is to look after kids. They have been doing it for years. I've been involved in boarding since 1979. I've looked after the kids a long time. We are not going to put kids at risk. So, it has been quite challenging and that has been the nightmare and if my hair wasn't grey beforehand, it would be now. So, I hope we do win some fights there and I do look forward to the second half of this year when things are settling because we will know what is going on.

I would also like to say that we have spent quite a bit of time working on the media and the way that they approach our boarding schools. There is nothing that gets the hair on the back of my neck to stand up more than when they call our boarding schools' elite private schools. It angers me enormously, and some of you will have heard this, but I've worked really hard at trying to write letters to the editor about that and even had one published in Queensland which was a bit of a shock too. I basically said boarding schools are there because those parents have got no choice. I'm standing in front of people who don't have a choice but send their child to boarding school. I realise that. 75% of our kids in boarding school in this country are your kids. Rural and remote kids. It is why we exist. It's the only place in the world it is the case and it is interesting when I stand up in front of a conference in the UK and talk to the principals there and tell them that boarding schools are influenced by the weather and they look at me strangely. So, I say that when it doesn't rain, they have no income so they can't send their kids to boarding school. That was so different to them. So, this is the only place but I continue to say to the media whenever I get the chance that, in fact, our boarding schools are really important because they look after the kids of those people who put food on your plate. Black and white. That is what I say. Jared is up the back smiling because I say that all the time but it is a really effective way of getting them to shut up. We are working on that really hard.

A couple of things I just wanted to emphasise to you and many of you will know that there was an Australian Standard for Boarding Schools published back in 2015. A certification scheme for that was launched this year even though it was held up for two years by Covid as well like everything else has. We're really keep for boarding school parents to ask their schools what are they doing with the standards. I think that is a really important part and part of that is making sure that boarding school's staff are trained. There is nothing more important in my vision and one of the reasons I was involved in starting ABSA in the very first place, and what gives me the energy to do what I do every single day, is that I think the people who stand in front of your kids or look after your kids between three and nine, the other eighteen hours, they need training. One of the things we have done recently and, hopefully this will come about, the Emerging Priorities Grant which was offered by the Federal Government and we applied for that grant, to educate not only all of our boarding staff across Australia but also all our Year 11 and Year 12 boarders in youth mental health first aid. I think that would be a really effective way for the government to do something useful and, fingers crossed, we should now in the next few weeks if we have been successful. Let's hope that that comes about. There are also really remarkable opportunities for training and they are available to all the schools so don't be frightened to ask your boarding school people if they are trained because I know that I have lots of boarding school people in the room and they all do training with us so they are not going to be upset but there are some who don't and that worries me and it is really, really important.

The last thing I would like to highlight is last night. Not only did we have a good time last night but also, I celebrated and I know that Alana celebrated because in the federal budget there was \$109 million dollars given to a Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Programme for 200 families from low SES communities in regional and remote Australia to help with the cost of boarding school fees. Roughly, they are saying \$15,000 per family per year for three years and it is a pilot scheme. Fingers crossed that that might continue. That is one of the greatest achievements I think, together, we've had and I say that because Alana and I have had the ear of the right people in government at the moment and I am hoping that that might continue. To get something actually announced so publicly was a little, quiet jump up and down last night that I did because I think that is one of those things that we really can do to assist you people and those who really need help. Boarding school fees are going up and that is because we need better staff and we need more staff. When I started in boarding back in 1979, I was the only staff member as a nineteen-year-old looking after 100 boys. You wouldn't put up with that now and neither you should. So, that is obviously expensive as well and is part of the problem. It is really important to understand that. I just wanted to paint a picture of what is happening at the moment and I have had a wonderful opportunity to talk to the Northern Territory ICPA conference a couple of weeks ago, the Western Australia conference that we assisted running on line two weeks ago

as well and so it is really a good opportunity to speak and I'd really encourage you to talk to Jarad who is at the back there, or myself if you have any questions, please don't be shy. We had some wonderful people from Broken Hill region last night asking lots of questions about boarding schools which was really good and I think that is a really good opportunity for you to feel really comfortable to approach us. Your organisation and our organisation are partners in what we do. Thank you.

Sam Baily, Farmer, Ultralight Pilot, Inspirational Speaker and Author

What a thrill it is to have been asked to come and help you guys celebrate fifty wonderful years of the ICPA and I'm right into helping people and when Kate Warby phoned me at the end of October last year and invited me I couldn't say yes quick enough. I remember thinking to myself that it is in March 2022 so it is miles away. Five minutes later, here we are. It is a great thrill and I remember Kate and I had words, and we chatted and I remember some key words we talked about. Challenge. Change. Of course, the big word that comes up in everything second paragraph and conversation these days is resilience. We talked of community and giving and we wrapped it all up by talking about gratitude and appreciation. I suppose they are all words that I know a little bit about. I have had some great challenges in my life. Some people would say that I have had great change which is actually, believe it or not, made my whole life. The big one, resilience, was never around when I was growing up as a kid and my niece asked me the other day what was around when you were growing up? I told her that I thought it was grit. I know you can't buy it and you won't find it in a cornflakes packet or under your pillow. You do have to learn it and I learnt it at a very early age and little did I know that it would help me enormously a few years down the track.

We talked about community and the incredible importance of community and giving. Well, some of you guys will know you only have to go through a family tragedy and you will work out the incredible importance of community and that people literally come running and they did to my family and the giving was just amazing. I suppose through my years it's one of the most important things I have learnt. That you will get far more out of life by giving and helping someone than you will yourself. Then we wrapped it all up by talking about gratitude and appreciation. I am so grateful that I live in this great country and there wouldn't be a week go past when I just pull up for ten or fifteen seconds and think how lucky I am to live in this country. How lucky we all are. How lucky you are to have this? We come all this way and have something to eat and something to drink and we all go home to bed with a pillow tonight. We have a toothbrush and if you turn a tap on you can have a drink of water and then we all wake to the most enormous opportunity in the world that this country offers us all. We are so very, very lucky.

Can I try and demonstrate all those words in a bit of a story? It is my story. I know some of you have seen me perform before so please feel free to fall asleep and I'll wake you in about 20 minutes. For you other guys, I probably have a very similar story to you. I was born and raised on a family farm. A little place called Croppa Creek. It is a little village of about a dozen or so people right in the north west of New South Wales and not far off the Queensland border. I just remember from day one that the bush was in my blood. The dirt was under my fingernails. All I wanted to be was a farmer just like my dad. Wherever he was I was and if he put his hands on his hips and pose for a photo, so would I. I don't know what it is but is it the wonderful lifestyle you have growing up on a farm? Is it putting a seed in the ground and growing a crop? Is it the love you have for animals? Of course, it is all the perks that keep fuelling that love affair. I remember the first motor bike and horse I learnt to ride. The first tractor I climbed up into by myself. The first wild pig I shot. The first billy cart my brother and I built. It was jolly hard work pushing it but we soon worked out that a bit of rope from the motor bike solved that problem. But they were great days and I simply had my life all planned. I'd get through my education, have a few years out in the big wide world then back home, take the reins from dad, marry, have family. I suppose, in a nutshell, that's how I thought my life would all pan out. I

kickstarted my education at the little Cropper Creek Primary School just down the road from where I lived and I remember getting home and my very, very enthusiastic mother running out of the house and asking, “Sambo, how was your first day at school?” I replied, “Yeah, it wasn’t too bad mum but I don’t think I’ll worry about going back tomorrow.” So let me tell you it didn’t get much better than that. I then had six years of TAS but I guess the grand finale there was doing my HSC in Year 12, way back in 1985 where I graduated in rugby, cricket and athletics and gained a high distinction in finding a way over to the girls’ school blindfolded. You can probably imagine, my HSC mark arrived home. Disaster. But that wasn’t my worry because the faster I could get away from the class room and get away from text books the better.

Earlier the following year I landed myself a job on a property up in western Queensland near a little place called Stone Henge which is about 150 kms south west of Longreach. So up I went in my old Holden ute and had a wonderful year. You know? Your first year out of school. Work hard. Play hard. Make some lifelong friendships and I just fell hopelessly in love with the outback. So, the following year I moved myself even further north and landed myself a job on a big cattle station up in the Northern Territory at a place called Avon Downs which is up in the Barkly Tablelands. I remember coming home for Christmas at the end of 1986 and the following year flying back in my old Holden ute then setting sail for the Northern Territory for what I thought was just going to be another wonderful year. It took me three days to get up there and I arrived at Avon Downs and I certainly learnt the true meaning of the word, “Wow.” Three days ago, I had left 4,500 acres and arrived at a bit over a million acres. I’d left 50 cows and calves and arrived at 35,000. It was so remote back then and there was no communication and all we had was a Royal Flying Doctor radio on the station and that was about the only form of communication we had. 25 of us on the station and it was really like being on another land.

Anyway, Sam was having an absolute ball. It was a Sunday afternoon and we had the day off so yours truly thought he would try and liven pace up a little bit by seeing if he could talk a couple of the crew into joining him in a trip to Commonwealth, which is about 60 kilometres back towards the Queensland border, for a beer. So, I rallied around and I managed to talk two of the guys into joining me and there was a little bit of method in my madness because of the two there was a governess. Her name was Alex and she was 21. Pretty handy and I just got word through the previous week that she had just broken up with her boyfriend in South Australia. So, while the hearts broken move in for the kill. I thought to myself that I couldn’t believe this as 90% of the opposition had no idea what was going on. At that stage of my life, I thought I was God’s gift to the female race anyway so, how could I miss? We assembled in the afternoon and there I was done up like an absolute Christmas tree and covered in about one and a half bottles of aftershave, shirt buttons undone down to my belly button to expose the two or three hairs I had on my chest and climbed into the back of this car. Got a whiff of perfume as I climbed in and that got my blood flowing in all sorts of directions. I had my fingers crossed that this was going to be my big night so we shut the doors, turned right onto the Barkly Highway and Jimmy Barnes was screaming and we were all screaming and Sam was going to arrive home madly, madly in love with the governess and away we went.

We never made it. We got 15 or 20 minutes down the road and I discovered that your life can change. We were flying and we had a blowout. The front passenger side tyre and the car rolled several times. I was a passenger in the back seat, didn’t have a seat belt on. Was thrown out the back window and came to lying on the side of the road. I knew straight away that this time there was something pretty serious wrong as I was completely paralysed and had no sensation at all in my lower body. So much so that I remember my first word was to a couple that obviously pulled up and walked over and knelt down beside me and I said to them, “Gee, I hope I don’t spend the rest of my life in a wheel chair.” I guess you could say that I was preparing myself pretty early on for what was about to become reality. I was flown from the crash site by the Royal Flying Doctor to Mt. Isa where I spent the night, most of the night in the Xray theatre where I was photographed from head to toe to try to come to some

diagnosis and I think, eventually, the diagnosis was certainly pretty simple. I had three or four cuts in my left arm, a dislocated right hand and a broken hand. I had severed my spinal cord completely at the base of my neck which left me a quadriplegic which basically means that I'll never use my arms and hands. I am paralysed from here down so I have no movement at all from here down. I've lost bowel and bladder control. I have no sensation at all from here down. I have a complete inability to be able to regulate body temperature and I only have about 45% of my lung capacity left so there is a fair portion of muscle paralysed around my lungs. I was placed in traction the following morning, placed back into the Royal Flying Doctor plane and flown to Brisbane where I arrived at the Spinal Unit at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. It was a shattering blow at that age to go from being a six-foot tall, bulletproof bloke with the world at your feet and at 19 you are bigger and stronger than superman and all of a sudden you have been ejected out of that world and be landed in one of complete dependency. I was literally pushed into that spinal unit a body on a bed and completely helpless.

I guess that I found out and I now know that tragedy, bad luck, accidents, diagnosis are, unfortunately a part of life. At some stage every one of us in this room will be confronted with it. I suppose the easiest thing to do in any hard luck situation is to look back and ask why me? Why us? It's not fair. No one understands. Why didn't I have my seatbelt on? Why were we going so fast? On and on you go. What will happen is that you start digging yourself into a rut and the more you look back the deeper that rut gets. The hardest thing to do in any tragedy is to stand back up, pick up whatever pieces that are left and soldier on because, unfortunately, this wonderful thing called life doesn't stop. Pick you up, prop you up, pat you on the back, the sun will go down this afternoon and be up again in the morning, tomorrow is a new and fresh day and as hard and as tough as it might be life rolls along. In order for me to roll on I had to come to some acceptance and it was a matter of saying, "Bad Luck mate." Wrong place at the wrong time. You can't rewind the clock now. Be grateful that you are still here and, after all, a lot of people don't get that choice. I was pretty severely maimed now but the doctors told me that I stood a chance of leading a reasonably independent life. I guess when I weighed it all up and broke it all down life was simply saying that I needed to sink or swim and I couldn't see my life at the bottom of the ocean so I chose to swim.

I spent five months in the spinal nit where you literally start all over again. I remember one of the first things in the spinal unit was that I had to learn to sit up in bed. I remember the traction was taken out of my head one morning and my physio came in and told me that that that day they were going to teach me how to sit up. I thought that was stupid and went to sit up and there was just nothing. It took me days and days to learn how to sit this torso up and then when you are sitting up you have to try to maintain your balance. Then you have to learn how to transfer all this dead weight into a wheel chair. Then there is showering, toilet then you get back to your bed. I had to learn to dress myself all over again and I can't tell you what it is like to try and pull a pair of jeans on a body that you have no control over or no sensation. Try getting a boot onto a foot. It is so difficult but once you are dressed and, in the chair, and seeing all the simplistic things you take for granted. Knowing your hands don't work properly. You can't hold a cup. Couldn't comb my hair or hold a knife and fork. I'd come back to my room and try to ring mum and dad and I couldn't even put their phone number into a keypad. So, five months there and then my dream came true alright. The spinal unit doors opened and I arrived home at the farm at Croppa Creek. I can tell you all that it was never in the plan to arrive home in a wheelchair and getting home was just an absolute nightmare. I got through the spinal unit in record time and because of that it caught mum and dad by surprise and they were only part way through widening doors, accessible bathroom for me, building some ramps, putting in air conditioning. I remember it was dark when we got home and I had to instruct mum and dad how to pull me up two or three stairs and get into the house. If that wasn't demoralising enough, I wheeled up the verandah and into my old bedroom for the first time and just being hit for a six because, there in front of me, was the life that I had had. My saddle hanging up, surf board and a water ski in one corner, cricket bat over in the other corner. I pushed myself over to the rack where my foot boots were and I remember grabbing them, putting them on for the first time and the horrible realisation that I would never play another

game of rugby. My dad was a Wallaby and I would have loved to have a crack following in his footsteps but obviously that dream was all smashed. I couldn't do anything. I had no way of getting around the farm. I had no car so, basically, I was house bound which was pretty confronting. But the biggest thing of all now was learning to live my life on four wheels. No longer was Sam that six foot tall bullet proof young bloke who was fiercely independent. No longer was Sam a big brother, guardian angel to his younger brother and sister. No longer was Sam a gladiator. Instead, I was used to people stopping and staring and looking and not really knowing what to say. Sam had to get used to asking for help.

So, in the course of two or three weeks after getting home from the spinal unit there I was. In the absolute prime of my life with the horrible realisation that my life was never going to be the way it was. My body from here down was never, ever going to do what it once did but it was still going to come along for the ride with me and be absolutely no help to me. I realised that I had a massive challenge ahead of me if I was going to try and make some sort of life for myself on the land. But I was never going to give up. There is no way I was going to let a spinal cord injury get in the road of what I always wanted and what I always dreamed of. So, with a room this size full of determination and another one beside it full of a never give in or never give up attitude I rolled my sleeves up and set about rebuilding a badly broken life. I got faster and faster at getting dressed, putting my boots on and taught myself to thread a fork through my left hand so I could hold it, taught myself to hold a pin to do up buttons so I got all the inside stuff sorted. Now it was time to venture outside. I then taught myself to get on and ride a four-wheel motorbike which became my legs around the farm and that just opened up an enormous world. All of a sudden now I could get up in the morning, get dressed, have my breakfast, grab my dogs and go mustering the cattle. Go and turn a pump on or off. Go and get the mail out of the mailbox. It really did get the wheel turning. I then got my first car with hand controls which put me back on the road and gave me some independence. I converted about four or five different machines on the property and devised a little hoist to get myself up in the cabins of those four or five different machines so now I could partake in the property activity on the farm. I then climbed my very own Mt. Kosciusko and learnt to fly an ultralight aircraft which became a very powerful symbol for me because it was something I could do that lots of other people couldn't. Once mum or dad had this thing fuelled up and pushed out of the hanger, I took myself to transfer into the pilot's seat. It was a two-seater so I could take my mates up with me and it was something I could do that they couldn't and I guess it proved to me that, it you put your mind to it, anything is possible.

I had about eight or nine weeks travelling around the world which was a tone of fun. I had a crack at snow skiing one winter down at Thredbo which was great also but not always coming down the slope in an upright position I might add but I had a wonderful ten days down there. I suppose I really did claw my way back to get my life back to some normality and somewhere I was before the accident. I had to jump all these hurdles and there was just one left to jump and that was finding a girl to share this life that I had rebuilt. I'd had two or three flings over the years with the girls who would fall madly in love with Sam but the following weekend when they found out a bit more about his mate the quadriplegic, they ran. I was accepting of that as I realised that not every girl in the world is going to throw themselves in front of someone in a wheel chair. I was now in my thirties and starting to think that maybe this journey was going to be a solo one and if that's the way it was going to be then so be it. But I always knew I had lots of love and lots of affection to give a girl and hopefully that would outweigh some of the physical limitations that I had. I just had to fine that girl. One of the great things about life is that you never know what is around the corner. One wintery afternoon the phone rang and I answered it and this bubbly, vivacious voice introduced herself as Jenny Black. She said that I wouldn't know her from a bar of soap but she was a rural reporter for ABC radio from Tamworth and I've been given your name by a number of people who told me that you have made a pretty remarkable life for yourself up there at Croppa Creek. Croppa Creek happens to be in my region and she just rang on the off chance that she could come and do a story about me. So, anyway, we chatted and chatted and I remember putting the phone down and thinking that she sounded alright. Mum was in the kitchen

and I wheeled in and asked her if she had ever heard of a girl called Jenny Black who is with ABC radio in Tamworth? And straight away mum said that she did and they had been listening to her for quite some time as she has a programme just before the seven o'clock news each Wednesday morning. Mum wanted to know why so I told her that was who was on the phone a minute ago and she is coming up next week to do a story about me. Mum said that it was a great programme and she is often interviewing someone we know. The following morning I gave the local radio station that I had been listening to the flick and tune my radio into ABC and I started painting a picture in my own mind what I thought this girl looked like, as all you guys would have done at some stage. For some reason she was quite tall and she had a dark olive complexion and every day that went on she got taller and taller and darker and darker. So, the day she arrives I jump on the bike and go down to wait for her at the front gate and there I was armed with this picture of this goddess in the back of my head. Not long and I see the swirl of dust in the distance and up drove a white station wagon. As it got closer I was eagerly peering through the windscreen to see that there was an auburn reddish colour so straight away my picture disappeared. She drove up right beside me as I was sitting on the bike and wound down her window and in a split second, I knew she wasn't going to be all that tall because the distance between the seat and the steering wheel was only about a hand's width. Sure enough, I followed her up to our house and out hopped a red head, freckly, sawn off little runt. But there was a spark. She stayed the night. She did the interview. She went back to air and got a great response to the story. We just kick started this wonderful friendship that lasted a couple of years. We used to ring each other from time to time. Jen would often come and stay with mum and dad and I if she was doing a story up our way. We really did become great mates.

However, a number of times during that couple of years Sam did try and put a worm on the hook and throw it out in front of her. She obviously didn't like worms. One time in particular I was staying in Tamworth with a mate of mine and I got up one morning and thought that I would have a go at asking her out. I rang her up and she was there so over I went in my ute and pulled up in the driveway and she came out and we kickstarted a conversation. After a while I thought that nothing ventured nothing gained so I took a deep breath and asked her if she was doing anything for lunch that day. Could I come over and pick her up and could we go down town and find somewhere to have a steak. The music festival was on at the time. She said that she had a house full of mates staying with her for the moment and they have been invited to another function on the outskirts of town so, unfortunately, she couldn't make it. Fortunately, yours truly had plan B so I took another big breath and asked if she could go out that night as I happened to know that John Williams was playing at the tavern, and thought we could go out there and have a meal and watch him strut his stuff. She said, "Oh Sam. You won't believe it but the National Rodeo finals are on tonight at the showgrounds and I got to take my recorder out and record some stories for my programme first thing in the morning so, unfortunately, I can't make it." There I sat, slapped over the head twice and I thought to myself that there was an inkling there that this girl would like to do something or she would like to take it a little bit further and she would have asked what I was doing tomorrow or next weekend. She didn't say anything. But right at that moment her dog, Winky, that was a black and tan kelpie, was lying in the shade of a tree right in front of my ute, hopped up, walked around the side of my ute and hopped up and put her two paws on my arms that I had resting on the door of the ute and she started licking my arm like there was no tomorrow. Anyway, we were part way through a conversation and Jenny abruptly stopped and said that that was the most incredible thing as she had never, ever seen that before. Her dog never, never takes to anyone that quickly. I looked up at her and thought to myself, "Well I wish you would take some lessons from your dog."

Believe it or not and to cut a long, long story sort we eventually fell madly, madly in love with each other and I have got to tell you it is the best thing that has ever happened. To find something that I thought I would never have. To have someone to share a beer with at the end of the day. Someone to go on holidays with. She really did come into my life and open every remaining door and gate that was in front of me. Like all girls she can generally talk under wet cement with a mouthful of marbles

but the morning that I rang in and proposed to her live on her radio programme had her stumped for a moment or two. What an incredible morning. We then got married and I guess my dream then did really come true. I arrived home to the farm as farmer with my little mate tucked under my arm and those first six months were just wonderful. We were doing the cattle work together and Jen would give me a hand with the cropping so I taught her how to drive tractors, trucks and frontend loaders. We moved into a big old house that no one had lived in for many years and madly tries to restore the order there. Could life really get any better? We were on the programme, Australian Story, quite a few years ago now and some of you may have seen it. It was way back in 2000. I remember we got this incredible response and it was quite overwhelming and we got letters and cards and phone calls and people pulled us up in the street. I think for me personally, it was the first time that I was starting to realise that, maybe, I had a story to tell because probably 80% of the people who responded had suffered some life changing hardship of their own and they had seen our story and thought that if we could do it then we can too.

What a strange story. It kickstarted with some public speaking and maybe I should get out there and tell this story. As you all know there is only one thing worse than dying and that is public speaking. But for the first six or eight months we were locally but for the last 18 or 19 years now we crisscrossing Australia and sharing this story. It is an incredible life. We get an email or a phone call as I did to be here, and all of a sudden you are on a direction to go and see someone else and see how their area operates. We get to meet some fantastic people. We give a bit but we certainly get a lot back. Not long after we started speaking, we started to get a lot of feedback and we noticed that people were starting to mention a book. We were asked if we ever thought of writing a book and I was encouraged and as there was only so much of 40 years you can jam into a half hour presentation. Well, I thought whoever was going to read my book? I knew mum and dad would be good for a copy and I could give one each to my brother and sister for Christmas but we respected their judgement and we were terribly lucky to get a book contract by ABC Books, we sat down and wrote and six months later out came "Head Over Heels". It has just been the most incredible thing. We thought we'd sit down and write and if we sell a couple of copies and help one or two people then the whole effort has been well worthwhile. It did come out and I can tell you that mum and dad did get a copy. Another great thing that came out of the book and we gave no thought of it at all when writing it, was the enormous impact it is now having on kids. We are now getting more feedback from kids, seven, eight-year-old and up, and that is wonderful. When you get feedback from a seven-year-old who writes you an email and says, "Sam, I've just read your book and it was incredible and I now know how lucky I am to live here and I now know I can do anything if I want to." So, that was very special.

My life, again, was shot down a completely differently road when the phone rang and it was a school teacher, a friend of mine in Warialda, and she said that they were doing a subject on role models at the moment and the kids had picked me out as most of them knew who I was and they had read the book in class and she thought it would be wonderful if I could go in and speak to them for twenty minutes or so. Well, holy dooly, if you ever want to be a bit daunted go and sit before a bunch of primary school kids. Anyway, I just went in and spoke in their lingo and at the end of it she came out and said that she had never seen 30 kids sit there and be riveted by your story. I then went up to a high school and got a similar result so we then started speaking in schools and we have been doing that for the last 17 or 18 years as well. If the opportunity arises, I always ask the organisers if they would like me to come the day before and stay a day later so I can go around and speak to the kids. You can have a big impact on a kid. Jenny and I, unfortunately, are unable to have our own kids but I think there was a reason for that because we now know that we have got a whole country of kids to inspire. I'm just trying to inject that and, as I said earlier, that grit and that determination and how lucky they are to live here and the realisation that they can do anything. We have made some great friendships with kids who send us Christmas presents and birthday presents and so that has been a wonderful thing to come out as well.

I've learnt many things through my life, some the easy way, some the hard way and, if I had a drum full of the things I have learnt, I would pick out the two biggest things I have learnt in my life and I learnt both these at the age of nineteen while lying in a bed in a spinal unit with a broken neck. The first is the incredible importance of family and your mates and your community that you live in because what did I see beside my bed? Mum and dad who dropped everything and ran, and my brother and sister the same. All my mates calling in and trying to do what they could. The little Croppa Creek community at home, not big in numbers by any means, but they all rallied to try and help my family. It was such a big wake-up call and I remember then that all the things that I had at the top of my list went to the bottom of the list and all the things at the bottom of my list came up to the top. I suppose the other thing I learnt, which rolls off the back of what I talked about in the beginning, I then started appreciating everything I have. I know that, in the life we lead now, sometimes we lose track of that because we all want designer shoes, we all want a television screen the size of a roller door, and we all want, want, want, but sometimes we forget about what we have got. You only have to look at the atrocities that are happening around the world at the moment to realise how very, very, very lucky we all are. So, they are the two biggest things that I've learnt through my life.

A question that is often asked is, "What are you guys going to get up to next?" We have lots of goals. We love the farm at Croppa Creek. We will continue speaking while we can make a difference in people's lives. We are writing another book but I have got another dream and goal. I'm sure you have probably all heard about it because we have been working at it for many, many years and that is to be the first quadriplegic in the world to fly a helicopter. There are three main reasons for doing it. The first is my love of flying and the freedom that it gives me as the ultralight did years ago. To leave the earth and look back down and see the empty wheel chair. I really can't put that into words. Secondly, I want to do it because a number of people have told me that can't and all their reasons why I can't. Like how am I going to fly without medical? 80% of your body doesn't work. How are you going to afford it, Sam? On and on they go and Sam, mate it just can't be done. Pigs it can't be done. So, I have written all those blokes names down in a notebook that I have got at home. The third and main reason is that we get to speak at lots and lots of schools and if you are a leader then you have to demonstrate. I was speaking at a high school at Coonabarabran to Year 11 and Year 12 and as I was speaking, I looked out a window and I saw their oval and, subconsciously I thought that you can't fly an aeroplane onto an oval but what a fantastic helicopter pad so why not fly a helicopter and fly into their school. Land, hop out into my chair, call the kids over, tell them my story then hop back in and fly off. I just know it would be an image that would stay with me for the rest of my life and, hopefully, they would see that if Sam could do what he is doing then they can do anything. So, I can't tell you all about it as I would need another hour but that is what the project is and it is called Heli First. It is the first in the world. We are getting very close. We've been at it for a number of years and the Commonwealth Bank has come on board as sponsors and I have a wonderful team. We were nearly ready to fly back on the 19th April, 2020 and I thought I had every "I" dotted and every "T" crossed but I just hadn't planned for a certain virus that hit us. So, we had that setback and another couple of years waiting but we are getting close and are all fired up again. The first school we are flying into is the little Croppa Creek school just down the road where I went to school and that will be our local launch and then if the invitation is still there, we have been invited by the Waverly City Council in Sydney to fly into Bondi Beach. That will be a pretty amazing day if we pull it off and it will be the next book title, You Don't Need Wings to Fly. So, stick with me as I know that many people thought it mightn't happen but I'm pretty stubborn and I'm going to hang in there until I do it and I'm sure you will all hear about it when I do.

I'm a very, very lucky bloke. I get to spend every day and all day with an extraordinary girl. She came into my life. She saw straight through wheelchair, quadriplegia. She has just taken it all in her stride. She's the one who allows me to farm. She allows me to speak. She is the one who pats, pushes, shoves and heave-ho's and all of a sudden we end up here in front of you at Bourke. I reckon it is one of a life's greatest privileges is to be sharing your life with your best mate and what they don't tell you

when you fall in love with your best mate, is how it just gets better and better as the years roll by. She is my best mate. She is an absolute cracker of a girl. Would you please welcome her by my side? Right, now I did tell them you could talk so you have got five minutes.

Jenny Bailey.

I think I am the luckiest girl in this room and that is probably the biggest thing I have learnt from Sam is to remember what you are lucky to have. Think about what you have got and don't focus on what you haven't. You know, I was very focussed on my career for a long time as a journalist and I always knew the next step in my career and that was the focus but I wasn't very good at thinking about what I already had. That is what Sam has taught me. Although, I have got to say, it's not really how I thought my life would turn out and I if someone had come to me when I was eighteen and said that you are going to marry a guy who is in a wheelchair, who is a quadriplegic and have an extraordinary life beyond what you can comprehend, I would have told them that they were mad. They are dreaming. But it is true. The vision that I had for my career isn't even close to the life I have got to lead because I have decided to share my life with someone with a disability. But then I don't see Sam as someone with a disability I just see Sam as Sam. He has a few things he can't do but we all have got things we can't do. You might want to play cricket for Australia but you are not good enough or, like me, you can't reach the top shelf in the supermarket. We all have things that we physically can't do and, to me, I don't see the difference between that and what Sam can't do. You live your life around those things you can't do. Before I met Sam I went out with a lot of guys from all walks of life, careers and ambitions and the one thing they all had in common was the fact that they could all walk and they could all run. But the feelings weren't right and in fact, I can remember one night having a conversation with my best friend from school's mum and I asked her how do you know when it is the right person? She said that you just know. But I asked how do you know because I obviously had not met the right person because I had no idea what she was talking about until I met Sam. There was no way I was going to turn my back on how I felt about him just because he couldn't do a few things. As I said, I am now living a life beyond what I could ever had imagined. I don't want you to think it is perfect. Nobody's life is perfect. You know that. We have our moments and, because of that, I am just a little bit nervous about him learning to fly a helicopter. Just because he hasn't got great balance and things happen at home from time to time. He occasionally falls off things and out of things. I'll give you an example. A little while back we had a flood through Croppa Creek which has steep sides and a sandy bottom and we just electric tape down through the actual creek so it is easier to fix the flood fences. Anyway, just the two of on the four-wheel bike and we didn't have any fencing gear but I said Sam to back up to where I had to put the iron posts back in, I can stand on the back of the bike and with a big rock I reckoned I could hammer the iron posts back in and we could fix the fence without having to go home. So, that's all good. Sam backs up and I climb up on the back where the dogs ride and I had a big rock in my hand and I hammer the iron post back into the ground and I was just about ready to jump off the bike when all of a sudden, the bike just took off. It flattened my iron post and I jumped off to the side and Sam went flat out up the creek and then the bike fell over on its side. It tipped over on its side and Sam was underneath it. Sam said he was alright and not under it so I dragged him out and he is all muddy there on one side where he has fallen into a muddy waterhole and I said, "What on earth just happened?" With a very sheepish look on his face, he said he was just shifting around to give you a little pinch on the backside when I lost my balance and fell off the accelerator. So, you can see why I am just a little bit nervous about him learning to fly a helicopter. Maybe I'd better be quiet or I'll be getting all the worst jobs for th next week. Thanks for having me and I'll hand back over to Sam.

Sam Bailey.

Isn't she gorgeous? I had better try to bring this journey to an end. It has been a thrill, it really has, to be in front of you today and can I thank you again, Kate, for the opportunity to be able to be here.

We'll be at the dinner tonight so we'll hopefully, mingle and tell lots of yarns. Many years ago, I tried to work out how my life might have been had I got to that pub that Sunday afternoon 34 years ago and I'll never know. But I wandered on through life not realising that I did have an inner strength of some sort to not only pull myself through my own bit of bad luck but also how to go out and help others through theirs. I am really thinking that that act was probably really meant to happen. I had a great life. I had a great life up to the age of nineteen but I have got an absolute ripper now and I wouldn't trade places with any of you guys. Thanks for having us.

Special Presentations.

ICPA-NSW Life Membership presentation to Wally Mitchell

Irene Lund, State Council.

You have heard some of this before but this is for a particular purpose so, my apologies but it is always good to reiterate some of our history. Continuing drought conditions and recurring years of poor financial returns in rural and remote areas of Australia necessitated the move of many families to regional and metropolitan areas to find work and educate their children. The rising costs of accessing education, in particular costs of boarding schools and hostels was prohibitive and exacerbated by the lack of family income from farming and grazing enterprises. It was also becoming apparent that education was becoming more important than ever if rural and remote children were to become successful in a changing world not only in comparison to their metropolitan peers but also in the future of agriculture as well.

The threatened closure of the Bourke Hostel at the end of 1970 which provided accommodation to children from the outlying areas, properties and villages to attend the local school prompted locals to take action. The Bourke Branch of the Graziers Association called a public meeting in Bourke on the 9th February, 1971 to discuss the issues regarding education and the problems accessing it for families in the town and the surrounding areas. The meeting highlighted the problems being experienced by many and as a result a further public meeting was called on the 16th April, 1971 at which the first branch of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association was formed.

Mr. Wally Mitchell was nominated and duly elected into the position of Foundation President at that first meeting. To be able to advocate for the educational needs of these rural and remote students there had to be documented evidence gathered and taken to government. There was consultation with the Education Advisory Commission of New South Wales and their visits to Bourke and Broken Hill in early 1971 as a result of representations made by ICPA and the Bush children's Hostel Foundation through their local members. Wally's import was integral to the gradual success of ICPA in those early years.

The NSW Education Minister initially refused to receive a deputation. However, by persistently making representation to government a deputation to the Federal Minister, Mr David Fairburn, on the 4th August, 1971, and NSW Minister for Education, the Hon Charles Cutler, on the 5th August, 1971, were made. It with these deputations and the increasing publicity of submissions detailing the needs of ICPA that branches began to grow in western NSW and south west Queensland. Elated by the growing interest Wally, as chairman of the Bourke Branch, recognised that it was essential to form a national body with identical objectives and so a meeting was called here in Bourke on the 2nd October, 1971, of all ICPA branches and forming the Federal Council. Wally became the first Federal President at this meeting and remained in this position until 19th July, 1974.

Much of this early representation was concerned with the withdrawal of children from boarding schools and hostels. A survey of ICPA branches in existence at the end of 1971 showed that 120 children would be withdrawn from boarding schools with 65 of them being from NSW. On the 4th December, 1971 Wally wrote to the Federal Member of Darling, MLA John Fitzpatrick, outlining the issues giving evidence from the ICPA branches and details of telegrams sent to the Prime Minister, the Hon Billy McMahon, all Education Ministers and the Federal Treasurer. This then led to meetings between the NSW Education Minister, Mr. Cutler, and the Federal Minister for Education, Malcolm Fraser to discuss Commonwealth grants to provide assistance for families in the Bourke area.

ICPA, now a federal body, rejected this first proposal as it was well known that the problems far exceeded the Western Division of NSW. This then prompted the formation of the NSW State Council. Wally's passion for the importance of education for rural and remote children, to take the issues to those who would listen and his determination to keep pushing them to anyone who wouldn't, meant that ICPA grew to become recognised widely. Many of these early deputations were funded by those attending raising money through raffles of dressed sheep and cattle provided by members or donations from local businesses to pay for fuel. Stories of Wally using a knitting machine to make himself a jumper to go to Canberra or driving through the night to limit time away from the property and family and to save on accommodation costs were current. There are many recounts made by Wally's children of countless hours sitting in the car or nearby while they waited for their dad to attend meetings and conferences. It is with this degree of dedication and his unconditional financial and personal sacrifices to those early years that helped to create the foundation and shape the three levels of ICPA that exist today.

Bourke Branch requests that Wally Mitchell be considered for NSW Life Membership at the 50th NSW State Conference.

Wally Mitchell AM, Federal Life Member and Life Member Bourke Branch.

Well, this is a very pleasant surprise really. I won't say we have waited a lot of years for this but I won't be waiting a lot more I don't think. It is so nice to see the firm go so well, the people in it so enthusiastic and that you have got the results when you look at the wins in it. Look at your own families. I look around and I see the schools, the training, the education they have had and the careers they have made and all of our families who have shared the gains of ICPA. We've been awhile doing it. Many of you people have put countless hours and a lot of miles into this and it is all worth it. We look at the results and it is certainly worth the effort. I would like to thank my good lady for carrying most of the weight of this. To be able to keep the property going. We didn't do too well there eventually as we had to sell Lakemere and the whole job certainly cost us but it was worthwhile. It was worthwhile. Thank you for your support and thank you for this acknowledgement of a team effort. Not a person but a team effort and I will always remember the occasion and the day. Thank you.

Kate Warby, President ICPA-NSW.

We are now going to have a special presentation of the unveiling of a plaque recognising the 50 years of ICPA and being here in Bourke. I call upon Her Excellency, The Hon. Margaret Beazley AC QC Governor of NSW together with Mr. Wilson and our newest NSW Life Member, Mr. Wally Mitchell and I will call upon Mr. David Cameron to join in the unveiling and is Rona Davis here? No? So, could I call upon Mr. Rory Treweeke? We are now going to have the unveiling. (*Applause*)

State Councillor Farewells

Farewell to Monique Watkins.

Laura Stalley, State Council. It is an honour today that I have been asked to farewell a beautiful state councillor, Monique Watkins. Monique was born and raised in the bush, marrying and raising four gorgeous children on a property at Mossgiel, she has had a passion for educating her children in the bush having taught her own children via Hay School of the Air. I am also lucky enough to be her neighbour. Monique has been to several conferences both state and federal over the years and in 2022 Monique and I set off to Moree conference. She was so excited to be going and told me that she intended to join state council. Unfortunately, we never made it to Moree but both of us joined state council at the AGM held via phone. During Monique's time on state council, she has made many friends and her presence is always refreshing due to her bubbly personality and caring and giving nature. As we all know, conference can sometimes get emotional and she is the first person to be there comforting and I personally know how much this is appreciated. A couple of years ago Monique decided to make the decision to retrain in nursing and is currently working hard to gain her degree. We on state council, wish you all the best in completing your course and congratulate you on this massive achievement. Monique, we wish you all the best and on behalf of state council thank you for your commitment, passion, sense of humour and, most of all, friendship.

Farewell to Tim Fletcher

Tanya Mitchell, State Council. It is an honour to be able to speak to the retirement of Tim Fletcher from state council. Tim is one of the most articulate and knowledgeable people I've had the pleasure of working with. Tim's knowledge of his Tertiary Portfolio, workings of government, policies and processes has been invaluable. Tim has brought a warm and calming influence to state council and, along with David, a very welcome male perspective on issues. Tim has also been great on giving us "westies" an insight into life in the cold country. We also want to thank Pam for letting us borrow Tim during this time and appreciate your presence and friendship over the last four years as well. Thank you so much, Tim, for your deep appreciation and understanding of the importance of ICPA and the need for every child to have access to a quality education. Your work in these qualities is truly admirable. Thank you, Tim Fletcher for your time with us on state council.

Farewell to Deb Neilsen

Annabel Strachan, State Council. It is with great pleasure that I am here to say the farewell to Deb Neilsen. Deb has been born and bred up here near Bourke and, luckily for me, she married my neighbour and we have been neighbours for quite a few years now so it has been a lovely experience. We have travelled to Louth School together on and off and I think we have solved every rural school problem on those trips but no one really listens. Deb came onto state council in 2014 where her passion has been for preschools in our rural and remote schools. Deb is tenacious and relentless in pursuing this outcome. She did step off state council for two years but decided to join again as the process was not happening quickly enough. ICPA-NSW, in 2014, felt the best way to achieve these preschools was in the form of distance education with a supervisor in the school. After a long and tiring seven years, in 2022, the Department of Education has taken this on and we are now seeing some preschools in some of these schools in the form of the distance education mode. There are still some to go which will be an amazing achievement. Well done Deb for your passion and we will sincerely miss you.

Farewell to Irene Lund

Shennah Joiner, State Council. I'm going to adlib this because I don't want to put me glasses on. The person I'm going to farewell is not really being farewellled because she doesn't get away quite that easily. She is going to remain on as Membership Officer and for that we are extremely grateful. I would introduce her as Mrs. Irene Lund, but she will kick me up the backside because Irene doesn't like titles and she goes by the default title of Princess Lund. Princess Lund and I first met and my first experience was sharing a room with Irene and we had another state councillor who was also newly elected at the time. We mustn't have had a very good impression because we never saw that state councillor again and we are still looking for her and I wish I was joking but I'm afraid I'm not. Irene has been the Lone Member Officer for many years and does an admirable job looking after the lone members of Victoria and NSW. All of you will also join me in thanking her for that because she is irreplaceable and I really think that Myfi has got big shoes to fill and I hope she is aware of that. Irene has become my travelling partner which has been fantastic. We actually, geographically, live about an hour and a half away although I think I could actually throw a tennis ball to her place if there wasn't a river and a mountain in the way. So that has been fantastic to be able to share that experience and have Irene mentor me as I stepped into the role as Treasurer. We are the Batman and Robin duo and Irene will be terrible missed. I think you can also all agree that her husband, Andrew, will be sadly missed when she steps aside because Andrew has also been a fantastic contributor to ICPA. One thing that really strikes me with Irene is that the majority of us sitting here in the room can say that we have an attachment to geographically isolated children. When you see someone who is a volunteer, who will step forward for an organisation and who actually has no experience in geographical isolation and has had her children attend a mainstream school, you could ask why she would do that? And that is the spirit that Irene is. She's giving so much. She is involved in many other organisations and ICPA is just a small fraction of what she gives to her community. So, I thank you Irene.

Farewell to Deb Castle

Claire Butler, Immediate Past President. I first met Deb at the Wentworth Conference dinner in 2019 and, yes, it is true, after my own arm had been twisted to stand for president, and it very quickly turned to a real fear when I realised that we needed to also fill the secretary's position. With that thought sending a shiver down my spine I went to the bar to get a stiff drink and it was by pure chance that I met Deb. At the bar. I think Richard Stokes was up there as well and I remember talking to him. We got chatting and one thing led to another and by the end of the night Deb agreed to stand as the state secretary of the ICPA. From day one it quickly became apparent that Deb not only had the skill set to perform the wide and various administrative roles of the state secretary but also, she had a beautiful personality. A warm and friendly nature with a rare ability to keep me and fourteen other state councillors in check with deadlines, organising deputations to Sydney, booking over thirty meetings at a time, report writing and checking the dreaded emails. Don't let that scare you off from becoming a secretary though. Deb also has a phenomenal way of telling people what to do without getting them off side and she tells me to get a move on, and she has done it often, and I get a move on. As a new president I was fumbling my own way through what I needed to do on state council and trusty Deb has been by my side from day one. I could not have done that role without her, especially when we had to cancel the Moree conference and we were so looking forward to our first conference. I don't think there has ever been a time when I would ring Deb and she didn't pick up the phone. Sometimes multiple times in the day and I'm sure that when she saw my number, she probably didn't feel like taking the call but she always made herself available despite the fact she works full time and is a beautiful mum who has the demands of a busy family of four children and a husband. I quickly learnt that she was always agreeable and I even learnt that if I just pushed a tiny bit further, she would say, "Sure!" We have an ongoing joke now when we say "sure!" to each other when we don't really

want to do something but we'll do it anyway. Like any relationship we have to give and take. As Deb said earlier, she has met many friends and influential people. Well, Deb, you are an influential person. You can hold your own when you are in a meeting with the Minister, I've watched you articulate and explain many times the issues to Ministers and MP's and bureaucrats and you have worked really hard for ICPA. Deb has been a tower of strength to our state council, a joy to have around, I'm a big believer that people come into your life for a reason and that fleeting moment that we had in 2019 has now turned into a lifelong friendship and I'm really glad that we got to do this journey together. A common theme these past days from all ICPA speakers and the panel and all last night has been the lifelong friendships that we make and so, Deb, you now have fourteen lifelong friends.

Agenda, Supplementary and Floor Motions

ALLOWANCES

A1. Bourke

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to lobby relevant Federal Ministers to change the criteria of the Relocation Scholarship so that tertiary students from remote and rural areas, who are not eligible to receive other student allowances, still receive the Relocation Scholarship if they are leaving home to study the year after completing Year 12.”

Moved by Amanda Bell, Bourke Branch. Seconded by Scott Mitchell, Bourke Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Tertiary students who are eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance are also able to apply for the Relocation Scholarship which is a welcome injection of funds for any student having to leave the principal place of residence and set up a new place to live to attend tertiary studies. However, it is not available to students who are deemed independent or not eligible for any other allowance. The meaning of relocate is ‘to move or to establish in a new place’. Regardless of whether a student is eligible to receive certain student allowances, they are still relocating. This scholarship was established to ensure students who had to undergo a process of relocation would not have the unfair financial burden of a move compared to those who are able to live and study from their family home. It would actually appear less as they are not only unable to access Youth Allowance but are also ineligible for the Relocation Scholarship.

Comments.

Alana Moller, ICPA (Aust) President. Thank you, Bourke Branch, for this motion and I just wanted to let you know that you are very welcome to bring the same to Federal Conference and we would love to see Bourke with motions there around these things. This is something which we have taken to the Department and they continue to say that the Relocation Scholarship is an adjunct payment and therefore you only receive it if you are receiving Youth Allowance or Abstudy but we keep talking about it. I did want to reiterate what Tanya was talking about with the Tertiary Access Payment that has gone a little way in assisting with travel and it is not based on if you get any other allowances or anything like that. There have been some recent positive changes to that. It first started in 2021 and we participated in a review of the first year and from that there were some welcome changes whereby the eligibility has been expanded to some extent. Also, that it is all being administered from Services Australia because we had heard that there were issues around the universities administering that and that was something we took forward. We are also continuing suggest other changes to it as it moves on and believe it will be reviewed again as it goes along. One of those changes is for it to be aligned with the Relocation Scholarship in terms of providing over the full period of education at university and not just the first year and reflecting the costs of that.

A2. **Bourke**

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) in requesting the Federal Government to change the criteria for gaining Independent Youth Allowance, so that rural and remote students who have to leave home to study at tertiary level, and are not eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance, are eligible for Independent Youth Allowance.”

Moved by Amanda Bell, Bourke Branch. Seconded by Scott Mitchell, Bourke Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Students who are unable to access Youth Allowance due to the Parental Means Test are having to support themselves until they prove they are independent. The Parental Means Test is not indicative of what income is available to support the family. Commodity prices and sale of stock due to drought can exaggerate figures. Consideration needs to be given to the fact that most income goes back into the running of the farm or into Farm Management Deposits for restocking and/or taxation reasons because of the forced sale of stock. We are not wanting to include students moving out of home because they feel like moving. The students we represent move hundreds of kilometres to major regional centres or cities and pay inflated rent and utilities for accommodation near their university. Moving so far away from the family home to set up a second home is a fair indication that these students are the very ones that should be eligible for Independent Youth Allowance. These students should be focusing on studying their chosen degree. It is great if they find part time employment however finding a job in a new environment and supporting themselves is a major concern. It leads to high dropout rates and increased stress and anxiety on individuals.

Comments.

Judy Sinclair-Newton, Walgett Branch Life Member. While I don't speak on behalf of Federal Council as a Past President, I just want to give everyone a little bit of food for thought. We are presenting a Federal motion at the State Conference. I just feel that they take a lot of time and we are going to have our Federal President up and down all the time. I wonder if there is some other way we can present them in a forum, or something like that, and that decision can be made from State Council by looking at significant motions from your state on the Federal agenda. One concern that I always had when I was Federal President, and this is the last couple of years aside from that, is that a lot of these motions were coming through and a lot of the branches thought that once they were passed through the State Conference then they went on and they didn't need to be represented at Federal Council. So, over the years we've seen a real decline in NSW representatives coming to Federal Conference and having that debate on the floor and it is there that they have the opportunity to see what everyone else around Australia is saying as well and not just someone in NSW. When we get a lot of motions that do come from a particular state, that is a red flag that we need to be talking to NSW because all these motions are coming from there. I just hope that branches are under the full understanding that these motions that state, "ICPA-NSW support ICPA (Aust)" they also need to come with you in person to the Federal Conference as well. That doesn't mean that there can't be some sort of discussion at State level like an open forum where everyone gets to have their say and you have a few representatives like that.

David Cameron, Namoi Branch Observer, Life Member and Past NSW President. I understand what Judy is saying. One of the reasons that I feel that it is important that these motions stay in NSW initially is that the majority of people in this room won't be going to Federal Conference so they need to understand what the branches around their own state are thinking. We need them to go to Federal

Conference and we need people from this room to be at Federal Conference but in the first instance it's important that we all know what Federal issues are affecting our state.

Claire Butler, ICPA-NSW Immediate Past President. I fully agree with those sentiments. I would like to really encourage people to go to Federal Conference because the last two Federal Conferences that State Council has attended, we have been up and down representing the branches. We have been putting your motions up and I know everybody is really time poor but I would use this as an opportunity to encourage you to think about going to Federal Conference. We had a lot of noticeably absent branches at the last two Federal Conferences.

Rory Treweeke, Federal Life Member, State Life Member, NSW and Federal Past President, Walgett Branch Life Member. I think it is critical that the discussion of Federal issues starts here. Every state has a slightly different perspective on some of these things that are affected from what the Federal

Government does. I think there has to be good discussion here. I think David is absolutely dead right. Not everyone from this room will get to a Federal Conference but the maximum number that should go there definitely should take the feeling from this meeting to the Federal Conference. We know that sometimes it's left to the Federal Councillors from NSW to take those messages but discussion has got to come from here because it is the people that the branches here are representing who are actually affected by these allowances.

Alana Moller, ICPA (Aust) President. We would love any branches to come if you can. You are all welcome so don't feel you can't bring your motions to us or you can't come to Federal Conference. If you bring it here, you bring it here but please don't feel you are not welcome to bring things to us directly as well. Now I would like to address the actual motion. For this particular motion that it is something that we can work on and I wanted to draw your attention to the NAPLAN review which was released several years ago and which had a number of recommendations around tertiary access for rural and remote students. We have been calling for every recommendation within that to be implemented and, thus far, some of those recommendations have been implemented. I want to draw your attention to Recommendation 2 which stated, "To improve financial support. To support greater fairness and equal opportunity by introducing a Tertiary Access Payment." Tick. That has started. "...but allowing greater flexibility in the pathways to qualify for Independent Youth Allowance." We will continue to ask for all of those recommendations to be implemented.

A3. Bourke

"That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to request the Federal Government change the eligibility criteria for Independent Youth Allowance so that those rural and remote students who choose to save or invest their earnings during the working period prior to attending university, are not disadvantaged."

Moved by Amanda Bell, Bourke Branch. Seconded by Scott Mitchell, Bourke Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Students who choose to save their earnings during their gap year should not be deemed ineligible or disadvantaged. Many students work hard to save their earnings to buy a car or perhaps a house deposit but instead have to use their savings to support themselves and pay rent while attending university. Other students who earn enough to be considered eligible for Independent Youth Allowance but spend everything they earn can be eligible for the allowance but those who have saved and have money in

the bank or invested their earnings are not eligible for the allowance, and therefore not eligible for the Relocation Scholarship, Tertiary Access Payment or Rent Assistance.

Comments.

Alana Moller, ICPA (Aust) President. In relation to this once again, we are happy to take it at Federal Conference so it can come as a motion in August. Tanya mentioned it in her report that, like with the liquid asset waiting period, it's not necessarily that if they have got savings that they will be ineligible for Youth Allowance. It's just that there is a thirteen-week waiting period before their payments would kick in. So, it doesn't necessarily make them ineligible for it unless they have got way above the amount of assets allowable for Youth Allowance, because there are many other eligible criteria besides this, but there is a thirteen-week waiting period if they have savings that are deemed to affect their payment.

A4. **Bourke**

“That ICPA-NSW requests all relevant NSW Ministers and Government Departments use a more accurate mapping method than the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Combined Drought Indicator (CDI) or ‘drought map’ that has been used to determine how affected a particular area is for assessing funding and drought services.”

Moved by Amanda Bell, Bourke Branch. Seconded by Scott Mitchell, Bourke Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

An example of how the inaccuracy is causing disparity is that Bourke was assessed at the lowest rate of drought impact as at 30th June 2019. As most people would be aware, this is indeed far from the case, and Bourke continues to feel the significant impact of the prolonged drought both economically and socially. The funding payments anticipated for the Bourke and District Children's Services (Preschool, Mobile & Childcare) for the three licences were a third of what was received due to assessment determined by the Combined Drought Indicator. This would have allowed the Services to install water saving measures such as irrigation and tanks and replace plantings, so that we could provide quality learning environments during a drought. The use of the Combined Drought Indicator mapping has also meant that children in our area are not eligible for the Drought Break program run by the Office of Sport, as the map indicates that Bourke (along with Cobar and Wilcannia) are not severely drought affected. The children and families in these areas are ineligible.

Comments.

Claire Butler, ICPA-NSW Immediate Past President. I think from our conversations with the government departments, a lot of the issue is that they put a disclaimer on that map that it should not be used as an accurate source of funding but organisations do refer to it and use it for their own determination of whether they will fund something. It is an issue but it is about going to individual organisations as well.

A5. Broken Hill

“That ICPA-NSW continues to support ICPA (Aust) to request Services Australia to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) for geographically isolated students undertaking secondary education via Distance Education.”

Moved by Suzanah Palmer, Broken Hill Branch. Seconded by Juanne Reynolds, Broken Hill Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

As students reach secondary level of their schooling through distance education, their needs become greater from the primary years. Currently the AIC allowance is the same for secondary students studying via distance education as primary students. Once a student reaches Year 7, more than likely they will be changing schools. This means extra cost of setting the student up for the school year. Changing schools encompasses new costs such as uniforms, appropriate furniture, educational resources, technology devices and access to satellite internet. With students moving into secondary schooling through Distance Education, it quite often means that the school is a much further distance from their home. This makes travel and accommodation expenses higher for students to be able to attend residential events. For example, many ex-Broken Hill School of The Air (BH SOTA) students are continuing their education into secondary through Dubbo School of Distance Education (DSODE) or ECalrossy. As students move on from BH SOTA, they need to return all furniture, resources and access to satellite internet to the school. Another example are White Cliffs and other students who live in a town which has access to primary school but not secondary schooling. These students will be studying via Distance Education for the first time which means students need to be set up for their secondary schooling including new appropriate furniture, learning resources and new uniforms. With more demand on technology for student learning the families need to set up access to satellite internet and have the appropriate devices to carry out their school work. Dubbo and Tamworth are a much greater distance from students in Far West New South Wales which adds to travel and accommodation costs for students to have equal access to educational experiences at the student’s school. All these expenses are the responsibility of the student’s family.

Comments.

Alana Moller, ICPA (Aust) President. This was a motion at our last Federal Conference in Longreach and was carried. I want to update you all that we have actioned this motion and since the federal conference we wrote to relevant ministers that this was a necessary thing that members were looking for. We also continue to advocate for an increase in AIC across the board, across all AIC eligibility categories and, because this was carried, it will form part of our advocacy in that broader policy for an AIC increase.

A6. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to request Services Australia to increase Centrelink rent assist payments”

Moved by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch. Seconded by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Regional, remote and very remote children need to factor in rent to their study plans. Rent is the biggest component of a student’s costs. For example, to study in a larger city this may mean that a student has to work so much that their course suffers.

Fortnightly

If a student is over 18 years of age, has no children and is single Youth Allowance is \$304.60.

Rent Assist varies according to your rent. If a student is paying \$124.60 in rent, they will receive a maximum of \$93.07 rent assist.

Approximate average fortnightly costs based on single basic room.

- Charles Sturt University Orange - \$400 without board
- Port Macquarie's Charles Sturt University -\$480 without board
- Coffs Harbour Southern Cross University -\$400 without board.
- Women's College Sydney University- \$1200 with board.
- University of New England-\$350 without board
- Sydney rented share accommodation - \$600 without board
- Larger regional NSW town and city rented share accommodation- \$320 without board

Comments.

Judy Sinclair-Newton, Walgett Branch Life Member. Before these motions are submitted to ICPA (Aust) for their conference you need to direct the motions to the minister. The Services Australia is just a department and they take their directive from the minister.

Alana Moller, ICPA (Aust) President. That was one of my points that I was going to mention as well so, thanks Judy. It needs to be to go to the minister because that is who we would be advocating towards and also to let you all know that this motion is in our policy and we do advocate for it and we will continue to advocate for it and it is good to know that members still want us to do that.

A7. Nyngan

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) in requesting the Department of Human Services to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children boarding allowance to more closely reflect the real costs of educating isolated students.”

Moved by Jodie Stewart, Nyngan Branch. Seconded by Kate Yabsley, Nyngan Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Boarding school fees continue to rise at a greater rate than the CPI. The Assistance for Isolated Children boarding allowance, an equity allowance, needs to be updated constantly to reflect the increasing financial burden being placed on isolated families by the government to educate their children. There is an underlying problem of an ongoing erosion of this benefit as an allowance, as boarding and tuition fees increase at a greater rate than the allowance. If our government is serious about providing the world-best educational opportunities to equip children with the skills they need, this equity allowance needs to remain equitable, giving rural children an education equivalent to their city counterparts.

A8. Walgett (withdrawn)

“That ICPA-NSW request ICPA (Aust) NSW Government urgently review the current Assistance for Isolated Children Policy and Guidelines to move from a largely school ‘subject choice’ focus of assessment for funding to the assessment of a much broader criteria of educational disadvantage based on conducted research.”

Robin Beckwith, Walgett Branch. Conference permission to withdraw Motion A8 due to editing issues. Permission granted.

Kate Warby, ICPA-NSW President. This motion is being withdrawn because of a State Council editing issue and Walgett Branch will present the newly worded Motion A8 as a Floor Motion at a later time during conference.

A9. Walgett

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) in requesting the Department of Human Services to change the criteria for the Relocation Scholarship to include all students from regional or remote areas relocating who do not qualify for Dependent Youth Allowance”

Moved by Karen Ricardo, Walgett Branch. Seconded by Robin Beckwith, Walgett Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Dependent adults need financial help in relocating to university, these students are moving from regional and remote areas to the city or possibly even interstate and this is a huge burden on the financials of the family. The Relocation Allowance would give them the opportunity and time to move, settle and commence studies before having to seek employment to subsidize their cost of living away from home.

Comments.

Alana Moller, ICPA (Aust) President. Similarly, to Motion A1, this is something that you can bring to Federal Conference and we can advocate for that if it is carried. Because this is a change in legislation it is something we would need to take to the minister rather than the department because the department can't make those types of changes. So, it will just need to be redirected to those we would be taking it to. Federal Council is happy to assist branches with writing motions and with knowing who they need to be directed to and those sorts of things, so please feel free to make contact with us. We will, in the very near future, be putting out our motion writing document for 2022 and this provides details for motions and how they can be written. We will also have details of all the Federal Councillors for you to contact for assistance.

BOARDING SCHOOLS, AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOLS AND HOSTELS

A10. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant authorities to create a standard Essential Traveller exemption for boarding school students, their parents and tertiary students that live in a different state to their educational institution, if border closures occur in the future.”

Moved by Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch. Seconded by Claire Butler, State Council on behalf of Balranald Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

During 2020/2021 the Covid pandemic many boarding and university students and their families were placed under undue stress when state border closures prevented students returning home or back to school or university, preventing them from being able to access their education, and maintain their emotional well-being. Late in 2021, a National Code for Boarding School Students was created by the Federal Government, with all states agreeing to adopt the principles of the Code and implement it in each state. Overwhelmingly, few states implemented the code in such a way that it benefited students

and their families, only adding to the stress and uncertainty of travel and education plans. There appeared to be no federal body able to hold the states to account on this. With school returning in 2022 during the Omicron

wave of Covid, state governments again gave differing guidelines to boarding houses and hostels to accommodate and care for students upon return. Many boarders commenced boarding with a “drop off” where parents were not allowed on school site, and boarders unable to leave school premises for any reason, including medical appointments. Many of these boarders share classes with day students who return home daily with freedoms to come and go from school. In many cases, it would seem boarding

students are being isolated on school grounds to avoid isolation in the future. This could become detrimental to the emotional and social wellbeing of students if it is to continue for prolonged periods of time, as well as affecting their ability to perform academically. The lack of consistency around these requirements has led to confusion and stress for many families and children. With ICPA-NSW continuing to advocate for these students, their wellbeing can be kept at the forefront of priority of the relevant authorities.

Comments.

Richard Stokes, Australian Boarding Schools Association. I’ll tell you a story and I’ll never forget that Friday night. I got a phone call from Racheal from Minister McKenzie’s office to tell us that that National Code had been passed. It was about 8.00 pm. She is a pretty special person and it was a pretty exciting moment and it has been one of the biggest frustrations we have had that we have state governments who have agreed to something and then went back. So, anything we can do to help we are with you.

A11. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW continues to request the relevant authorities to consider the emotional wellbeing of boarding students when implementing covid management plans in boarding houses.”

Moved by Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch. Seconded by Claire Butler, State Council on behalf of Balranald Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

With school returning in 2022 during the Omicron wave of Covid, state governments again gave differing guidelines to boarding houses and hostels to accommodate and care for students upon return. Many boarders commenced boarding with a “drop off” where parents were not allowed on school site, and unable to leave school premises for any reason, including medical appointments. Many of these boarders share classes with day students who return home daily with freedoms to come and go from school. In many cases, it would seem boarding students are being isolated on school grounds to avoid isolation in the future. This could become detrimental to the emotional and social wellbeing of students if it is to continue for prolonged periods of time, as well as affecting their ability to perform academically. The lack of consistency around these requirements has led to confusion and stress for many families and children. Some state health authorities have defined all boarding students within a boarding institution as close contacts of each other, while others have different rules. Some are allowed to have students isolate within the boarding house while others have been told they cannot do this and any child who is unwell, deemed a close contact or positive with Covid must be collected immediately. This obviously presents logistical problems with many families unable to make a return trip from home to school safely without needing to stay overnight along the way due to distance but unable to do so with a student with covid. These scenarios present constant concern and worry for boarding staff, students and family, causing building stress and worry for all involved, while the wider community

returns to a greater sense of normal while living with covid. The gap is widening for the rural and remote students accessing education through boarding school. With ICPA-NSW continuing to advocate for these students, their wellbeing can be at the forefront of the relevant authorities.

Comments.

Richard Stokes, Australian Boarding Schools Association. I think Kate Warby and I know very much how important this is. It was interesting that, once we got a seat at the table with NSW Health, we actually got them to understand that it was essential for parents to be able to drop their kids at the boarding school at the beginning of the year, particularly for new students. NSW Health were going to stop any parents from going on site at all. What I would encourage you to do and would love to assist you with as well, is to continue to implore our relevant government authorities to actually listen to the people who know the answers to their questions rather than listen to people who don't. That is one of the things that is really important.

A12. Broken Hill

“That ICPA-NSW strongly requests ICPA (Aust) to advocate for boarding school students, to ensure state governments follow and implement an explicit National Code for Boarding School Students.”

Moved by Sally Nevill, Broken Hill Branch. Seconded by Britt Anderson, Broken Hill Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

As states learn to live with Covid spreading within the community, there is concern from families that restrictions placed on boarders puts them at a disadvantage compared to their day student peers. We understand that restrictions are necessary to protect boarding communities but feel that the restrictions placed on boarders could be more flexible and consistent. Boarders, as a cohort, are already at a disadvantage and are vulnerable.

Comments.

Alana Moller, ICPA (Aust) President. I want to assure and reassure NSW members that we are doing everything we can and, from our level, we are working consistently with NSW Council, with ABSA, we are working with Bridgett McKenzie's office and they are as frustrated as all of us are. We will continue to do so until we have to, whether it's borders or whether it's the situations that occurred this year where separate boarding schools are doing different things. The amount that we are working together is amazing and our governments could, perhaps, take a leaf out of ICPA's book because our Federal Council and our State Councils have been working together incredibly on this and other topics but, particularly this, and have really built that relationship and I think they could take a look at ICPA.

Kathy Bishop, NEGS Principal. I would also like to support this motion for us, particularly. We also see this in schools. I think that you know that to implement a National Code that some states are supportive and some states are not. When we have students from four different states or five different states, it does have an impact on those girls trying to come to a boarding school.

A13. Broken Hill

“That ICPA-NSW advocates for boarding school students and their immediate families to be classified as ‘essential travelers’ in emergency management plans.”

Moved by Sally Nevill, Broken Hill Branch. Seconded by Britt Anderson, Broken Hill Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

We greatly appreciate that state borders are for now open, yet families live with the worry that this could change and appreciate ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) working with the relevant authorities to prevent border closures and/or Local Government Areas lockdowns affecting boarders and families in the future.

A14. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW urges the NSW Department of Education and relevant stakeholders to consult with ICPA-NSW and NSW boarding families to be flexible and considerate around regulations regarding returning to school.”

Moved by Emma Boede, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

I probably should state that this is Covid regulations. The return to boarding saw differing interpretations of the health guidelines by boarding schools. There needs to be policies which allow for a more streamlined boarder drop off, both for schools and families, at the beginning of the year and the school terms throughout the year. Staggered return times for instance, which then limits the number of people in the boarding houses at any one time. Elevating the need for drop off time restrictions on families and the use of Rapid Antigen Tests before entering boarding houses can help with the process. Boarder family involvement is an integral part of the boarding school environment. Louth Branch urges the NSW Department of Education and boarding schools to work together on this issue.

Comments.

Alana Moller, ICPA (Aust) President. This has been an issue across the whole country and I am sure people with children in other states have been impacted as well. It is something that State Councils and ourselves have been working together on. We are well aware of it and many of us have experienced the same things ourselves and we will continue to do the best we can and I know ABSA will, to try to get the solutions put into place because we do know it is a problem. We have got your back.

Kate Warby, ICPA-NSW President. I might just add a further comment to that. The school holidays are approaching so there will be discussions with NSW authorities over the school holiday break and we will be working with our colleagues in Queensland as well as Federal Council to see if we can have a revision of some of the current guidelines that are in place. They haven't been revised since the start of the year and it is an ever-changing environment. I think we know how Term I has panned out and, unfortunately, many of us, myself included, have had children in isolation and close contacts more times than they probably been in the class room this term as well as experiencing having the virus. It is definitely something that we will be working on in the coming weeks and hopefully we can report back to members with an update on that.

A15. ICPA-NSW State Council

“That ICPA-NSW strongly supports the Australian Boarding Schools Association and ICPA (Aust) in requesting that, at all times, boarding school staff are considered essential workers.”

Moved by Bree Wakefield, State Council. Seconded by Monique Watkin, State Council.

Carried.

Explanation:

With the current pandemic some health authorities have not declared that all the boarding school staff are considered as essential workers. Boarding schools are very different school settings and need more than teachers to be operational. All teachers are considered essential workers, but not all the other staff such as boarding staff, kitchen staff and cleaning staff. Without all these members of staff, boarding schools are unable to operate.

Comments.

Anthony Begg, St Ignatius' College. I just wanted to support this motion as it is becoming very difficult to adequately staff and I think, highlighted in this motion, cleaning staff, catering staff and particularly hospitality staff, is an area we found particularly difficult to staff. So, we very much support this motion.

Richard Stokes, Australian Boarding Schools Association. I think this is a great motion. It has been one of the great frustrations of recent times to even watch health departments change their minds from letting principals make the decisions that boarding staff are essential workers to stopping that choice and making it only teachers. We don't understand that and we have been pretty vocal about it right around the country. It is a problem in both NSW and Queensland at this point in time and South Australia but we won't talk about that. Anything that we can do together would be really helpful.

Libby McPhee, State Council. Just to add weight to this motion. In aged care all workers are essential workers. I don't understand how they can draw lines between aged care and boarding school staff.

COMMUNICATIONS

A16. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW strongly requests Telstra address the lack of a consistent mobile and landline service to the Louth Public School and local community”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

The Louth Public School has ongoing issues with their landline and are forced to use a mobile. However, the mobile phone service is not always reliable. If the landline service is not available and if the mobile service goes off, the Louth Public School is uncontactable and unable to make calls including if there is an emergency.

Comments.

Josh Fullwood, Telstra. We do acknowledge the fault at Louth Public School and apologise for the inconvenience. We can advise that the fault is in the process of being rectified and can also confirm that the 3G tower near Louth Public School will be upgraded to 4G by the end of May, 2022.

Acclamation of thanks.

A17. Namoi

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Telcos to ensure that when 3G services are switched off, that the rural/remote mobile service is equivalent or better than what we currently have.”

Moved by Nicole Piper, Namoi Branch. Seconded by Laura Stalley State Council on behalf of Namoi Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Rural and remote people rely on reliable, affordable mobile services for phone calls and internet for emergencies, education, running of businesses, accessing online health services and in their personal lives.

Comments.

Josh Fullwood, Telstra. At Telstra we are committed to a robust coverage equivalent programme and can confirm that 4G network will be matched or exceeded before the 3G network is decommissioned.

Alana Moller, ICPA (Aust) President. I want to let members know that this is something that all councils have been working on together. We actually had a joint council’s meeting with Telstra a couple of weeks ago where we had representatives from every state council and federal council and they were left with no doubt how we felt about the 3G shutdown and how our concerns around how that would happen and what would happen in the future with that.

A18. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW strongly urges the NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood to ensure that all remaining TP1 and TP2 schools with satellite internet have a secure and consistent connection.”

Moved by Ellen Walker, Rankins Springs Branch. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

We thank the Department of Education for installing fibre optics at Naradhan Public School which has resulted in an improvement with the connection as opposed to the previous satellite internet connection.

Acclamation of thanks.

Claire Butler, ICPA-NSW Immediate Past President. I just want everybody to realise that having those mobile towers that do the fibre optics connectivity is a huge plus and I don’t want people to get disheartened if they ever lose a motion because we actually lost a motion many years ago at a federal conference when we were asking for mobile phone service to be implemented in rural schools. We kept fighting and didn’t take no for an answer. I just wanted it on the record. Don’t give up.

A19. Tibooburra/Milparinka

“That ICPA-NSW thanks NBN for donating laptops, in 2021, to various education facilities around the state including Broken Hill School of the Air and their Hay campus.”

Moved by Fiona Hotchin, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. Seconded by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch
Carried by acclamation.

Explanation:

The laptops have been utilised for various reasons. Some examples include one of our branch members, whose NSW Department of Education internet connection, required for satellite lesson, broke in July 2021. The connection could not be fixed until a technician physically came to their remote property, as there was a lockdown, this could not occur and in fact still in February 2022 has not been fixed. The family’s three children were able to use the laptop to attend the school’s satellite program. They used a home NBN Sky Muster Plus plan to connect and access essential satellite lessons. Without the laptop the three children would have been unable to access essential satellite lessons. Another example includes the scripture teacher based out of the School of Air Hay Campus. The teacher used to travel many hundreds of kilometres to come into the studio in Hay. The teacher now has a laptop, with the school satellite lesson program on it and can now log in and teach her lessons from wherever she is. The teacher has expressed much gratitude at being able to do this.

Comments.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I think it should be noted that the schools have been using those laptops to provide two families who currently haven’t been connected onto the NBN SkyMuster Plan or have any connectivity because, until children who have joined School of the Air or any distance education centre currently have no NSW Department of Education supplied internet or devices so they have to, essentially, use their own device. Some of those laptops have been given to the preschool children who have attended School of the Air. We do appreciate it, so thank you NBN.

Libby McPhee, State Council. In light of all the information we have just heard on that resolution, I believe it would be great for us to carry it with acclamation.

A20. Tibooburra/Milparinka

“That ICPA-NSW asks Telstra to provide comprehensive information on the conversion of 3G to 4G connectivity to all local and remote communities for many reasons including education of our students. Members would like consultation and dissemination of such information with specific timelines, accessibility, booster and equipment capability before 3G towers are converted to 4G connectivity.”

Moved by Fiona Hotchin, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. Seconded by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch
Carried.

Explanation:

We request that Telstra provide this information across a variety of means, such as letters, social media, community meetings, webinars, local newspapers, phone calls etc. in simple to understand terms. In June 2019, a laminated letter was found, zip tied to the property Mt Shannon fence. The letter was to inform the community that the, Mt Shannon, 3G tower was to be upgraded to 4G, within the next six months. The tower is still currently on 3G. The community is still in the dark as to when the tower is going to be upgraded. Some community members who are on the edge of coverage of this tower are

very concerned that moving to 4G will decrease the area the current tower covers. This tower not only provides mobile connectivity but also landline coverage. In our distance education classrooms this means phone support for our students, home tutors and parents.

Comments.

Josh Fullwood, Telstra. We do have a dedicated 3G closure page on Telstra.com and we will also embark on direct communication campaigns before the 3G closure in June, 2024. With respect to Mt Shannon, we apologise for the delay in upgrading the facility. We identified a need to upgrade the radio transmission system to ensure sufficient capacity to support the Mt Shannon tower and the facility will be upgraded by June, 2022.

Libby McPhee, State Council. I'm totally in support of the motion and the specifics around that but I do want you to remember what we've been given today as a commitment that there will be no 4G shutdown until there is a 4G compatible situation.

Micheal Davis, Brewarrina Branch Observer. When I was on State Council Communications, we were informed that when they replaced the 3G tower with a 4G tower the area of coverage was a lot smaller. Do Telstra intend to put up more towers or do they have the capacity to expand 4G over a greater distance?

DISTANCE EDUCATION/AHWISE

A21. Brewarrina

“That ICPA-NSW urge the NSW Department of Education to investigate alternative learning options for Stage III students rather than the current option through Distance Education and School of the Air.”

Moved by Nikki Pearce, Brewarrina Branch. Seconded by Terissa Angel, Brewarrina Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Currently Calrossy are offering a virtual classroom called eCalrossy for Year 7 and 8 students. It is a virtual classroom that is giving rural and remote families another option to educate their children other than sending them to boarding school. Can the NSW Department of Education adopt a similar program for Stage III, Year 5 and 6 students in preparation for secondary schooling? Currently, Dubbo School of Distance Education and Broken Hill School of the Air are not meeting the needs of the Stage III children in adequately preparing them for the transition to secondary school. The e-learning platform would allow the Stage III children to remain at home until the end of Year 6.

Comments.

Sally Neville, Broken Hill Branch. I support this motion. I am seeing first hand with my kids who currently have satellite lessons through the Dubbo centre to support some set work. It's not being taught at all. The teacher is simple just going through the leaflet for the week ahead so the children are very disengaged and bored.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. The learning programmes for Stage III students within distance education are responsibly delivered to individual schools and are designed to support a broad range of students regardless of location or enrolment category. The Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy team are investigating ways to strengthen alternate pathways and provision for all students.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I would like to reference Minister Sarah Mitchell from her presentation that we viewed earlier. She stated that we lived in a digital world and since there has been no change to the delivery of distance education since the introduction of the internet and video conferencing facilities, I think there definitely does need to be a change. I think we also have to remember why distance education was created. Distance education was created for geographically isolated families and whilst we understand that there has become a need for distance education for other families, geographically isolated families are long term. They are doing it from preschool to Year 6 and even to Year 12. They are not moving, travelling around and only there for a year or maybe two. There are several lots of categories and we are told that we are the minority but that shouldn't matter. We are there to educate our children. We do it with passion. It's hard work and can be very hard as a parent teaching in the school room. I think we need to separate geographically isolated families and also cater for their needs and what they want. I appreciate Ben's comments but let's think about the fact that we are here for our geographically isolated families and whilst we want all children to have a great education, let's think about those that have no other choices because of where they live. As Ben said, we should not disadvantage any family because of where they live.

A22. Brewarrina

"That ICPA-NSW urges NSW Department of Education to encourage the sharing of resources between Dubbo School of Distance Education and Broken Hill School of the Air to ensure quality educational outcomes for all distance education students."

Moved by Nikki Pearce, Brewarrina Branch. Seconded by Terissa Angel, Brewarrina Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Can the Department of Education encourage both Dubbo School of Distance Education and Broken Hill School of the Air to share learning material between the centres to enhance the learning of their students?

Broken Hill School of the Air has deconstructed their Maths program and added extra content which would greatly benefit other students in other centres like Dubbo School of Distance Education.

Comments.

Helen Parker, Department of Education. I wanted to note that we did discuss this in Tuesday's distance education session and on behalf of Kylie Green, Principal of Broken Hill School of the Air, I am happy to take this on notice and have further discussions about what sharing might be possible.

Laure Stalley, State Council. I agree with what Helen said but also wanted to make note that, if this sharing of resources between schools, we are always told that students are unable to have as many lessons with their teacher because they have got programming and all that sort of stuff, so, just thinking that this is probably cost effective and time effective for these teachers which will then allow them to actually have more time with the students.

A23. Brewarrina

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to investigate an alternative to the current “Maths Pathways” learning program being implemented through Dubbo School of Distance Education, to better suit the learning needs and styles of distance education students.”

Moved by Nikki Pearce, Brewarrina Branch. Seconded by Terissa Angel, Brewarrina Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Dubbo School of Distance Education have implemented Maths Pathways as the only Maths program for Stage III upwards. This program is not taught by a teacher but by a computer. This program should only be used as a supplementary learning program to enhance other Maths programs. The best learning outcomes are achieved using multiple teaching strategies, different exposures and by being delivered by a teacher or supervisor. All educational programs should contain the above. Maths Pathways might analyze and deliver the teacher lots of data on a child that is completing the modules, but it runs the high risk of becoming boring and non-stimulating if being delivered by only one strategy. Maths Pathways do not cater for students with different learning styles.

Comments.

Deborah Nielsen, State Council. I can totally understand, from experience, the frustration of these girls. Obviously, there is a link missing here. It is complicated and the long way around to have to come and detail this at conference. The Maths Programme, you would think, would have been able to have been organised by the director and I think that is the missing link. If these families can see a solution to being able to enhance their Maths Programme which is being delivered from Dubbo, you would think that the first port of call would be the director and he would be able to organise that. It is extra work for these families and these women would not have any spare time. I think it is very disappointing and I feel sorry for them that they have to go the long way round. This should have been something that could have been solved with a text in my opinion.

A24. Broken Hill

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education and Early Childhood to improve and expand the infrastructure at Broken Hill School of the Air.”

Moved by Suzanah Palmer, Broken Hill Branch. Seconded by Juarne Reynolds, Broken Hill Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

The current facilities at the Broken Hill School of The Air campus are mostly made up of outdated transportable buildings which are full to capacity and only consist of two functional classrooms. There are ten classes in 2022. Therefore, the school is unable to accommodate all enrolled students at once. This results in staggered attendance for various stages, and some families spending one week in town for their children to only attend school for part of the week and another child the other part of the week or involve multiple trips during the week or term. This also results in teachers having to take some stages off campus as there is not enough room for all students. School of The Air student numbers need to be reviewed as there has been a long-term increase in the number of enrollments and facilities currently assigned are not sufficient for current needs. These facilities need to be increased so these children are not disadvantaged by lack of interaction their teachers and peers.

Comments.

Nerida Healy, Wentworth Branch. I would like to give some context as this may be where the department is lacking the understanding of what the consequences of this sort of thing and I will give an example of my situation. The last few years I have had students over every stage. This year I don't but next year I will and for the following six years I will have students across every single stage. This means that, at any one time, only one of my students can attend Broken Hill. So, I have to go every single time to Broken Hill which means I'm away from my business, I can't be productive because I am in Broken Hill. It costs me \$1,200 every week in accommodation that I go there and I have to do it individually because we don't have enough rooms to actually put two of my kids in a classroom in Broken Hill. I have to organize alternate care for my kids during that time. There are so many implications that the Department of Education need to understand about what happens from out end when these decisions are made.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. The Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy team are happy to work with you to find a solution on this issue.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I would like to touch on what Nerida said and it was discussed in our meeting on Tuesday with Helen Parker and the principal did say that it was very hard for her to do school planning when she has to separate the kids across the week. I think it is also important to note the cost of going there. These families, whilst there is a cost, do it for their children's education. No one complains.

We go in there; we do it and we get it done because we believe in our children's education and we want them to have the best outcomes. It is really disappointing when you are in there for a week and you have one child with you who isn't attending school, might not even have any school work or if they did you have to cart a whole school room to the town to complete that child's school work while you are there. We all know this is very difficult to complete a beneficial educational programme when you are in a hotel room.

A25. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW ask the NSW Minister for Education to ensure secondary students at Dubbo School of Distance Education have "in person" access to their peers and teachers each term."

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

2020 and 2021 were years like no other, however we believe opportunities for in person contact with their teachers or fellow students is necessary for distance education secondary students.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I would like it noted that this motion was actually one which has been submitted in the past and we all understand that Covid has been an excuse but it shouldn't be an excuse any more. We need to ensure that these children should miss out because of where they live. We need to ensure that, in a pivotal time of their lives, they are getting face-to-face interaction and social interaction not only with peers but also teachers. These children are geographically isolated who don't have daily interactions so we need to ensure that secondary students are gaining that as well.

A26. Tibooburra/Milparinka

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to provide one connected device per student (Preschool to Year 12) who are enrolled full time in Distance Education due to geographical isolation.”

Fiona Hotchin, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. I seek conference permission for a word change.
Permission granted.

The motion now reads:

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to provide one portable connected device per student (Preschool to Year 12) who are enrolled full time in Distance Education due to geographical isolation.”

Moved by Fiona Hotchin, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. Seconded by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch

Carried

Explanation:

Access to a connected device, either fixed or via Wi-Fi is an essential tool for full time geographically isolated Distance Education students. Currently many families are going to extraordinary lengths and expense so their children can access basic technology and internet because what is provided is completely inadequate. Use of a connected device as a geographically isolated Distance Education student is not optional, it is indeed the only way to access public education.

Comments.

Laura Stalley, State Council. A conversation around this was had on Tuesday at our distance education meeting. The addition of the word “portable” was because we have been told that children will receive a desk top. While that is greatly appreciated, we also feel that, if you have got three children in the school room, you are not going to be able to fit those desk tops in. Also, it would be one child sitting in the middle of two other children either side of them and that is not really going to be a productive exercise. We need flexibility in our learning especially in this digital world we now live in as Minister Mitchell said. So, we really need to make sure that these devices are portable and can move around their school room and it becomes an interactive classroom.

Nerida Healy, Wentworth Branch. Probably one of the most disappointing things about this is that the department consulted ICPA over what they thought was best yet they still delivered what worked for the department with little regard for what ICPA said or what the actual home site required. It is a bit beyond disappointing that we find out that in 2023 our new technology roll out is not going to involve a portable device or even WiFi capabilities.

A27. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW strongly requests the NSW Department of Education to ensure there is a point of contact and advocacy for distance education schools.”

Moved by Tegan Douglas, Wentworth Branch. Seconded by Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

The NSW Department of Education has recently restructured and there is concern amongst the broader school community that distance education schools will no longer have strong representation and understanding within the Department. Previously there has been a strong understanding of the unique

context in which distance education schools operating through the position of the Leader, Rural and Distance Education. Distance education schools must not fall through the cracks with the recent restructure.

A28. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW urges NSW Department of Education to implement practical access to secondary schooling for geographically isolated Distance Education Stage 4 students, using the existing primary school facilities in remote and very remote areas.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

For many years NSW Department of Education has not provided practical secondary options for some isolated children who are beginning secondary schooling. The students this motion refers to are those who, for many reasons, are unable to successfully assimilate into a boarding school environment. These children may be emotionally unready to leave their families to attend boarding school or because of a variety of other prohibiting reasons. The only practical pathway left to access secondary school is by distance education. Successful distance education requires a tutor and an appropriate place. Currently children in this category are unable to access Assistance for Isolated Children, In Home CCB or financial aid for the employment of a home tutor. Distance Education Allowance may financially cover the setting up of a school room however some students are without a space to set up. We would like to see a situation in which a successful time at secondary is as accessible and the attendance obligation to do so, is as rigorous as it is in primary school; at the very least for Stage IV students. It is unreasonable to expect or imagine a student having any success completing the distance education secondary curriculum without a literate adult to support them and an appropriate environment to learn in. Many students to whom this motion is addressed are living within sight of a NSW Department of Education primary school which are resourced to meet their needs. The model has varying precedents. In the 1980s and 90s distance education students could come to school and quietly complete their leaflets. In another instance students were tutored in an unairconditioned village hall. Recently indigenous students were given permission by the generosity of the principal to come to school and the Distance Education centre provided a tutor, for two days of the week. These arrangements have been advocated for privately and are ad hoc. Therefore, in some instances, remote families are anxious when their children are nearing Stage IV (Year 7). Latterly with the increase of regulations accessing the primary schools' facilities for studying secondary has been more difficult. This situation has led to parents arranging for their children to repeat Year 6. In some instances, the whole community worries and wants the Year 6 student to repeat because effectively that buys them one more year of school. The family and community recognise it will be those students' last chance of a genuine school year. Louth Branch recognises the complexities with enrolments in dual schools however we ask the NSW Department of Education work with ICPA-NSW to find a solution as quickly as possible because the current reality is that for some children their future is inescapable with the one avenue - education- being closed to them.

Comments.

Laure Stalley, State Council. I wanted to give an update on this because it is a motion that has already been in policy. At deputation we did discuss this matter and they did say that it will be a case-to-case determination and it would need to be discussed with the principals but it still is an important motion in terms of the fact that we do need to ensure that they do have education.

A29. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to support incentives, such as recognition of work experience, for graduate teachers who accept work as a home educator (governess) tutoring distance education student in remote areas.”

Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch requests conference permission to withdraw Motion A29.

Permission granted.

A30. Tibooburra/Milparinka

“That ICPA-NSW increase the understanding and awareness of the home educator role to promote this employment opportunity.”

Moved by Fiona Hotchin, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. Seconded by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch

Carried

Explanation:

We ask that when ICPA-NSW liaises with educational institutions such as TAFE, universities, Country University Centres, and private companies, who offer training in teaching and early childhood, they promote the Home Educator role as viable and accessible employment opportunity in rural areas. Another suggestion is to liaise with these educational institutions to find a pathway that recognise the work out in a distance education classroom can contribute to work placement hours to fulfill the requirements for completion of the teaching courses. Case Study: This year, one of our branch members tried to recruit a home educator (governess) for 16 weeks. For 15 weeks there was no applicants. This family has been employing home educators for nine years and this year by far was the most difficult. This member really found a lack of awareness of the home educator role was a major contributing factor this year.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I want to assure Tibooburra/Milparinka that we definitely are promoting this and when we do speak to everyone, we do encourage them to let their university graduates that this is a viable option for them to do governessing and work in the industry at the same time. We are working on it.

A31. Brewarrina

“That ICPA-NSW urgently requests the NSW Department of Education to provide the NBN Sky Muster service to enable better quality internet and learning platforms for distance education students.”

Moved by Nikki Pearce, Brewarrina Branch. Seconded by Terissa Angel, Brewarrina Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

The current NSW Department of Education services available to Distance Education and School of the Air centres are not adequate. The computer and internet are still very slow and not allowing resources to be downloaded and accessed in a timely manner. REACT can only have two student videos on at a time. Many of the resources such as videos may take over an hour to download before they can be viewed. The system is extremely slow especially when there is multiple School of The Air

and Distance Education centres and students using the system all at once. When will the new NBN Sky Muster service be installed and implemented?

Comments.

Nerida Healy, Wentworth Branch. It was extremely disappointing to learn that we are still not going to have this delivered until the end of the year considering that we were in this same position in Hay last year when Mike Tom guaranteed that we would have this roll out at the end of last year. Now, a year down the track, we being told the same thing so I think they need to really make sure that they actually deliver this as soon as they possibly can.

Laure Stalley, State Council. I just want to assure our members that Bree Wakefield and myself, who were appointed to liaise with the Department of Education, will continue to do so and we will continue to keep pushing the urgency for this NBN SkyMuster to happen and, yes, that is correct. They have told us that the roll out will be completed by December 2022 but, as Nerida has suggested, we were told that it would have been finished at the end of last year and the start of this year and we are still waiting for even contact from the Department.

A32. Brewarrina

“That ICPA-NSW investigate with the NSW Department of Education if families can be reimbursed or subsidised for the use of their own technology, hardware and data access whilst waiting for the NBN Sky Muster service to be satisfactorily implemented for Distance Education families.”

Moved by Nikki Pearce, Brewarrina Branch. Seconded by Terissa Angel, Brewarrina Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Over the past 18 months many new families to School of the Air and Distance Education centres have been told that there was no point installing a new NSW Department of Education computer into their school rooms as the new NBN Sky Muster service will be coming online very soon. These new families have then been using their own home computers to access lessons and resources needed to complete their everyday school requirements at their own expense. These families need be reimbursed for the cost of this extra financial burden.

Comments.

Nerida Healy, Wentworth Branch. We fully support this motion but I just want to say that it is really disappointing that there was no communication about this from the Department of Education to these new families. We had a number of new families at the start of the year who were sitting around waiting in those weeks leading up to the start of school and having absolutely no idea how they were going to access a lesson. There was zero communication and it was only through the help of existing families that these families were made aware that, while there were some donated devices, they would have to use their own internet and told the how to get on. This information should have actually been provided to these families from the Department of Education.

Louise Martin, ICPA Qld President. I thought I would share with you how it works in Queensland and whether you think it is a good idea or not. In Queensland, our distance education families source their own internet, provide their own hardware etcetera, but the Department of Education gives an internet subsidy of \$500 per student per year and we also have a hardware subsidy that is \$250 per student per year. Then you are actually able to get the most suitable technology, hardware and so on that suits your own family.

A33. Broken Hill

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education provide a time frame of when geographically isolated students enrolled in Distance Education will be switched over to the NBN SkyMuster service as a matter of urgency.”

Moved by Suzanah Palmer, Broken Hill Branch. Seconded by Juarne Reynolds, Broken Hill Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Attendees at the 2021 ICPA-NSW State Conference were informed by the NSW Department of Education that Broken Hill School of the Air would be switched over to the NBN Sky Muster service by the end of 2021 and beginning of 2022. Families of Broken Hill School of the Air have not received any correspondence regarding this switchover, apart from a survey which was conducted at the end of Term Four 2021, to gather information regarding the family's current NBN Sky Muster service connections.

Families conducting their children's education through Distance Education through the NSW Department of Education, would appreciate more communication regarding the NBN Sky Muster service switchover

and perhaps a guarantee that this long awaited and necessary improvement for our children's access to appropriate technology will take place as a matter of urgency. Twelve new families to Broken Hill School of The Air are waiting for the rollout of NBN Sky Muster service and do not have access to the REACT program using NSW Department of Education supplied equipment. They have either had to use their own devices or purchase new equipment to access the necessary technology to access their child's education.

A34. ICPA-NSW State Council

“That ICPA-NSW ensures that after the completion of the NBN SkyMuster service roll out to geographically home isolated distance education primary students, there is a quick transition for preschool and secondary students onto the same network and technology resources (i.e., computers etc).”

Moved by Laura Stalley, State Council. Seconded by Bree Wakefield, State Council.
Carried.

Explanation:

ICPA-NSW is aware that in the past distance education students who are in secondary do not have access to the same internet and technology resources as their primary counterparts. We would like to ensure that

there is a consistent technology approach across all distance education students who are geographically home isolated.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

A35. Tibooburra/Milparinka

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to provide funding for accommodation, or offer rent subsidies, to teachers and educators in Early Childhood centres in remote locations.”

Moved by Fiona Hotchin, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. Seconded by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch

Carried.

Explanation:

The first 5 years of a child’s life are vitally important for development in all areas, including cognitive, physical and social. While the State and Federal Governments have worked hard to establish and sustain

early childhood education services in remote and very remote locations, it is very hard to attract teachers and educators to these areas. Accommodation is scarce and what is available is expensive. If services could offer rent subsidies or free accommodation, it would make it easier to attract staff to remote areas.

Comments.

Vicki Olds, Outback Mobile Resource Unit. I am the Director of the Outback Mobile Resource Unit based in Broken Hill and the Tibooburra Multipurpose Centre based in Tibooburra. Our early childhood service in Tibooburra, for the last two years, were fortunate enough to access teacher housing with staff paying half the weekly rent and our service paying the remainder. However, late last year we were informed by the teacher housing authority that the dwelling would no longer be available because the house may be required to be used by teachers in 2022. This resulted in our nominated supervisor resigning as she and her family had nowhere to live. We also lost another staff member due to lack of accommodation. Both of these ladies were qualified in early childhood education. If accommodation is included in an advertisement position, we are more likely to get someone. Currently I am travelling out on Sunday, 330 kilometres to Tibooburra, spending five nights there and travelling back so we can get the centre open and it’s \$90 per night for accommodation with discount five nights each week.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. We are aware of this issue and this is a space we are advocating for.

A36. Bourke

“That ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant State and Federal Ministers for funding to be sought to address Early Childhood Teacher pay parity.”

Moved by Amanda Bell, Bourke Branch. Seconded by Scott Mitchell, Bourke Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Pay parity of Early Childhood Teachers is a significant issue. An early childhood teacher completes a four-year degree course. If they elect to work in the public school system in a rural and remote location, the additional benefits they would get compared to working as an early childhood teacher would include:

- Additional seven weeks of annual leave (approx. \$10,000 pa)
- Significantly shorter contact hours per week
- Approx. \$20,000-\$30,000 additional salary
- Professional mentoring by other Teachers
- Structured Professional development programs (\$10,000 pa)
- Access to Teacher Housing (at a 70% discount on market rates in Bourke) (\$10,000 pa)

Early Childhood services are significantly limited in their budgets. It is important to find long term solutions to address pay parity of early childhood teachers in rural and remote locations.

Comments.

Nerida Healy, Wentworth Branch. I want to raise the issue that pay parity is an issue between our borders. Wentworth sits on the Victoria/NSW border and in our early childhood setting our teachers actually have to be conscious of which side of the border they work. They might enjoy their job more in NSW but they can only afford to work in NSW for two to three days and then they have to make up their extra hours in Victoria where they get paid more. We really need to be conscious of this because our kids on our side of the border are missing out because of the pay parity.

Alana Moller, ICPA (Aust) President. I noticed in the motion it is also addressed to ICPA (Aust). I want to let conference know that, following on from Federal Conference in November last year, we had quite a number of motions raised around early childhood educators and getting them into rural and remote communities. We wrote to Federal Ministers and MPs and Shadow Ministers and certainly one of the key things that came from that was employment incentives and what could be done at Federal level for employment incentives. I just wanted to let you know of that and also wanted to tell Bourke Branch that you are very welcome to bring the motion to Federal Conference in August.

Vicki Olds, Outback Mobile Resource Unit. Our staff shortages at Tibooburra are also a result of staffing being more attracted to the school across the road and the pay that they can offer as opposed to what we can.

A37. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood to amend the lack of salary parity between four year trained early childhood teachers and four year trained primary and secondary teachers.”

Moved by Emma Boede, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

It is necessary for the NSW Department of Education to take over the salary payments of early childhood teachers so that they can be afforded the same salary package as their four-year trained peers who are working in primary and secondary. Currently the pay gap is so significant it is impossible to recruit and retain teachers in early childhood centres and new recruits often use early childhood jobs as a steppingstone into the primary school sector. Particularly in the remote context where the early childhood packages are without comparable incentives such as holiday pay, provision for housing, access to professional support and travel to attend professional development. Some centres are unable to offer early childhood packages which are equal to those in state primary and secondary schools.

A38. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood review pay rates and incentives for Early Childhood workers in rural and remote locations.”

Nerida Healy, Wentworth Branch I seek conference’s permission to deem Motion A38 covered by Motions A35, A36 and A37.

Permission granted.

Explanation:

For many years the NSW Department of Education have been aware of the need to provide pay and incentives to attract and keep teaching staff in rural and remote locations. We now need the same attention paid to attracting and retaining staff in the Early Childhood Sector. We are losing university trained early childhood educators to the school system where the pay and conditions far outweigh that of preschool and childcare centres, yet we know how important those early years are. In very remote areas, access to housing or subsidised housing can mean the difference between having an operational centre or not. Rural and remote areas need assistance to attract educators because our children deserve a ‘good start’ too.

A39. Bourke

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood to implement better governance models for Early Childhood Services in Western NSW.”

Moved by Amanda Bell, Bourke Branch. Seconded by Scott Mitchell, Bourke Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

In rural and remote areas of NSW, most Early Childhood Services are provided by community managed not-for-profit organisations or Local Government. The significant weight of responsibility placed on the volunteer management committees means that many potential candidates will not volunteer for such a role. There is limited capacity for volunteers to undertake rigorous training, and indeed Early Childhood Services have extremely limited resources to be able to deliver training in governance and financial management.

Comments.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. The Department supports this motion and is exploring training supports as an immediate response to this particular issue. We will also consider longer term options for addressing these important issues.

A40. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood continues to establish Distance Education/School of The Air preschools in small, isolated schools where there is no other access to preschool for four-year olds.”

Moved by Emma Boede, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Thank you for the establishment of the Distance Education Preschool at Ivanhoe Central School. Several remote schools were identified by ICPA-NSW in 2014, as servicing areas without access to preschooling. The fact that to date all remote communities which have been identified as needing practical access have not had a simple Distance Education preschool model offered at their school can only be attribute to inefficiency. This is despite an on-going effort to collaboratively find a system with sustainability which could facilitate preschooling in remote villages for three and four-year olds.

Comments.

Louise Martin, ICPA-Qld President. We have a couple of options in Queensland that might be worth considering. We have the e-kindy which is run out of the Brisbane School of distance Education and that is for all students across the state. You can be located anywhere. We also have a programme called the State Delivered Kindy Programme which was a pilot programme but is now a permanently fixture called State Delivered Kindy. It is available in State Schools if you are forty kilometres from the nearest long day-care or established kindergarten service. Both of those in conjunction with each other are working very well.

Deborah Nielsen, State Council. Thank you, Louise. We are aware of what goes on in Queensland for your kindy, our preschool and that was exactly the point you made for us to take to Minister Williams when she was the Minister for Early Childhood. Unfortunately, it didn't work. They didn't take it on but I'm very, very excited that we do have the enlightened RRREP and I'm glad that you have made that comment because it wasn't just me saying it but it really exists over the border. Thank you.

Lisa Alonso Love, Department of Education. I wanted to thank the Louth Branch for moving this motion and also Deborah for her advocacy in this space and take on board that we will look at how we can roll this out and do it quickly and we will try not to get stuck in some of the long-term thinking and planning that sometimes happens. We will consider those other motions around pay and accommodation in light of some of that as well so that we get the right services in those places.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

A41. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Health and NSW Minister for Regional Health to implement an incentive program to encourage allied health professionals to come to rural and remote areas.”

Moved by Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch. Seconded by Claire Butler, State Council on behalf of Balranald Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Children benefit the greatest from early intervention. To give one example, a speech issue is usually identified at preschool. Parents are then referred to the relevant therapist at a local allied health service, however there is an increasing gap and turnover of health professionals in towns like Balranald, therefore parents may need to travel over 300kms one way to access a speech therapist or occupational therapist. The disadvantage of access to allied health professionals in rural health services settings was recently highlighted during the pandemic as health professionals and appointments were made near impossible due to border closures, covid regulations and the redistribution of health specialists in our health system. Telehealth was a highlighted benefit of allowing access for health specialists and their

patients, but there is nothing more important than face to face appointments so that health specialist can properly perform their assessments and referrals. Balranald Branch therefore requests that more incentives be offered to allied health professionals to work in rural and remote localities.

Comments.

Jacynta Moylan, Department of Education. Regional, Rural and Remote Education Policy Unit. In consultation and working with regional health and working on ways in which we can support the health and wellbeing of students in schools.

Laura Stalley, State Council. I think that it is also worth noting on this motion that the services that are available, even if they are online, it has only been recently that you have been able to claim telehealth under your Medicare rebate. So, if you do use that Medicare rebate it is for ten sessions I think, and the cost to implement a speech therapist for an hour session can be as much as \$140 a week. We all know that ten sessions are not going to solve the problem straight away as it has to be implemented the whole time. On a personal note, I do use speech online and it does cost me \$140. I had two children doing it and needed to do a third. I had to prioritise the two older ones and then wait for the younger one to come through. We do need to get more professionals out into rural and remote areas and we are slowly seeing the implementation of telehealth but that isn't the solution to everything. We still need that face-to-face interaction but we also need to be mindful about the cost because it does cost a lot of money and not everybody can afford to do that and we are disadvantaging the children. I think we do need more people but we also need to think about the cost and how it affects the families because children are missing out.

A42. Bourke

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Regional Health for travel and accommodation assistance to be made available for rural and remote families travelling to access face-to-face specialist allied health services not covered by Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) for geographically isolated and ‘at risk’ children.”

Moved by Amanda Bell, Bourke Branch. Seconded by Scott Mitchell, Bourke Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Children with specific education needs and developmental delays require access to appropriate specialist allied health services which often require face-to-face consultations. Adequate and uniform assistance should be available to assist geographically isolated, vulnerable and at-risk children accessing face-to-face specialist sessions with expenses such as travel and accommodation when extensive travel is required to attend these consultations. In NSW there are only a couple of services in Metropolitan Sydney that can be claimed for and these are inaccessible for the majority of rural and remote families.

Comments.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. I have a question for the branch. When you are saying face-to-face specialists who do you want this addressed to because some are.

Tanya Mitchell, State Council. I think what they are talking about is specialist allied health services such as occupational therapists and speech services.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. I'm just wondering if presenting this motion again and actually specifying exactly who you want it to go to instead of just generalising but actually directing it straight to OT such-and-such?

Laura Stalley, State Council. I just want to make note on the IPTAAS. I think it we do need to be able to use it but we also need to be made aware of it and I think a lot of families aren't aware that they can claim for IPTAAS or even know what IPTAAS is. I think the government also needs to be promoting the services and get the services that are able to claim it to give that information to their clients as well. Many people don't know that you can actually claim IPTAAS when you have a baby when you go to hospital so your husband's accommodation is covered and your travel as well. So, I think it is also that the promotion of IPTAAS is not great and needs to be improved.

A43. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Health and the NSW Minister for Regional Health to investigate antenatal, postnatal and infant support available to rural and remote parents, especially the provision of services that are accessible and supportive of geographically and socially isolated families. “

Moved by Emma Boede, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

The health and wellbeing of children and their parents is vital to promote growth, establish foundational skills, knowledge and understanding to support success in preschool, school and adulthood. Isolated parents and their children are unable to access adequate support, especially in the early childhood stages of infancy. This means families are relying on social structures, a compounding problem, as rural communities are becoming smaller and more isolated as agricultural practices become more efficient and populations change. With decreasing populations and increasing isolation there is a need for focussed and coordinated supports that are designed with isolated rural families in mind. Currently there is no formal mothers group provided to rural mothers, online resources suggest inaccessible supports such as in home supports, clinics and localised programs. Targeted and tailored programs for isolated children and parents are needed to ensure equity of access to support, especially in zero to three years to ensure children start preschool without disadvantage because of where they live.

A44. Monaro

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Regional Health to prioritise workforce health capacity with targeted scholarships as part of a program to incentivise employers.”

Moved by Pam Fletcher, Monaro Branch. Seconded by Tim Fletcher, State Council on behalf of Monaro Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

There are many vacancies in some health fields especially for professional medical technicians like sonographers. For example, to become a sonographer an individual must complete a post-graduate course.

These courses require the student to be employed as a trainee in the field before they can enrol in the university course. However, employers want qualified employees not trainees whom they still have to pay. By offering rural students' scholarships the employer is freed of the financial obligation and will be more inclined to accept trainees.

A45. Bourke

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to request that a permanent Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item number for telehealth consultations is assigned to telehealth, Allied Health Services, specialists and consultations, including but not limited to Speech Pathology, Paediatricians and Psychologists and to support the specific educational needs and learning difficulties of geographically isolated children.”

Moved by Amanda Bell, Bourke Branch. Seconded by Scott Mitchell, Bourke Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Many allied health services are unavailable to rural and remote families. In border regions this unavailability is heightened for example, Qld practitioners cannot see patients who live in NSW and vice versa.

Barriers are:

- that people have to travel long distances sometimes to have the appointment cancelled
- People have to join lengthy waiting lists to access practitioners located in the metropolitan areas
- little or no access to allied health services, particularly for children with special needs and developmental delays (often on more than one domain)
- financial hardship caused by travel and accommodation costs while accessing treatment
- low socio-economic families living in rural and remote areas do not have the means to travel for treatment
- rural and remote people are often unable to find their way around or unfamiliar with metropolitan areas in order to access treatment
- most people needing National Disability Insurance Scheme plans are unable to navigate the system and without access to services they are unable to utilise their plans
- we are aware of many families rejecting National Disability Insurance Scheme plans due to lack of access to services.

Utilisation of telehealth services can be of great benefit to families in geographically isolated locations who would otherwise have to travel considerable distances or encounter lengthy delays to access face to face consultations with relevant health professionals. Students with developmental difficulties require frequent and timely consultations and these can be enabled via telehealth services for many families otherwise unable to access allied health professionals due to living in rural and remote areas. Some specialist consultations, such as speech pathology, can be satisfactorily delivered using telehealth services where the technology is available. These services are already providing improved access to health services for some children in geographically isolated areas. The cost to families to access such services should also be equitable.

Comments.

Suzanne Wilson, ICPA (Aust). Federal Council can assure members that we are all working vigorously and continuously on this. I recent correspondence to federal government we have highlighted the need for this and seeing the success of some expanded and extended telehealth services during Covid, to be equally effective for these allied services. We welcome Bourke Branch to bring this to the federal conference later this year.

A46. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood ensure that rural and remote schools have access to face-to-face counselling sessions for students.”

Moved by Ellen Walker, Rankins Springs Branch. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

There are students requiring counselling face to face in rural and remote schools, however, due to the lack of services being available locally, they don't have access to an appropriate face to face counselling service. At our TP1 School we have been fortunate enough to try the Royal Far West counselling service via video conference, but it freezes and stops working due to our poor internet connections. Our local TP1 School, Naradhan Public School has not had access to a regular school counselling service for over two years. The school has a significant need for regular face to face counselling to support students academically and emotionally and are being disadvantaged by not having this support. They have recently participated in a further trial with the Royal Far West where they had access to a psychologist who provided a mix of telepsychology and a fly-in, fly-out service. At the end of the second trial, the principal saw the model as a viable last resort but had many students missing out on vital support as there was only capacity for one student to be receiving counselling through the telepsychology program. The effectiveness of this program was also hindered by the school's poor internet speeds. During the fly-in service part of the trial, students had to be transported to the nearest larger school, at the school's expense, for cognitive assessments to be conducted as the school's internet connection was insufficient. The teaching staff are also feeling the absence of a regular school counsellor, who had previously provided support with classroom management strategies and learning adjustments to ensure every student was supported.

Comments.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. This motion has come up before but what also needs to be noted here and this comes from the communications side of the activity. Naradhan has been told that they will never get connected because of the makeup of the ground and it is just impossible to get proper connectivity to this school. Therefore, why can't the Minister for Education, Health Department and Communications get together and case by case, address this situation. Because they are not going to get connected and it is always happening, it is finding another solution so that they can address these issues.

Libby McPhee, State Council. I have a question for the branch because I think in February Naradhan got connection so is it too early to tell if that worked? To help everybody here, Naradhan has been connected and now have a much better connection but Kerrie is saying it is too early to tell.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. Just wanted to confirm with the ICPA that we will work with health and with regional NSW to improve the allied health services to regional areas which will include regional health. We know we are doing a lot in the counselling space and we are working closely with Royal Far West around different models and ways we can do that. We know there is still more work to do and we will continue to work both externally with other government agencies and internally with our own department.

RURAL SCHOOLS

A47. ICPA-NSW State Council

“That ICPA-NSW thanks NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood for the creation of the Regional, Rural & Remote Education Policy Team and allowing fortnightly meetings for us to have input into education in NSW.”

Moved by Annabel Strachan, State Council. Seconded by Libby McPhee, State Council.

Carried by acclamation.

A48. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW asks the NSW Department of Education to ensure remote school communities are informed prior to the end of the school year of plans which affect employment and enrolments for the following school year.”

Moved by Emma Boede, Louth Branch. Seconded by Deborah Nielsen, State Council on behalf of Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

We are at the end of January 2022 (that is when we had our meeting and did our motions) and the current staff at the Louth Preschool are unsure of their employment for 2022 or if the preschool is even going ahead at Louth this year. Therefore, we feel it is essential for the plan to be presented to the community prior to the end of each year so those affected locally regarding both employment and enrolment of students can be planned for. Louth is now functioning but we would still like to present this motion to ensure it doesn't happen in the future.

A49. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to review their policy on advertising staff vacancies in rural and remote areas.”

Moved by Tegan Douglas, Wentworth Branch. Seconded by Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

The ideal time to attract a new staff member to a rural location is over a holiday period when they have time to relocate and get used to the new setting. Not advertising a position prior to holidays or over the summer holiday period, unnecessarily prolongs the process when the school could have been starting the year with a new teacher. We would ask that the NSW Department of Education ensure positions are advertised within two weeks of receiving notification that a new staff member is required, and that this advertisement occurs over the holiday period rather than waiting until the school year starts to ensure continuity of learning in the most stable environment possible.

A50. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Department of Education implement a half yearly parent feedback survey for all rural and remote schools with responses collected and actioned by the Director, Educational Leadership.”

Moved by Tegan Douglas, Wentworth Branch. Seconded by Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

For many years ICPA-NSW have called for regular meetings with Director, Educational Leadership which have never eventuated. There exists a disconnect between many schools and the Director, Educational Leadership and many parents feel they have no avenue to report what is happening in a school and community. Director, Educational Leadership visit remote locations infrequently and check in with principals, however, rarely seek the feedback from families or communities. In a small school and community, the interaction between the school and the community is vital and families should have an appropriate avenue to report their educational experiences and expectations. By implementing a survey across a random selection of parents every six months, the Director, Educational Leadership would then have a far greater understanding of how the school is performing in the community. They would have a benchmark for continuous improvement and they would then have accountability for this improvement.

Comments.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. The Department has newly established a Student and Parent Voice Team and the Regional, Rural and Remote Policy Team, my team, will be working closely with them to try and work through how we can hear better feedback from our rural and remote schools.

Deborah Nielsen, State Council. That is very welcome news. I just wonder if there will be a situation that could then arise when a student or the student’s family is loath to report something because they have to go back to that small community and bear the brunt of having complained. How can it be confidential in reality?

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. I’ll have to take part of that on notice because we’ll need to talk to the Student and Parent Voice Team and see how they do that. What we will do is ensure that we can do it in a way that is confidential and try to work through a system that will allow the students and the communities to do that in a confidential way.

A51. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood to explore an exchange system, similar to that offered to city-based teachers to teach rural and remote, for teachers at small schools and Distance Education.”

Moved by Tegan Douglas, Wentworth Branch. Seconded by Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Small schools and Distance Education are unique settings where the ability for both students and teachers to learn and collaborate with others is limited. Particularly in a small school environment, it becomes very hard on both students and teachers to remain fresh and enthusiastic when you are with the same small group day in day out. A strongly encouraged exchange system after 3 years in the same small school or distance education centre, where teachers could go back into a mainstream school with the comfort of job security, would be of benefit to both the students and teachers. The exposure to

different teaching methods, styles and interests are a benefit to students and the exposure to ideas and different practices are a benefit to teachers.

Comments.

Laura Stalley, State Council. In terms of the distance education, we have been having meetings with Ben Ballard's team and one of the questions that we did have and that we didn't get around to yesterday when we had our distance education session, was just ensuring, particularly in a distance education space, teachers who have had been in schools for long periods of time have that experience to have that interaction in a mainstream school on a daily basis. In terms of teacher training, how will the Department go about in those spaces to make sure that teachers continue with their training but also having that interaction with children on a day-to-day basis? In terms of the exchange for this, having a teacher who teaches DE, go into a main stream school for a year and then comes back into the DE space so they are continuing their skill set.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. We are happy to explore that with the ICPA and look at some options on ways that could be done and work through the relevant areas of the Department and see what we can do.

A52. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW urges the NSW Department of Education to make school staff aware of ICPA as an information source for understanding isolated education processes and difficulties that may be incurred due to remoteness.”

Moved by Emma Boede, Louth Branch. Seconded by Deborah Nielsen, State Council on behalf of Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Louth ICPA welcomes knowledge sharing with professional staff and believes that all communities, to which teaching staff come, would always wish to share issues with the aim of working collaboratively towards solutions.

Comments.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. One of the roles of the Regional, Rural & Remote Education Policy Team is to raise the profile of our stakeholders both internal and external so we will take that up as something we can work with you on over the next twelve months.

A53. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to strongly promote and emphasise the benefits of early transition programs into rural and remote schools throughout NSW.”

Moved by Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch. Seconded by Laura Stalley, State Council on behalf of Balranald Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

In 2019 Clare Public School introduced the early transition program for the four preschool aged children in the community that would be attending in 2020. Apart from fortnightly access to the Hay Mobile Preschool, these children would otherwise have had no other access to an early education due to the huge distances involved. For some a trip of 180kms one way. The early transition program

introduced at Clare Public School allowed these children to access the program in mid 2019 instead of late in the year. This early transition program allowed the children to have access to education resources and was received positively by the children, who showed great advancement in their school readiness. The universal 600 hours of preschool recommended by the Federal Government is difficult to achieve. Many children from rural and isolated areas barely, if at all, receive the recommended hours of preschool education because of the limitations in their community. By encouraging more rural and remote schools to introduce an early transition program the NSW Department of Education would be allowing children to have some preschool education before attending primary school. The Balranald Branch acknowledges the NSW Department of Education and congratulates the Principal of Clare Public School for the successful implementation of the program and we suggest that this be implemented in other similar schools.

Comments.

Deborah Nielsen, State Council. I am aware of what is happening at Clare and it is wonderful in lieu of the fact of nothing else being available and I know it is a very good programme. I also think it would be good if other schools would be able to adopt it. However, not instead of the mandated 600 hours preschool programme that all Australian children are meant to have. I believe we can still keep pushing for that as well as the transition.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. The success of the Clare Public School Transition Programme is currently being evaluated and we will be looking to see where that can be applied in other areas based on the context of those communities.

A54. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Department of Education to monitor and encourage consistent information at handovers of principals in TP1 rural schools.”

Moved by Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch. Seconded by Laura Stalley, State Council on behalf of Balranald Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

The changeover of principals at Clare Public School, six in the last four years, has had a negative impact on the pupils and staff at the school, detrimentally affecting the education of the pupils and putting an excessive amount of time constraints on the new principal. Inconsistent information and difficulty accessing the department’s computer system due to contract changes for new principals means that the teaching principal has a lot of catching up to do and, in some cases, it takes a whole term for all the administrative applications to be implemented. This impacts on the productivity of the principal in the office and ultimately impacts the time spent in class with the students. Contracts commence on the first day of school however, if they were dated 1st January the new principal would have access to applications and information well before the first day of school and would be able to familiarise themselves with information applicable to the new school. It is vital in this small school and other TP1 schools that correct information is exchanged and there should be a consistent handover to ensure a smooth transition at the start of the school year.

A55. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW urges the NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood to ensure that there is always a 'hand over' between principals in TPI schools, especially in the program.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

It has been the practice in small western schools, for the succeeding principals not to have crossed over. The common arrangement is for the leaving principal to tidy and pack up the school, collect their own resources, hand back the keys and drive away just before Christmas. When the new principal arrives in the blinding heat of January with all the problems it creates for stock people, most isolated school community members, while welcoming, are not focused on school. Even with an industrious will, it is hard for the new teacher to 'set up' the school for the following year, not knowing the students or their way around the resources. Seldom is there an on-going term 1 program, scope and sequence or assessment records. To be frank, there have been several cases where there is not even the preceding year's program. In general, the Teaching Principal is felt to be the boss in the sense that they are responsible for students' welfare and schooling, the staff and the school's budget, assets and grounds. As the leader, the principal often must assume a role of command which is difficult when all the vagaries of whatever scenario they are faced, are totally unfamiliar. In our experience of assisting new teaching principals as they begin their appointment, the major shock is the huge workload required to program appropriately for a multistage classroom, let alone rigorously implementing same and following up with constant assessing.

Comments.

Deborah Nielsen, State Council. We wrote this motion at Louth in 2010 to be presented at the 2011 conference at Lightning Ridge and at that time we were told that it would be attended to. I'm sure everyone in this room who has been involved in a rural school will have experienced the same frustration and worry that the school is not performing in a rigorous manner because of the lack of preparation for the new principal.

Annabel Strachan, State Council. We have had directors and we have had principals who will be willing to do it but what happens when these people leave there is no policy or anything further up that makes them have the next person coming along know that they have to do this as well. So, that's what we need to have changed.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. The department recognises the complexities involved in the handover procedures. I am advised that there includes work, health and safety concerns, geographical distance as well as the ability of staff to be away from their substantive role. Handovers are often facilitated in a virtual environment to overcome these complexities with information provided in hard and soft copy form by previous principals to the Director of Educational Leadership. My team are happy to work with the ICPA and the relevant department directorates to see where we can improve some of these things.

Deborah Nielsen, State Council. Thank you, Ben. We have obviously discussed this before and I feel that you are on to it. I am interested to know that there is, and I gather from what you said, actually a process whether it is by virtual or a different way. But my question is, does there exist a handover protocol?

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. I'll have to take that on notice and come back to you with the actual processes.

A56. Brewarrina

“That ICPA-NSW consult with the NSW Minister for Education about the possible extension of the school hours currently under discussion and the impact on rural and remote students who may travel up to 100km one way each day to get to school.”

Moved by Nikki Pearce, Brewarrina Branch. Seconded by Terissa Angel, Brewarrina Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

It has recently been flagged in the media and by NSW Premier, Dominic Perrottet, that the State Government is considering extending school hours across NSW. It is of concern that rural and regional students have not been considered adequately when thinking of extending school hours and prolonging the school day. Some rural children currently travel in excess of 100km both ways to access education. Time spent on a school bus, at school and doing homework leaves little time for children to maintain a healthy lifestyle balance of play/school/family time. We ask for further consultation and debate regarding the change to school hours.

Comments.

Carol Huggins, Hay Branch. We strongly support this motion and we would assume and hope that the Premier has already been advised by the department and Minister Mitchell, with the help of this new department, of the severe implications that this will have for rural based children and families who already have long days because of their school commitments.

A57. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW urges the Director, Educational Leadership of NSW Public Schools to ensure an interview process is undertaken when a TPI school's relieving principal's position is to be filled for longer than two terms.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

When a principal is away from their permanent position for whatever reason it can stretch to years in time. Obviously, the relieving principal is then a significant person in the school life of a child. Louth Branch feels that, when the relieving principal is in the situation of ‘filling in’ for longer than two terms, for their sake and the school families involved, the position of relieving principal should be opened for applications of expressions of interest and the formal interview process should be conducted. Anything less is creating an environment for confusion and awkwardness.

A58. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to provide single person accommodation at Louth Public School as they have done in other small remote schools.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

There is literally no affordable accommodation in Louth. So, when a casual teacher or visiting consultant needs to overnight it is not feasible for them to do so. There is no additional funding which allows for this

extra expense. This is yet another disincentive for principals as they cannot leave their position for any amount of time as the school would not be attended by a teacher.

A59. Louth

“That an ICPA-NSW representative meets annually with each Director, Educational Leadership overseeing rural and remote schools and that these meetings become embedded into the Directors’ calendars.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

When we have education issues in the bush, we are always aware of how fortunate we are to have ICPA-NSW as a voice through which we are able to lobby. However, this motion is really too old as it was first presented and carried with NSW Department of Education acclaim in 2011. It is a simple initiative to action. It has come to our attention however that new directors responsible for “ICPA-NSW areas” are sometimes aware of ICPA-NSW existence only after a conference when a motion that concerns their office has been carried. However, without ICPA-NSW asking annually for a meeting they currently do not happen. We feel it would be beneficial to both the community and Director, Educational Leadership, newly appointed or not, if they’d had the opportunity to meet with ICPA-NSW State Council and or members from their area and at least, heard of some of the issues ICPA-NSW is working towards.

Comments.

Claire Butler, ICPA-NSW Immediate Past President. I support this motion. Is there an opportunity that we could be able to be invited to attend some of the meetings of directors such as the conferences, so that we could actually, as a State Council, address them in room about how that we are in this together and we are working together to get things done? There is a perception out there that we agitate, and yes, we do, but everybody wants good and the directors want good. We want good. Maybe there is an opportunity for us to address them at one of the education conferences.

Deborah Nielsen, State Council. Yes Claire, we have actually talked about this and that is exactly what we would like to see because, what does happen in reality, is that the new principal comes, there is an issue, it comes to conference and the directors, if they are here, are having a lot put on their shoulders at that point. Wouldn’t it be better to meet, and, I believe, they do meet in January when they have a principals and directors meeting, we would really like someone to meet with them at that point so that they know that we are not exactly the ogres they might think we are.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. I can assure you that we are very strongly working with or every time we talk to the DELs and the EDs in school performance that we encourage them to meet with you and they have given us the response they welcome the opportunity to meet with the ICPA and the ICPA can contact the DELs directly to coordinate these meeting times. The DELs do visit the schools regularly throughout the year in person or virtually and I am aware that the Covid impacted the ability to have face-to-face visits in 2020/21. Jacynta, at our table, is also letting you know that you are not ogres and that you are on the same page and want the same thing. So, we are right there in that space with you.

Annabel Strachan, State Council. If we had that opportunity to meet in January it would be great because you could do it across the board rather than us having to contact someone. I'm sure you have guest speakers at those sorts of events so it could just be ICPA giving our little blurb and highlighting some of the issues that are happening in their space.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. We are happy to sort a meeting with the DELs and Eds and will take that up. There hasn't been a meeting for a few years in January for obvious reasons but we'll see how things go in the next twelve months and try and find a time which could be mutually agreeable to all.

A60. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Executive Director of Public Schools NSW ensures that the Director, Educational Leadership physically attend the rural, remote and very remote TPI schools in their area, at least twice a year.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

There are many reasons for which the Louth and Wanaaring school communities feel that the Director, Education Leadership should be on site at least twice a year. Most importantly they need to review the

teaching principal's program to be delivered and register of work which has been delivered to the students. The Director, Education Leadership then also needs to inspect and enjoy the students' completed work; whether it be a work in progress or published and ready for sharing. How else can the tax paying public be assured that the above is happening in a positive manner? We believe that the Director, Educational Leadership's physical presence will engender friendships and networking which will allow them to understand issues between teaching principals and their communities before problems arise. This level of support is necessary for the Teaching Principal who is working in professional peer isolation (even though they have access to online mentoring) and the communities they are serving who deserve the best education possible for their children.

Comments.

Nerida Healy, Wentworth Branch. We are fully supportive of this motion as we have several small schools in our area and the benefit to those students and the community of them actually coming out but not just engaging with the school principal. They have got to engage with the school parents and the community to truly get a regular understanding of what is happening in those communities.

Deborah Nielsen, State Council. As a teacher and I was a rural area relief teacher, I just wished and wished and wished a director would come and look, first of all, the programme for the day at the date, look at the children's books or ipads and see if those correlates. Look at the continuum. See that it was on task. Actually, thoroughly check every little bit to make sure that the children were getting their stage appropriate work in a timely fashion. I used to try and hint to the directors that perhaps they should do it and hint to the teacher that perhaps they should have it ready. It was just frustrating. It is really necessary because, working in isolation does allow for work to be done differently.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. The directors are part of the Performance Development Programme and do meet with principals multiple times during the year. In talking with the EDs in school performance who manage the schools, each of those executive directors do ask their directors to physically visit the school sites. I believe there has been a bit of a hold up obviously in the last couple of years but I believe that will start happening a lot more frequently.

A61. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the Director, Educational Leadership responsible for isolated schools, monitor their principals to ensure that the communities are being thoroughly included in any school decision process.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Currently the principal can access a series of training opportunities for themselves even though they are intending to transfer from their current school. Louth Branch certainly does not wish to hinder any in-servicing of staff if it is necessary for their jobs in our remote schools. Without a definite school program to follow or sometimes a casual teacher to deliver it, students can miss valuable learning days while their teaching principal is away. Other examples of lack of community consultation have resulted in issues with throwing out of and reordering school resources. We feel the Director, Educational Leadership should be aware that in some circumstances training needs to be moderated and we feel that safeguards still need to be put in place to prevent wastage of students’ school time and school resources. We ask therefore for the Director, Educational Leadership to help local people induct Principals with a strong sense of the need to collaborate.

A62. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW urges the NSW Department of Education to ensure that the Hub and Spoke Program position in rural communities is retained for TP1 and TP2 schools so that relief teaching staff can be accessed when needed.”

Moved by Ellen Walker, Rankins Springs Branch. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Our local schools currently have access to a Hub and Spoke Program teacher when covering teaching staff on leave or who are attending professional development. These positions are filled on a temporary basis and at the end of each contract the position is reviewed. School principals are continually fighting for the positions to continue as casual teacher availability is extremely low in rural areas. These positions are vital in ensuring schools remain operational in the event of an unexpected illness and/or leave. TP1 and TP2 schools have a low number of staff and do not have the ability to split classes in the event of an unexpected absence.

Comments.

Julia Mitchell, Department of Education. We are pleased to advise that the Hub and spoke Programme is being extended to approximately 190 schools across NSW in 2022. The Lake Cargelligo Hub and Spoke group which includes Rankins Springs, has engaged a new teacher in 2022 for three years. The other issues which have been identified are being worked on by our team.

A63. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister of Education and Early Childhood to allow TP1 & TP2 Principals more autonomy on how Routine Planned Maintenance funding is spent.”

Moved by Ellen Walker, Rankins Springs Branch. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Currently the Assets Management Unit identify what projects will be funded with the Routine Planned Maintenance funds whilst the Principals of TP1 & TP2 schools don't have any say in where the money will be spent in their school. Often the money could be better spent in other areas that would be of immediate benefit to the students and staff. Funds associated with Routine Planned Maintenance are for carpets, painting, adjusting doors and windows, cupboards and boundary fencing. A school where students of some of our members attend wanted to fix some old blinds in the staff room and place ceiling fans in some of the rooms. However, they could not use the money they had available to them in Routine Planned Maintenance fund as the items requested were classified as new fittings and fixtures. Improvements need to be included. ICPA-NSW State Council has completed a submission for the review into the Planning and Delivery of School Infrastructure in NSW where it is hoped that this issue will be addressed.

A64. Walgett

“That ICPA-NSW request that the NSW Department of Education include Walgett Community College on the list of the “Limited Program Schools” for Years 7 - 12 commencing 2022.”

Moved by Robin Beckwith, Walgett Branch. Seconded by Karen Ricardo, Walgett Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Walgett Community College is the only secondary school in Walgett. The issues at the Walgett Community College are well documented in the GIPA Freedom of Information records over the past few years. There is no denying that the truancy, vandalism of school property, physical and emotional abuse and high staff and principal turnover are directly contributing to the poor educational outcomes and mental health of these children who deserve better. Whilst we acknowledge that Walgett has complex, wider community issues that can't be resolved by the NSW Department of Education, they can address this issue. Allowing all families in Walgett, regardless of where they live within the Shire, to access Assistance for Isolated Children will allow a fairer and more equitable access to an education in a safe and nurturing environment which Walgett Community College cannot provide.

Comments.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. Our branch is the neighbouring branch to Walgett. I know that there is probably no one here from the Department, except one. These motions have been around for a long time and, honestly, we have seen no movement, nothing is even indicated, to help this town and these schools. As a neighbouring town we see a lot of the reflection it has on this town and families and families who are friends and so forth. It just a motion and I know that there is no one here to really comment on it but I want the floor to know that it is continually there and it is one issue of great concern and I know that David Cameron would certainly be aware that we really haven't seen any movement on it. I know we had Minister Mitchell last year and she started to tell us

that they would do something and I must have made a face because she asked for a minute to explain. But this is still dead I the water and we just need to keep it going so, thank you Walgett, for being persistent. That's what it is all about.

Libby McPhee, State Council. As a neighbouring branch, Collarenebri/Mungindi, we are on the Limited Schools Programme. What I wanted to say is that I am totally in support of you coming onto the Limited Schools Programme but there are other criteria and I wonder whether you actually wanted to amend your motion and add, "without any other criteria."? We can't get it either because of all the other things.

A65. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Water, Property and Housing and the Teacher Housing Authority of NSW to ensure that teacher housing is maintained to a high standard in very remote schools by insisting the relevant authorities respond immediately to any reasonable requests"

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Because of the isolation and distances from amenities and trades persons it is imperative that remote teacher housing be maintained at such a level that is comfortable, safe and an incentive for the principal and their family to make it a home throughout their time at the school. We believe that there should be consultation with the staff who are going to live there. For example, the Louth Public School house has been there 30 years and the recent upgrade did not include a provision for dishwasher. The installation of a new stove and oven is also necessary. The community is disgusted with the following and we would like to table those issues by way of explanation of our motion. The installation of a new tank – the original plan was to clean out the tank, however this did not happen due to safety concerns from the contractors and the tank is old and corroding inside. There needs to be a new tank installed and attached to the kitchen and bathroom. Since moving to Louth in April 2019, the current principal has had to purchase his family's drinking water as the water in the current tank is bore/river water and undrinkable. The external blinds which were on the house veranda originally have been removed. These are illegal due to the length of the cords and the community is wondering if they will be put back or replaced. The front of the house faces the west and is extremely hot in summer and requires blinds or something similar. The community would also like to have ceiling fans installed in the house, as this would assist with the cooling of the rooms. These issues are in themselves not hugely expensive and we urge an immediate response.

Comments.

Neridah Healy, Wentworth Branch. I can't believe that this is on our programme still. It is not a new issue and providing drinking water for your principal is a pretty basic necessity of life and I cannot believe that this issue was raised in the exact form last year yet we still haven't delivered drinking water to the principal.

A66. Louth

"That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to include an appropriate vehicle in the incentive package for the Louth and Wanaaring Principals."

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Louth Branch requests, as a matter of urgency, a car that could transport all of Louth Public School students to extra-curricular activities. For example, a car could transport to activities such as swimming carnivals, excursions and any cultural activities they may be invited to attend, other small cluster schools and the like. All these activities require a 200 km round trip on dirt roads. Students access to and participation in these activities is a crucial part of their development. Currently parents have to drive long distances requiring time away from work and other family commitments in order for their children to participate. Quite often students attending such events is logistically not possible. This means that Louth Public School students' schooling opportunities are inequitable. Vast distances and unsealed roads in these isolated communities coupled with the fact that there are no essential services, for example health, emergency services and telecommunications, means that the school and students are even more isolated without an appropriate vehicle. Obviously, it is an expensive decision to accept a position as an incoming Principal at a rural and remote small school as they need to already have or to buy an appropriate vehicle. Therefore, without a vehicle attached to the school, these very remote schools are at a disadvantage.

A67. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education ensure procedures are followed before sending a complaint to Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

We understand that once a complaint has gone to Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate the Department are unable to do anything about it. We believe before a complaint goes to Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate that the person about whom the complaint has been made is able to defend their actions and any other persons who can give information are asked before the person responsible sends it to Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate. This would alleviate the stress that occurs when waiting for long periods until the complaint process is dealt with by the Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate. Only when all the information has been gathered and the person responsible is not satisfied should it then be sent to Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

A68. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to request the Minister for Education to consider ways to condense tertiary training, such as at Marcus Oldham Agricultural College.”

Moved by Emma Boede, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Several member families at Louth have expressed concern about the time wasted when their young adult children are completing a tertiary qualification. Students who live in a very remote context such as Louth, Wanaaring, White Cliffs, Hungerford, and other places our members come from, by

necessity, relocate many kilometers away to access training and study. In most instances the training and study institutions' destinations are expensive places to live. Isolated students are entitled to access independent Youth Allowance once they have proven their independence. The Youth Allowance rates allow for rent and living costs, leaving very little if any at all once they are deducted. Accessing extra part time work prevents students from receiving the full Youth Allowance rate. Thus, it is often a frustrating time and the reality is that remote parents need to financially assist their children whereas peri-urban and urban families can arrange accommodation which is cheaper or free. These stresses could be alleviated if the courses were able to be completed in a shorter time frame, such as provided at Marcus Oldham. Louth Branch would like to see public universities considering offering that flexibility to condense their courses also. Louth Branch would like to see that remote students have access to an accommodation institution at which they study on a daily basis from nine to five (40 hours/week) so that they finish their courses at a speedier rate. We have mentioned Marcus Oldham as an exemplar of education delivery, not because of its agriculture courses, but rather because its model is based on high student contact hours, small class sizes and devoted lecturers. Another benefit would be students possibly returning in a shorter time frame to their remote communities with their skills.

Comments:

Louise Martin, ICPA Qld President. I'll just make a comment that in Queensland we have two agricultural colleges, Longreach and Emerald. They used to have long courses but when they started introducing compact courses the wheels fell off and now, they are closed.

Alana Moller, ICPA (Aust) President. I wanted to comment because the motion does ask for State Council to bring it to Federal Council. First to the Branch. You are welcome to bring it to Federal Conference and we welcome the motions that are brought there for us to deal with. We wanted to let you know that we are not entirely sure that it would be the Federal Minister's place to go to universities and tell them how they should run their courses because it will be dependent upon staffing and many other issues for those universities. It may be that the State Council could go to universities individually but you are welcome to bring it to Federal conference and if it **Carried.** today NSW council will bring it to us and we will see where we can go with it.

A69. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW works with universities to ensure that a higher level of support be delivered by university and tertiary educators.”

Moved by Emma Boede, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Louth Branch has family members who have struggled to receive enough help from their lecturers and tutors with their studies. This lack of support is compounded by the fact that they felt they would be penalized if they were too forthright about their needs not being met. As a result, we have several families whose children have withdrawn from courses. If a student is living within their family and extended friendship group, they have more chance to benefit by discussing the topics they are studying. For remote students this is not possible.

A70. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests University Administration Centre (UAC) to look at the way credits and advance standings can be transferred when a student moves from one university to another.”

Moved by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch. Seconded by Emma Boede, Louth Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Louth Branch asks for this because we believe the circumstance is unfair when a university degree course unit has been completed and passed that a student is required to re-do and pay again for that same unit.

A student completed two and half years of a primary school degree at Notre Dame University when, due to the expense of living in Sydney, he transferred to Charles Sturt University in Dubbo. He then discovered that only two units from Notre Dame were acknowledged in his primary school degree at Charles Sturt University. As a result, this student has ceased his training. These degree courses are both certified by the NSW Department of Education so we feel the lack of unit acknowledgment is an inequitable deterrent for students’ success in achieving qualifications and requiring more time to complete plus having to pay twice for the unit. Are these regulations serving for monetary gain or the altruistic education of young people? This seems especially counter-productive when one considers that some of these students are from isolated addresses who, when qualified, may return to rural and remote Australia to be employed in the hard-to-fill professional positions. Students everywhere change universities for a variety of reasons. A rural student has the added worry of course length when choosing because of always needing to factor in the cost of accommodation. The lack recognition of passed units is particularly frustrating for bush families.

Comments:

Tim Fletcher, State Council. I have spoken to UAC about this issue and they are hoping that, in the near future, to have a table that will show which universities are willing to do subject swaps. I guess part of it is the financial applications and getting students to stay at your university and spend their money there. Hopefully they are going to talk to universities to see which are willing to acknowledge courses from other universities.

A71. Monaro

“That ICPA-NSW seeks a greater partnership between universities and businesses to assist tertiary students find placements as part of their work/university load”

Moved by Pam Fletcher, Monaro Branch. Seconded by Tim Fletcher, State Council on behalf of Monaro Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

While there are some examples of partnerships existing between universities and employers more could be done. There are many examples where students need to work with an employer before they can graduate but there is often little assistance in finding such places for them. This situation is often worse for rural students as they may not have the necessary contacts to find placements. Greater partnerships between employers and universities would assist both the students and employers particularly in some health fields, engineering, and architecture.

Comments:

Libby McPhee, State Council. I wanted to support that motion in the fact that we just saw all that with the last harvest where we were not able to utilise backpacking staff bus there was an opportunity for us to use staff from universities, for example, Armidale, and that was utilised.

A72. Monaro

“That ICPA-NSW supports the Country University Centres in their requests for additional funding to sufficiently resource the increase in students attending one of their centres.”

Moved by Pam Fletcher, Monaro Branch. Seconded by Tim Fletcher, State Council on behalf of Monaro Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Further funding is required to cover all the additional students that have enrolled with Country University Centres over and above what was originally expected. For example, originally a target of 70 students in Broken Hill was set but now it has over 200, so that takes extra staff, technology hardware and campus space to support these students. There are also student increases across the seven other locations of Cooma, Griffith, Leeton, Narrabri, Moree, Grafton and Goulburn. Further investment is also sought for the funding for two new Centres in NSW – one in or around Deniliquin and one in or around Inverell (expected cost of \$3.2 million to establish and run two centres for two years until they get on their feet).

TRAVEL

A73. Broken Hill

“That ICPA-NSW requests Transport for NSW to improve their School Drive Subsidy program by appointing a rural and remote liaison officer and creating a direct contact line for rural and remote families.”

Moved by Sally Nevill, Broken Hill Branch. Seconded by Britt Anderson, Broken Hill Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

The current system is time consuming, frustrating and ineffective. We feel it could be streamlined and simplified to ensure accessibility for everyone. Many families are experiencing significant and reoccurring issues. A liaison officer and direct line could greatly assist families to resolve these issues.

Comments.

Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch. I want to support the motion and say that this role is currently actually been filled by two ICPA members who are volunteering their time and doing all the liaison on behalf of all of us. I think it is now timely for the Department actually put that person in place and relieve the two volunteers from doing that duty.

Pip Ryan, Hay Branch. We strongly support this motion as well.

Bree Wakefield, State Council. I am one of those parents who volunteer and have spent the last twelve helping countless families to get the benefits of the School Drive Subsidy and I feel that we really do need this liaison officer because, although we have helped many families, there are so many more out there who should be benefiting from this scheme.

Holly Davies, Transport for NSW. Transport for NSW feedback is the most efficient channel for parents to use for these enquiries regarding the School Drive Subsidy scheme. This ensures that all enquiries can be managed and responded to by the entire School Drive Subsidy team rather than one single point of contact and when someone wants to critically contact them, they are not available. The School Drive Subsidy feedback form can be found on Transport for NSW website as I'm sure you are all currently aware. We are happy to nominate two individuals from within that wider team who can focus directly on addressing the applications and queries that arise from the rural and remote families and who will better understand their individual needs.

Britt Anderson, Broken Hill Branch. I'd like to make the extra comment that, with the School Drive Subsidy, a simple phone number would be greatly appreciated. We can't even talk to people. We can email and hope for someone to get back. I currently have had something in for eight weeks and I have had no response and I think that is not good enough to be perfectly honest.

A74. **Broken Hill**

“That ICPA-NSW requests Transport for NSW to improve their School Drive Subsidy parent portal for rural and remote families.”

Moved by Sally Nevill, Broken Hill Branch. Seconded by Britt Anderson, Broken Hill Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Due to the poor functioning of the parent portal, many families are experiencing significant and reoccurring issues. Improvements to the parent portal would greatly assist families to resolve these issues.

Comments.

Holly Davies, Transport for NSW. Over the past twelve months Transport for NSW has made incremental improvements to the school bus drive parent portal based on the feedback received. We can report that Transport for NSW is currently working on a whole new platform for the School Drive Subsidy that will provide new features and functionality for a better, user-friendly customer experience. We are happy to include ICPA representatives at the appropriate time of development of this new platform.

A75. **Tibooburra/Milparinka**

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Minister for Transport ensure that all eligible preschool aged children, in particular those enrolled in a Distance Education Preschool, can access the Preschool Drive Subsidy with an unlimited cap on kilometres travelled, when fully implemented in 2023”.

Moved by Fiona Hotchin, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. Seconded by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch
Carried.

Explanation:

In the pilot program for 2022 the subsidy for kilometres travelled is capped at 50km a trip. This would only cover a fraction of the kilometres travelled by our members to access face to face distance education preschool days. Distance Education Preschool is the only available access to a preschool

program for the majority of the families in our area. For example, in 2021 a family in our area travelled 640km return trip to access a Distance Education face to face preschool day.

Claire Butler, ICPA-NSW Immediate Past President. I fully support this motion. There have been many conversations with the Department of Transport about that 50 kilometre cap and it was a very big concern of ours when we were negotiating and having those conversations with Transport for NSW and I'm just wondering, although I don't want to put Transport on the spot but maybe I do, if it is something that you are looking at? I know it is the pilot and you have the 50 kilometres cap, but is this something, when this programme is rolled out to everyone, that will be like the School Drive Subsidy and have unlimited kilometres?

Holly Davies, Transport for NSW. As you know this is in its infancy and this is the first year so our holding lines are very much that we will continue the evaluation of that. We are definitely hearing that feedback. It's currently sitting at that but we are not saying it will never change. We are definitely listening and it's in that evaluation phase.

A76. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW continue to work with Transport for NSW to evaluate bus runs on a case-by-case basis rather than set numbers in remote areas.”

Moved by Tegan Douglas, Wentworth Branch. Seconded by Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Bus runs and routes need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis so that the people making the decision are fully aware of the alternate and consequences that come with that decision. The understanding that this decision in remote areas means children will either attend a small school who would welcome the numbers or school of the air, is important when assessing a bus run. It is also important to consider the long-term numbers for a desired bus run.

Holly Davies, Transport for NSW. Transport for NSW considers all applications for new bus services in rural and regional NSW on a case-by-case basis. When reviewing the requests for the introduction of a new service Transport for NSW considers, among other things, whether the proposed bus service will travel by the most practicable route to the school, the number of children who will use the bus each morning, afternoon and weekly, expected future patronage numbers over the following five years, the nature of the roadways to be travelled and the safety of the bus stops. Noting where this is not feasible to provide public transport, the School Drive Subsidy is offered to those parents of eligible School Student Transport Scheme students. Transport for NSW has a contractual obligation to monitor the performance of all rural and regional bus services including the number of passengers using the service. In cases where passenger numbers fall below eight Transport for NSW may replace the service under review for a two-year period. However, the review of the service does not necessarily mean that a service will be withdrawn if numbers do not increase. During the review period Transport for NSW works closely with the services provider and the school communities to ensure that every avenue to maintain the service is investigated. Noting that during 2020 and 2021 due to the impacts of Covid no services were subjected to a viability review.

Claire Butler, ICPA-NSW Immediate Past President. Just referring to the number of eight for the bus run. I feel that it needs to be noted that there is a declining population in the bush and remote areas so that number eight may need to be reviewed. I also like to point out that now that many parents are able to work from home or they are working off farm so it makes it difficult if they lose their bus and

they have to fifty kilometres that way to drop a child at school and fifty kilometres the opposite direction to go to work then that has a real impact on the local economy as well.

Judy Sinclair-Newton, ICPA (Aust) Past President and Walgett Life Member. Just to continue on with what Claire was saying, often on Federal Council if we heard these issues and the work we have done around the AIC and the Distance Education payments and things, every time you take one of those bus runs away there are eight children, and I know it's tax payers' money, but that takes a family out of the workforce. You are looking at \$50,000 minimum per family if they have to go and do distance education.

While there is the Drive Subsidy available as Claire has already said, that is going to take a family out of the workforce so that needs to be considered by Transport for NSW. It is not just the cost to the taxpayer to fund these bus runs but it is also the impact it has on the whole communities and how many families taken out of the workforce.

Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch. Some of the smaller schools are really struggling when it comes to enrolment time and parents are looking for that commitment that they will have a bus close by and in our local area we have had several families who have chosen to travel further to a school to access a bus and it is putting a lot of pressure on keeping those small local schools open and their numbers are falling and getting closer to that number eight because the bus won't extend to pick up the children going to that school.

Tegan Douglas, Wentworth Branch. For specifically our run for 2017 it ran for one student and, obviously we need to get the fifteen to reinstate that and that will never happen but we currently have seven who are eligible for it at the moment. For our specific road is now bitumen and we have got all of the infrastructure in place so it is really disappointing that the fallback is on finance which is the information we have received directly from the Minister. We can't get that projection is there but we just can't get the fifteen to re-establish it and it was just a minor eighteen months, two-year gap between finishing and reinstating.

A77. **Broken Hill**

“That ICPA-NSW requests Transport for NSW to increase their allowable trips for term boarders.”

Moved by Sally Nevill, Broken Hill Branch. Seconded by Britt Anderson, Broken Hill Branch.
Carried.

Explanation:

Currently term boarders are allowed five trips per semester. This does not cover all trips that students are travelling to and from school each semester. Many boarding schools have two leave weekends per term and that is four each semester. This then does not allow trips to be claimed for beginning and end of term and any other trips that require a student to return home, for example, being unwell.

Comments.

Holly Davies, Transport for NSW. Transport for NSW can advise that the current School Boarder Rail Pass allows boarding school students to travel free of charge on regular timetabled existing public coach services for visits to and from home on weekends or during holidays when space is available. For term boarders this already includes the nine free trips per year. This allowance is already allowing for the eight journeys required to cover the inbound and outbound journeys for each school term.

Nerida Healey, Wentworth Branch. For a lot of these kids, public transport is actually not a viable option. I've done many trips in the last few weeks because my daughter has done back-to-back isolation where it has required me to go to Adelaide and I can guarantee you that there is no public transport from Adelaide to Pooncarie.

Britt Anderson, Broken Hill Branch. I can say the same for Broken Hill. There is very minimal opportunity for public transport from Broken Hill. I have brought my daughter home from Adelaide and returned by Angel Flight because of such restrictions.

Bree Wakefield, State Council. I know the issue is that the term boarder a term doesn't allow for exit weekends. In South Australia our kids have two weekends per term so we then have to have them classified as weekly boarders when they can actually claim twenty-two trips per term and that is in excess to what we actually need. I think it would be great for ICPA-NSW to work with Transport for NSW to redefine that and make it a clearer option for our families.

Kate Warby, ICPA-NSW President. Thank you for that comment, Bree but the motion was actually closed when Bree spoke to the floor.

A78. Namoi

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads contact Local Councils to ensure roads which are school bus routes be regularly maintained and edges mowed.”

Moved by Nicole Piper, Namoi Branch. Seconded by Laura Stalley State Council on behalf of Namoi Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

When edges of roads are overgrown, vision is reduced at school bus stops and generally leaving and entering a road. This is particularly important in busy times when there are more vehicles on the roads for example at harvesting time.

Comments.

David Butler, State Council. When we have met with the minister for Regional Transport and Roads, this one has always come up and he advises us to get our Branches to lobby their shires because the funding is there under that Fixing Local Roads Programme. If your engineer is smart enough, he will use the money to do your bus run routes. So, get your shires onto it.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. We raised this motion last year in Hay and were told by a representative from Transport for NSW to contact our council. I did that but still haven't heard. I would just like to note because of the archive records state that in 1975 there was a motion about this exact same thing.

Claire Butler, ICPA-NSW Immediate Past President. I thought we had a Council representative here in the room and so I was just wondering if it would add any further weight to this if, at the Western Division Conference, a motion was moved asking for more funding from the Transport for NSW or whether there is a way we can have a collaborative voice?

Mark Riley, General Manager, Bourke Council. I think the way to handle this would be to adopt your motion here and then specifically write to the Western Division Conference and I would be happy to talk in favour of that.

A79. Namoi

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads to provide extra funding to Local Councils for school bus route roads to be maintained, repaired and upgraded.”

Moved by Nicole Piper, Namoi Branch. Seconded by Laura Stalley State Council on behalf of Namoi Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Potholes, rough gravel roads, deterioration of tar road edges, and overgrown, tall grass edges all make it more dangerous for school buses to travel on.

Comments.

Libby McPhee, State Council. In support of the motion, it might be a collaborative approach if we, the people in this room, go back and talk to our local councils as well and try to set up road committees. We actually have one of those in the Moree Plains Shire and it is working exceptionally well. We have people who are experiencing these problems and bring those issues forward and I can say that our council is dealing with them as, I'm sure, yours would to.

Holly Davies, Transport for NSW. Just a further comment to say that Transport for NSW is very mindful that councils are your delegated legal road authorities for all roads within their local government area. Councils are responsible for prioritising their works based on local consultation to identify local needs. The NSW State Government administered by Transport for NSW provides funding to local councils via a number of funding streams for the upgrading of council selected local and regional road networks. The nomination of priority roads under these funding streams is at the discretion of the local council providing a priority road aligns with the funding guidelines. Transport for NSW currently administers twenty plus programmes alone within our western region to local councils with road funding assistance. These programmes include fixing local roads, regional road grants, repair programmes, fixing country bridges just to name a few. I can assure you that school bus routes are given a priority ranking in the assessment of these projects on road networks under the above programmes when they are submitted.

A80. Nyngan

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Transport provide tertiary students with a travel subsidy, similar to the School Drive Subsidy.”

Moved by Jodie Stewart, Nyngan Branch. Seconded by Laughlin Ross, Nyngan Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Providing a subsidy based on the distance from their home to the tertiary institution as a kilometre rate, assisting with travel costs at the start and end of each semester. Dependent tertiary students still live at home with their parents but are required to move away from home during semester time to access their tertiary education. With limited access to transport links in rural and remote NSW, it is an equity issue that these students have access to a travel allowance like the School Drive Subsidy for travel at the beginning and end of each semester. We are aware of the Fares Allowance but not all students meet the criteria to receive it.

Comments.

Holly Davies, Transport for NSW. Transport advises that this proposal has been duly considered previously by Transport for NSW and that the development of a private vehicle subsidy as proposed for tertiary students is currently not supported. Tertiary students continue to receive concession travel arrangements and these include concession fares on all public transport in NSW including NSW train link services. Introduction of a tertiary drive subsidy also sets a precedent for any tertiary students that travel to university by car. There are additional equity issues for students who live in Sydney metropolitan areas but attend universities in regional locations such as Armidale or Wagga Wagga or even interstate.

David Butler, State Council. Like these other motions Holly, they can't get the transport. All we are asking here is to change the criteria so we can get the fares allowance because I know a couple of mums here can't get it because their son worked for eighteen months, two years and got money. He had to travel a distance to university and because they had that money in the bank, they are not eligible for this but the kid who hasn't done any work can get the youth allowance, go to the pub and do what he wants. So, it is the criteria we are looking at.

Tanya Mitchell, State Council. I would like to support this motion. I have a couple of tertiary students who are unable to access any fares allowance because they are not eligible for Youth Allowance or any of the other criteria that is required. Sorry, if they are not eligible for Youth Allowance then they are not eligible for Fares Allowance.

Libby McPhee, State Council. I just wanted to make a point following Holly's point about Fares Allowance. We are talking about children who cannot access the train. No, you can't get the train from Louth. You can't get a train from Mungindi. That doesn't work for them. They have got to fly to Sydney with all their luggage and then get themselves to Armidale or where ever they are off to university. It just doesn't work talking about using the public train and that system. This is not what this is about. We are talking about wanting these kids to get some sort of assistance to get to Armidale if you live at Louth or Enngonia or wherever you live without having to fly with all your baggage all the way to Sydney and then getting on a train or flying to Armidale, or however you do it, and taking your worldly possessions, all your clothes and your computer and whatever else you need, for your time at university.

A81. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and Transport for NSW to lower the number of students required to start a non-commercial bus run as a matter of urgency.”

Moved by Ellen Walker, Rankins Springs Branch. Seconded by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Although a bus run may be maintained with eight students, 15 students are required to start a new bus run. This requirement means that an operator needs to purchase a Category II, which is a 14 - 24 Authorised Adult Seating Capacity (AASC – excluding the driver), bus to service the run. This would mean for example a Toyota coaster or similar bus. If the required number to commence the run was brought back to eight then a Category I, which is an 8 - 13AASC bus, is all that would be required, a Toyota commuter bus or similar. We understand that the larger bus allows for a significant growth of student numbers but would argue that the lower number of eight is hard enough to attain in most rural

and remote communities so that much room for growth is not necessary. Consideration of applications for commencement numbers lower than the requisite 15 on a case-by-case basis would be welcome and appreciated. All communities are different, and consideration of this should be taken into account. Perhaps it is time that Transport for NSW again looked at community owned bus runs where feasible, which would be less expensive to support.

Comments.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. Transport for NSW needs to take into consideration that rural areas population is declining and I think that needs to be considered and factored in to why we want numbers to start a bus run lowered. Everyone around here have all considered that numbers are going down and projected numbers don't look good and wherever I've been people are saying the same thing is happening in their area so that needs to be factored in and looked at because population is declining as sad as it is.

Lara Hawke, Walgett Branch. I just wonder with actual numbers, how many do we need to extend a bus run and also, in light of that, given we are emphasising the 600 hours of pre-school education, when will these pre-school kids be eligible for the School Drive Subsidy both on the bus and by parents driving them to the bus?

Gordon Dunlop, NSW/Vic Lone Members. I don't know how many years I've spoken to this motion. I started in 2003 and Kate would know from the archives because it went back before that. When I was president and we worked closely with the head of the Elizabeth Street office they told us that it was viable with eight. It is impossible with fifteen now with what they've been saying with the families moving from small communities to larger towns. We always said that if it is viable at eight why don't you start at eight? It is an access to education issue. It's so important for families to employ farm hands which they may be in a better position now than previous years and it just encourages their workers to access education. Hopefully the solution is for Transport for NSW to change their bus start up policy to eight.

David Butler, State Council. Just another comment on that number. We asked Bus NSW where fifteen came from and no one can tell us why that number was picked. It is like Gordon said, why not eight?

A82. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Transport to allow preschool children to travel on rural and remote bus runs in the year prior to commencing school enabling them to be included in the School Drive Subsidy and the School Students Transport Scheme for that year.”

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch. Seconded by Ellen Walker, Rankins Springs Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

The costs relating to getting preschool children to the service's front gate are a significant barrier for many rural and remote families. If the preschool children were included in the contract between the bus operator and Transport for NSW this would result in certainty of numbers and financial remuneration for the bus operator, as well as a definite seat for the child. For those families who do not have the option of putting their preschool child on the local school bus, the ability to receive the School Drive Subsidy to transport their child from home to preschool would be of great benefit. This would alleviate some of the costs relating to driving their own vehicle to transport the child to the preschool's front gate.

Comments.

Tegan Douglas, Wentworth Branch. That is exactly what we were hoping for with the inclusion of the preschool numbers and obviously with the reduction, we would have eleven students for a bus run if they allowed that. At the moment it is 140 kilometre in and out of town for myself but putting my children on a bus, if I got that, I would then be following it for my son and nephew to get there as well. So that would be appreciated.

Claire Butler, State Council. State Council has actually taken this many times to the Minister and agree with the motion. However, they do come back to us with some pretty strong language around child protection, supervision of children crossing roads, what preschool staff are going to be able to be on hand to take that child into the class room so it is a really complex and hard argument. We will keep pushing for that but that is the answer we get back from the Minister.

Lara Hawke, Walgett Branch. In note of what you have just said, our bus driver has been taking preschoolers on her bus for about twenty years now but recently, in the last few years, she has been asked to document what preschoolers she is taking. So, the Department is fully aware that she is taking preschoolers to and from preschool every day.

Jacynta Moylan, Department of Education. Just on a number of these motions in relation to transport and bus loads, I wanted to say that the Regional, Rural and Remote Policy Unit are working closely with Transport for NSW to provide an educational view on some of these motions.

Holly Davies, Transport for NSW. I would mainly like to speak to the Walgett concern because that is true. Individual bus operators may personally elect to allow unaccompanied preschool aged children on buses. Transport for NSW recommends that they first conduct a risk assessment in line with their operator accreditation requirements which would include consultation with the preschool provider and the parents. Transport for NSW understands that early childhood education and care providers must comply with strict regulations relating to the pick-up and drop-off of young children. I guess proceeding that is that right back at the beginning like Kate acknowledged, it is about the child protection laws for those under the school age needing to be accompanied to school by an adult.

MISCELLANEOUS

A83. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW requests NSW Minister for Customer Service to re-evaluate their restructure of the Creative Kids Voucher”

Moved by Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch. Seconded by Claire Butler, State council on behalf of Balranald Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Geographically isolated children were not considered in the restructure of the Service NSW Creative Kids Voucher program and are now possibly going to miss out on using this financially and educationally viable resource. The restructure of the Creative Kids Voucher program introduced from the 1st January 2022, is refocusing on encouraging real-time (live) activities. Art kit programs, pre-recorded video lessons and online programs that are not delivered in real-time are no longer eligible. The fact that the programs, craft/art kits can only be received along with online live lessons has some complications attached to these as some families have limited/varied internet access that at times can be non-existent making the access to these lessons difficult. If children were to travel to a physical

lesson this includes the numerous amounts of kilometres families would have to travel to access these programs, not all towns have access or provide these lessons meaning distances are extended creating a financial burden to families and time constraints on these families. In previous years the art and craft kits that were available through the Creative Kids Voucher program voucher system to registered businesses were very useful, especially as resources for home school learning programs and during the learning from home times faced by teachers, students and their parents during the pandemic. The Balranald Branch ask that children from rural and remote areas have some consideration included in the Creative Kids Voucher program and the delivery of the suggested art and creative lessons and how families can utilise these vouchers.

A84. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Minister for Customer Services and Service NSW adjust their criteria for accessing the Creative Kids Vouchers, to allow for equity of use for all students across the state.”

Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch requests conference permission to deem Motion A84 as covered by Motion A83.

Permission granted.

Explanation.

In late 2021 Service NSW changed the process in which a Creative Kids Voucher could be spent for school age children. Previously you could use your voucher for either a creative class in person (music lesson, art lesson etc.) or you could use the voucher to purchase specific art resource packs or purchase online prerecorded lessons to do at your own pleasure at home. The art packs have been a great addition to school rooms, as they have allowed children to have access to different art materials and techniques that they might have missed out on if they hadn't been able to access these from home. These materials are not commonly supplied by schools as art supplies.

A85. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW invites the NSW Minister for Customer Service and Service NSW consult with them when developing future initiatives to promote sports and creative arts.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Louth branch applauds the initiatives to promote sports and creative arts. We believe that consultation between ICPA-NSW, NSW Minister for Customer Service and Service NSW would ensure options are available which promote equitable access for rural and remote NSW students.

A86. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW insists the NSW Department of Education keep an updated and referenced file on all motions which ICPA-NSW brings to their attention, to ensure that despite staff changes, issues are smoothly resolved.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Explanation:

It has been the case that Louth branch has presented many motions which have been carried, agreed upon by the relevant authority and yet not actioned. This has involved more time and staff/departmental changes in the NSW Department of Education and thus necessitated the issue to be reexplained. Sometimes the new people have brought a new approach to the implementation of the agreed upon resolution and therefore different strictures have applied and had to be worked through. More time taken. We always try to offer a solution and believe that genuine and consistent consultation in the initial conversation in most circumstances is all that needs to be conducted. This has often not been possible as the new staff are unaware of the historical process and the detail which has been decided upon. Louth branch would like all staff to be aware of the background of issues which have been brought to their attention.

Comments.

Irene Lund, State Council. It is really the wording in this motion that I object to. “That ICPA-NSW *insists* the NSW Department of Education...” I like the last sentence in the explanation that says, “Louth Branch would like all staff to be aware of the background of issues.” We are an important lobby group. We have an important and valued connection with the Department of Education but I cannot see that we can “insist” anything with the Department.

Deborah Neilsen, State Council. I take on board what Irene has said. I worded that motion and it was because, in trying to get the early childhood story through the Early Childhood Directorate as it was then, I had to re-explain the situation every time in the bowels of their Directorate. I think that I would like a strong word to still be there. Perhaps the way forward now, David, is if we reword it? No, that will take too long. We won't do that. So, can I ask for a word change or amendment.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. I'd like to seek conference permission for a word amendment to Motion A86.

Conference permission granted for an amendment.

Motion A86 now reads:

“That ICPA-NSW asks the NSW Department of Education keep an updated and referenced file on all motions which ICPA-NSW brings to their attention, to ensure that despite staff changes, issues are smoothly resolved.”

Moved by Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch on behalf of Louth Branch. Seconded by Prue Ritchie, Bourke Branch on behalf of Louth Branch.

Carried.

David Butler, State Council Vice President. We need to resubmit Motion A86 because the seconder of this motion is not a delegate therefore the process is not valid so we need to go through the process again.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. I'd like to seek conference permission for a word amendment to Motion A86.

Conference permission granted for an amendment.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. The amendment is that “ICPA-NSW asks” and not “ICPA-NSW insists”.

Conference granted permission for the amendment.

Motion A86

“That ICPA-NSW asks the NSW Department of Education keep an updated and referenced file on all motions which ICPA-NSW brings to their attention, to ensure that despite staff changes, issues are smoothly resolved.”

Moved by Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. Seconded by Amanda Bell, Bourke Branch.

Carried.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. Could I just add here that it has actually been a day where we have witnessed where we have had to deal with some motions with changes, amendments and trying to work out the process. Some years it is just smooth running and nothing unusual and then we get hit with examples like today. So, yes it catches us in the back foot and everyone is scrambling to make sure that we are constitutionally correct because we do have to cross our T's and dot our I's. So, thank you for bearing with us but this is the process we have to abide by. Thank you.

A87. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Government ministers to not announce initiatives which they have actioned until those projects are ready to commence.”

Moved by Tegan Barton, Louth Branch. Seconded by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

The establishment of preschools by the NSW Department of Education and ECECD, in very remote NSW was announced at the 2017 ICPA-NSW State Conference in Mudgee. Louth branch applauds the implementation of distance education preschools at Ivanhoe. It is obviously disappointing and confusing when initiatives are announced by government departments as being actioned, when the actual plan is not implemented. Louth Branch would like any new initiatives to be 'ready to be begin' before they are announced.

SUPPLEMENTAY MOTIONS

S1. Broken Hill, Brewarrina, Wentworth, Tibooburra/Milparinka, Balranald, Louth and Hay Branches

“That ICPA-NSW works collaboratively with the NSW Department of Education to undertake a review into Distance Education, to ensure that fulltime equivalent students are receiving quality educational outcomes across all areas.”

Moved by Nerida Healy, Wentworth Branch. Seconded by Tegan Douglas, Wentworth Branch.

Carried

Explanations:

Tegan Douglas, Wentworth Branch. With COVID-19 forcing many students across Australia and the world to adapt quickly to online learning, schools were forced to explore options to deliver education to their students. Several studies have since been completed looking at processes and platforms that

delivered the best outcome and what effect this style of learning had on both student and teachers. With the benefit of quality data and research, it is now timely that we complete a review of Distance Education and School of the Air so that we ensure these findings are incorporated in the delivery of this style of education.

Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. Being the most remote branch, distance education is often our only option of public education for our children. Many of our members currently are educating children or have themselves been educated through School of the Air or Distance Education. With the introduction of NBN SkyMuster the opportunities to apply new and dynamic approaches for the different processes, teaching methods, platforms and systems used, seem endless. One of the upsides is that we have now been provided with great research to show, what it actually is that provides students with the best outcomes from remote learning. This is the perfect opportunity to do a review of distance education as a whole to find out what's working or not or what's needed. Giving the understanding of the contextual factors, considering the learners perspective and how to help provide a strong social presence for learners to stay in touch. We want to ensure evidence-based practise for distance education learning is implemented in a practical, compelling and timely manner and always, with the students at its heart.

Nikki Pearce, Brewarrina Branch. We support a review into distance education from preschool to Year 12. We believe that this is a timely review which should involve all stakeholders including the students. We feel that there needs to be a timeline incorporated as reviews can be a lengthy process and results reported to all stakeholders. The review should include how subjects are taught either by a teacher, online, via satellite lessons to the set work children complete at home (include how the delivery of lessons for core subjects should be taught) and ensuring that children are accessing excursions/classrooms/mini school. This will assess if the learning outcomes have been met and how all stakeholders can improve the outcomes for these children. Case Studies have been given to ICPA-NSW.

Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch. Louth branch believes that there needs to be a review into how distance education is delivered as there are multiple, ongoing issues which are occurring across several distance education centres. We would like to see the following reviewed and implemented:

- Better adoption and usage of technology from Preschool to Year 12, to be brought in to line with how other schools and businesses are progressively using it.
- Increase in the number of lessons delivered online with teachers.
- Immediate/relevant feedback provided by teachers (in addition to supervisors).
- Consistent and more frequent assessment across KLAs with results to be reported back to supervisors.
- Personalised and targeted individual learning plans implemented and continually reviewed/updated.
- Improved engagement with students – so that students want to learn as it is a difficult learning environment as is.
- More graduate teachers.
- Regular teacher/principal evaluation against KPIs including programming/ feedback checks.
- Fixed term contracts for teachers/principals, to return to mainstream schools at the end of tenure.
- Sharing of resources, programs, and assessments across centres.

Juarne Reynolds, Broken Hill Branch. I second this motion. Many of our branch members have been involved in distance education for more than a decade. During this time there has been minimal changes to the programs and their delivery, processes and technology. As many schools moved to remote learning during the time of COVID-19 we saw various means of delivering education through modern technologies such as Zoom and Teams. Since COVID-19, learning attitudes and styles have

changed and many face-to-face schools are offering Distance Education, using a different, modern approach for their program delivery. For example, students participate in daily four-hour face-to-face sessions, which are completed all online in a Zoom group with other distance education students and their teacher. The students are communicating with their teacher during this time and receiving real time feedback. For some students this has been the first time in their schooling that they have received immediate feedback, which is such an instrumental part of the learning process. This highlights a gap in the current technology, as it does not allow for sufficient real time feedback and assessment, due to the limited face-to-face time NSW Department of Education distance education students have with their teacher. Increased face to face learning time with their teacher enables the teacher to explicitly teach and deliver exactly what is needed. The teachers are witnessing the student's processes as they learn. Current assessment in NSW Department of Education, distance education relies on teachers assessing the product and subjective feedback from the supervisor. Current NSW Department of Education distance education processes require untrained supervisors to deliver the curriculum as well as providing feedback to students and teachers, this can lead to misinterpretation of what needs to be delivered and the feedback given by supervisors may lead students in the wrong direction. Face-to-face time online also allows for age/stage appropriate teaching, which can be difficult for many home supervisors supervising multistage schoolrooms in distance education settings. Supervisors regularly report that students find it hard to engage without daily interaction with teachers and peers, due to limitations of current technology used by NSW Department of Education distance education schools. Lessons do not run fluidly and there are many disruptions. There is also nowhere near enough satellite time available to teachers using current technology. Students are using modern technologies to interact with their peers and it is frustrating for them that their education cannot be delivered the same way. It has been proven that distance education can be delivered in a way that is more effective and efficient using better technology and programs. Modern technology enables increased face-to-face teaching, leading to more engagement, appropriate feedback and improved learning outcomes. A review into current NSW Department of Education distance education delivery is well overdue.

Pip Ryan, Hay Branch. We strongly support this motion. I finished our children a couple of years ago with School of the Air and so I am familiar with the challenges of DE. I see a review as a wonderful opportunity to create a universal standard across all the DE centres to encourage ongoing interaction between the DE centres with particular programming to ensure the use and revision of technology is acceptable. For example, the necessity for one computer per student.

Kirsty Wilson, Balranald Branch. We strongly support this motion.

Ben Ballard, Department of Education. While there aren't any direct plans for a review of distance education, we are happy to take that on notice and come back to you with a response.

Laura Stalley, State Council. In terms of this motion, we have had lots of comments from distance education families in regards to the education and wanting improvements and working collaboratively with the schools. I think that this is a timely review and, as Ben mentioned, there is also the new team, Parent Experience, so, hopefully along with that team and the Department of Education, we will endeavour to review and make changes.

Lindy Kitto, NSW/Vic Lone Member, Life Member. I notice that this motion has been seconded twice and I think that needs to be addressed because I believe it is not constitutional.

Kate Warby, ICPA-NSW President. We have had a slight error in the programme so we are just going to ask if there can be a retraction of the seconding of the motion.

Juarne Reynolds, Broken Hill Branch. I hereby retract my seconding of motion S1.

S2. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Department of Education to ensure that distance education schools are added to the Aurora College list of schools with opportunity classes so that academically gifted Stage III distance education students have access to their program.”

Moved by Tegan Douglas, Wentworth Branch. Seconded by Nerida Healy, Wentworth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

Currently distance education students are ineligible to access the Aurora College Opportunity Class Program for gifted and talented students. The current technology provisions for distance education schools, both internet and hardware, are insufficient for the requirements of Aurora College. The rollout of the NBN SkyMuster and updated hardware into distance education home sites is scheduled for and will be completed by the end 2022 and therefore distance education students will be able to participate in the Opportunity Class Program. As applications close at the beginning of May for 2023 enrolment, it is a matter of urgency that distance education schools are added to the list, so that distance education students are not disadvantaged in the future.

Comments.

Rosalind Walsh, Department of Education. This has been actioned and Opportunity Class Programme registrations will commence at the end of April. That is a period of about one month until it is open and distance education has been added to the list of home schools.

Laura Stalley, State Council. It is really refreshing to hear you say that and I’m glad that you said that on record and that you have said it here because last year we were told that families were able to register as we were getting the new technology that would enable them to apply this year and here were families that did miss out on that opportunity for this year. So having you say that on record means that, hopefully, NBN will be installed in our class rooms and children won’t continue to miss out. I think also, that for the child that did miss out then maybe there are options and availabilities for them to participate next year and I think that should be very much considered to ensure that these distance education children aren’t continually missing out because, as Ben said, children should not be missing out because of their location or where they live.

S3. Moree

“That ICPA Moree Branch host the 2023 Annual State Conference in Moree on the 15th and 16th March 2023.”

Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch on behalf of Moree Branch. I would like to request a word change.

Conference permission for word change granted.

Motion S3. now reads:

“That ICPA Moree Branch host the 2023 Annual State Conference in Moree on a date to be advised.”

Moved by Kerrie Johnston, Rankins Springs Branch on behalf of Moree Branch. Seconded by Nicole Piper, Namoi Branch on behalf of Moree Branch.

Carried.

FLOOR MOTIONS

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Government urgently reviews the current AIC Statement of Support criteria for schools such as Walgett to move from a largely school subject choice focus of assessment for funding, to an assessment of a much broader criteria of special circumstances educational disadvantage.”

David Butler, State Council Vice President. I seek conference permission to accept this motion for debate.

Permission granted.

F1. Walgett

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the NSW Government urgently reviews the current AIC Statement of Support criteria for schools such as Walgett to move from a largely school subject choice focus of assessment for funding, to an assessment of a much broader criteria of special circumstances educational disadvantage.”

Moved by Robin Beckwith, Walgett Branch. Seconded by Tanya Mitchell, State Council.

Carried.

Explanation:

Karen Ricardo, Walgett Branch. In considering requests for a Statement of Support the AIC criteria require NSW Department of Education to investigate one of three circumstances. In this instance we would be highlighting whether there is another suitable school in the district that students can attend daily. There has never been a more pertinent time in our community while we all experience the chronic teacher shortages across the state to address the educational disadvantages of rural and remote students. Some very remote and socially isolated. Why are these students still being overlooked? Why has the AIC policy and guidelines, Statement of Support not been changed over time to address obvious educational inequalities in this region? The students in the most educationally disadvantaged areas of this state are still unable to access the AIC. The AIC being a small contribution to the enormous costs of education. One example of the many studies done on Educational Disadvantage, real educational disadvantage, that could be used in an AIC Assessment is a particular Study done by Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre Study, “Educate Australia Fair”, June 2017. To quote Dr Allan Duncan in his Foreword.

‘There are many indicators that can be used to measure education access, participation and outcomes, but no one indicator can show the full picture. Through the new BCEC Educational Disadvantage Index, we pull together data from a wide range of sources, to deliver a comprehensive analysis of education inequality across Australia. We profile those areas of the country that aren’t providing fair access to educational opportunity for our youngest Australians and see how this potentially exacerbates participation in education in the later stages of secondary and into tertiary education.’

In this study they included the ten areas that suffered the most educational disadvantage.

1. Far West
2. Walgett - Lightning Ridge
3. Bourke - Brewarrina.

All students from these particular areas, some very sparsely populated, deserve the opportunity for a fair and equitable education. By offering these students some assistance in making them all eligible for the AIC, is a step forward in addressing their very real educational disadvantages and the social isolation they experience simply defined by the postcode in which they live.

“That ICPA-NSW strongly urges the NSW Department of Education to prioritise new distance education families in the technology update.”

David Butler, State Council Vice President. I seek conference permission to accept this motion for debate.

Permission granted.

F2. Tibooburra/Milparinka

“That ICPA-NSW strongly urges the NSW Department of Education to prioritise new distance education families in the technology update.”

Moved by Fiona Hotchin, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch. Seconded by Bernadette Maxwell, Tibooburra/Milparinka Branch

Carried

Explanation:

At the distance education session prior to conference, we were made aware that there is currently no priority list for the installation of technology for home isolated families. Currently new families at School of the Air, Broken Hill, had to use and purchase their own technology such as laptops, microphones, cameras and printers. They use this hardware with their own personal internet connections. The cost of this is born by each family. Each family has taken this on board so that their children are not left behind and can access the daily satellite lessons. However, the bring your own technology has a multitude of compatibility issues with the Department of Education’s systems. For example, the kindergarten phonics lessons. The students can’t clearly hear their teacher enunciate the new sounds being taught. The teacher can’t hear the student enunciate the sounds they are being taught and, in fact, can only have one student microphone on at any one time. These issues have a huge daily impact on every satellite lesson. This lack of access to technology is detrimentally affecting the building blocks of these student’s’ education. We have been informed that the technology will be rolled out by December 2022. This means a whole kindergarten cohort will potentially be disadvantaged and miss out. It is a matter of urgency that these families have Department of Education technology installed.

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education work on solutions to allow distance education families to access the hostel accommodation at the Dubbo Distance Education School site.”

David Butler, State Council Vice President. I seek conference permission to accept this motion for debate.

Permission granted.

F3. Broken Hill

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education work on solutions to allow distance education families to access the hostel accommodation at the Dubbo Distance Education School site.”

Moved by Suzanah Palmer, Broken Hill Branch. Seconded by Juarne Reynolds, Broken Hill Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

The dubbo School of Distance Education hostel was built for the purpose of helping families have affordable accommodation to stay at when they come residential camps, athletics carnivals and swimming carnivals. It has been increasingly difficult for families to be able to stay at the campus if there are enough families attending these events. At times there hasn't been the required number of families to stay at the hostel which has seen some of these family's camp in swags and tents in a caravan park.

“That ICPA-NSW urge Telstra to continue to provide and maintain a landline service to the Louth Public School and local community.”

David Butler, State Council Vice President. I seek conference permission to accept this motion for debate.

Permission granted.

F4. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW urge Telstra to continue to provide and maintain a landline service to the Louth Public School and local community.”

Moved by Rachael Nielsen, Louth Branch. Seconded by Libby McPhee, State Council on behalf of Louth Branch.

Carried.

Explanation:

The Louth Public School and community have ongoing issues with their land line service. Louth Branch believes it is crucial for the land line service to be maintained and continued as a matter of safety due to our isolation. We are aware of the USO in place until 2032.

Kate Treweeke, Lightning Ridge/Goodooga Branch. I'm against this motion mainly on technicality. This motion has already been presented as Motion A16 and it could have been presented just asking for a word change. Floor motions are presented when something has come up out of discussion over the last two days and is almost as a sideline to it. This is almost reading that the branch would have as in the Agenda Motions it asked for a word change. I totally agree with what the intent is but under this technicality I can't agree.

David Butler, State Council Vice President. This motion is “to provide and maintain a landline service” whilst the other one was “to address the lack of a consistent mobile and landline service”. However, we will vote on this motion F4.

Carried.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
of the
**ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH
WALES INCORPORATED**

Convened at 8.15 am on Thursday, 31st March 2022

at

**Full Gospel Family Fellowship Church,
25-29 Short Street,
BOURKE NSW 2840**

Good morning, everyone, my name is Deborah Castle and I am the Secretary of ICPA-NSW. Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW, 31st March 2022.

Apologies: The apologies as posted in conference room.

Motion 01.03.22 *“That the apologies received, be accepted.”*

Moved: Deb Castle

Seconded: Tanya Mitchell

Carried

Adoption of the Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting:

Motion 02.03.22 *“That the minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting as circulated electronically be accepted as a true and accurate record.”*

Moved: Deb Castle

Seconded: Tanya Mitchell

Carried

Business arising from the Minutes: Nil

Correspondence: Nil

President. Mrs Kate Warby.

Good morning and welcome all to the 2020 AGM for the Isolated Children's Parents' Association. I hope everyone had a fabulous night last night. So, without any further ado I will ask Deb Castle, our secretary, to present her report.

REPORTS

Secretary Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present my last Secretary's Report.

I feel privileged to have been a part of this wonderful and passionate group of people. Although I was somewhat coerced into the Secretary role by Claire Butler and Helen Ponder after quite a lot of wine at the conference dinner the night before the AGM in 2019, I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on State Council. I have learned so much about other people's lives and what they go through to enable them to access education for their children.

I feel I have been a part of the ICPA family since the Rankins Springs branch formed in 1988, as my mother Jenny Caughey was an instigator in starting this branch up. I remember when I was having my first child Emma, Mum was in Port Macquarie at the ICPA-NSW State Conference, every morning she would ring from a phone box to check on me and see if I was still all together. When she got word that I had had the baby she was back in the phone box with her friend Penny crying on the phone, she could not get home fast enough to see her first grandchild. When mum returned from the conference,

she got to the hospital in rest time and was asked to leave but she said she was not leaving and she would just sit here and hold the baby and not speak, this was a big thing for my mum not speaking! My daughter was born on the same day as one of our ICPA-NSW Life Members, so I feel that me being here on state council was probably inevitable.

ICPA-NSW managed to get both Mini and Main deputations in this year, Shennah and I volunteered to go to Sydney for Mini Deputation in June where we met with the Minister for Education Sarah Mitchell and Minister for Regional Women and Youth Bronnie Taylor, Policy Officer from Minister Toole's office, Transport NSW and Policy officers from Early Childhood Education where we had Deborah Nielsen phone in on the meeting. It was a whirl wind of a day. When we got home, we were both plunged into self-isolation for two weeks due to a positive case being at Parliament house and anyone who had travelled to Sydney from that day we were there!

Main Deputation was a challenge, but we managed to have a handful of State councillors in Hay together as the rest of our councillors were in red zones and unable to travel due to COVID restrictions. These state councillors were all able to join the meetings due to them being zoom meetings. We had the opportunity to use the new Hay TAFE complex as our base which is an extraordinary complex with technology in abundance, this worked very well and we were able to have 3 zoom stations set up for me to organise 22 zoom meetings over two days with ministers, stakeholders, and the Governor of NSW. A few Ministers were unable to make meetings due to changing circumstances with the pandemic and a parliamentary reshuffle, but they were rescheduled for a later time. Some key points that were discussed at these meetings were seatbelts on buses, school drive subsidy for pre-schoolers, preschools in remote areas, teacher incentives, distance education, state borders and boarders, better connectivity in schools and distance education schoolrooms. All our meetings were well received, and we took a lot away from the meetings.

All motions that are carried at conference are our reason for Mini and Main deputations. This is the chance when we get to advocate on your behalf. As you heard yesterday and will hear today from our portfolio holders, things are moving along with some of our motions - for example our last remaining satellite schools have switched over to fibre optic internet early this year this is a great achievement from ICPA.

I would like to conclude in thanking my fellow state councillors in helping and supporting me these past 3 years in my role as State Secretary. I will be forever grateful for the friendships I have made, the interesting and influential people I have met. ICPA is a great organisation made up of such dedicated and passionate people which is why this organisation works so well in advocating for all its members.

I leave you with this quote from Alice Morse Earle- *"Every day may not be good....but there's something good in everyday"*

Deborah Castle
ICPA-NSW Secretary

Motion 03.03.22 *"That the Secretary's Report be accepted."*

Moved: Deb Castle

Seconded: Laura Stalley

Carried

Treasurer's Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Treasurer's Report for the 2021 Financial Year.

These audited financial statements, with accompanying auditor's report, have been prepared by Colin Harris of Audit & Risk Solutions Pty Ltd.

Statement of Income and Expenditure:

2021 saw the appointment of a new audit company. During 2021, ICPA-NSW Membership Officer-Irene Lund and I met with Colin Harris from Audit & Risk Solutions in Wagga Wagga. We discussed the ongoing financial reporting of ICPA-NSW and made some changes in the accounting categories to better comply with audit requirements. These changes enable us to refine the categorization of the income and expenses. Over time, we envisage that the financial data will be simpler to enter and audit.

As we implement these changes there will be several entries on the Income and Expenses summaries that pertain to the same item. These occur as we move a category from one sub heading to another. Please feel free to ask for further explanation of the accounts should you want additional information.

- **Memberships:** The amount of \$15,901 is the total of all branch membership payments forwarded to ICPA-NSW in the 2021 year. Additional Membership income was received through the online PayPal payment method and is shown under the heading of NSW Membership Subscription.
- **Donations:** Included in this amount are member donations, branch donations and a conference donation.
- **Government Grants:** The Educational Support Grant (ESG) for the 2021/22 financial year was received in October. The NSW Department of Education is currently negotiating a partnership agreement with ICPA-NSW and this will replace the ESG.
- **Funds Held in Trust:** \$2908.39 is being held in trust by ICPA-NSW for Cobar Branch and an additional \$4985.04 is being held in trust by Lone Members for Warrumbungle Branch. These funds will be absorbed by State Council later this year if the branches do not reform.
- **Income:** Total Income for the 2021 financial year was \$174,369. This amount included the ICPA-NSW Conference Account. The inclusion of this account enables the hosting branch to issue tax invoices for attending organisations and ensures that GST is applied to the revenue raised within this account.
Income generated from advertising in Top Wire has increased to \$8,963. Advertising has proven to be very successful and is only available to our School Members. Also noted in the Income category is the FRRR Grant. This Grant was received for the Moree Conference and was carried over to the Hay conference in 2021. This entry is an audit category correction, and it is countered in the Expenses under Uncategorized Expenses.
- **Expenditure:** Total expenditure for the 2021 year was \$193,151. This expenditure is significantly higher than 2020 due to the incorporation of the ICPA-NSW Conference Account. This can be seen under the category- State Conference. Additionally, the Lone Members Account is incorporated within the accounting software and the Lone Members Officer has access to the QuickBooks account. Due to the rearrangement of the financial reporting, there has been an increase in bank fees due to the PayPal online payment system.

Whilst the 2021 Federal Conference was largely attended online, ICPA-NSW did manage to send our President to Longreach. This was a costly exercise but having a physical representation at the conference was considered a valuable exercise.

Subscriptions to Zoom and Dropbox have been continued and these have enabled the continuation of virtual meetings.

Top Wire costs have remained stable, both for the printing and postage and the income received from advertising in the November edition has enabled the purchasing of Calendars for our members. This is listed in the Advertising and Promotional Category.

During 2021, ICPA-NSW saw a need for motivational workshops to assist our senior school students and their parents, many who had expressed concerns about student engagement during Covid-19 lockdowns. Two online workshops were presented by Danielle Miller from Inlumino Enterprises in early October and these totaled \$5000, this cost is located within Uncategorized Expenses.

State Council's meeting expenses have remained low again this year with many meetings attended via video link and teleconference instead of face to face. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, State Councillors were again given the option of single accommodation during this reporting period.

The result for the 2021 financial year is a loss of \$18,782.

Assets and Liabilities Statement:

The overall equity position of ICPA-NSW for 2021 is as follows:

- **Assets:** The Unexpended Donation Account has not been utilised this financial year, the balance remains unchanged.
- **Plant & Equipment:** One additional printer was purchased this financial year to replace the secretary's printer.

Merchandise:

Merchandise sales were primarily from the 2021 Hay Conference sales and totalled \$1,427. No sales were made at Federal Conference as we were not able to attend due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. Many thanks to David Shrimpton who has again managed the merchandise and is in the process of replenishing the stock items.

Lone Members:

The Lone Members Officer, Irene Lund has again managed her large membership providing regular newsletters and updates to the members. Sadly, Irene is stepping away from this role and I am sure that all Lone Members will agree that she will be missed. Lone Members ended the 2021 year with 136 memberships. Irene has also held the role of Membership officer and her ability to manage the vast number of memberships has enabled me to focus on the financial role. Due to the inclusion of the Lone Members Account within the ICPA-NSW accounting software, Irene has access to all ICPA-NSW Accounts, and this ensures transparency.

Sponsorship:

ICPA-NSW is very appreciative of the continued support of our sponsors. Telstra through a

community partnership agreement has provided \$5000 in sponsorship. Additionally, the Australian Boarding Schools Association and The Boarding School Expo have provided sponsorship, either monetary or in kind. Donations from individual members and branches are steady and these can be made through the online membership renewal. Many families have chosen to direct their donation to either their Branch or ICPA-NSW. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our sponsors and donors, your generosity helps make our conferences affordable for all members.

Membership:

At the end of the 2021 membership year, ICPA-NSW had 25 financial branches (not including Lone Members), and five branches in recess. Membership numbers for 2021 are included in the Membership Officer Report. The 2022 memberships are still trickling in slowly. I would encourage members to use the online portal when paying your membership subs. This option reduces the workload of the Branch Treasurer and ensures your payment is received promptly. Holding your Branch AGM in October or early November is essential so that branch fees can be set prior to the opening of the 2023 memberships in mid November. This also enables memberships to be forwarded by the due date. This has been problematic again this year with many branches not holding their AGM until early this year.

To my fellow State Councillors, thank you, 2021 was again a year of change in which we have all had to grow and adapt. Special thanks to the following:

Kerrie Johnston - ICPA-NSW is blessed to have such a competent, hardworking TopWire editor. She continues to produce a top-quality magazine whilst quietly working away. Thank you, Kerrie.
David Shrimpton - the ICPA-NSW Merchandise sales are a great way to promote our organisation. David has again done a great job in selling our stock and managing the items for sale. Thank you.
Irene Lund - I don't think the value of having another set of eyes can be overstated. Irene is that set of eyes! Her commitment and energy often surpass my own and she is always ready to gently remind me of a task overlooked. In addition, she is a great travelling partner. I can't thank Irene enough for her assistance and help this year. A special thank also to Andrew for his patience with the ICPA life.
Jane O'Brien - our most esteemed Federal Membership officer has again done a fantastic job. It is inspiring to see the amount of work this lady can get through! Her guidance has been ongoing and in much appreciated.

The many Branch Treasurers - I would name you individually but, by now, I think the timer will be ringing! To each of you, thank you. You have made the job of State Treasurer enjoyable. Managing any group of people, particularly when you need to get money out of them is difficult, I am thankful that you have all shown patience with me and dedication to getting the job done.

In conclusion, at this, the ICPA-NSW 50th Annual Conference, I would like to thank our forebears who paved the way. The first NSW Treasurer Mrs Joyce Pratten held the position of Secretary/Treasurer from the 15th of April 1972 until the 1st of November 1973 when she was replaced by Mrs Marion Ward who held the treasurer's role until 1978. Mrs Pratten later went on to be the first recipient of an ICPA-NSW Life Membership. Looking through the records held online, it is interesting to note that the accounting practices have continued to develop and change over time. I wonder what

Mrs Pratten and Mrs Ward would make of QuickBooks and a computer. Could they have imagined the future they ensured for our children when they took on their roles all those years ago? I hope so! I hereby request that this report and the audited financial statements be accepted. I also recommend that the state component of a Branch Family membership remain at \$18.00 for the 2022 membership year.

Shennah Joiner.
Treasurer.

Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN 68 132 394 867

Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2021



Audit & Risk Solutions Pty Ltd

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Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

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Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN 68 132 394 867

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Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN 68 132 394 867

Statement of Profit & Loss & Other Comprehensive Income for the period ending 31 December 2021

Notes	2021 \$	2020 \$
Grants	98,099	95,247
Conference Income	25,468	31,426
Memberships	15,901	11,573
Other Income	14,556	24,364
Sales	13,727	-
Subscriptions	6,618	-
Gross Profit	174,369	162,610
Administration Expenses	(175,323)	(90,382)
Selling Expenses	(3,185)	(4,595)
Marketing	(14,643)	(14,194)
Operating profit (deficit) before income tax	(18,782)	53,439
Other comprehensive income:		
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year	(18,782)	53,439

The above statement of income and expenditure should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN 68 132 394 867

Statement of Financial Position

as at 31 December 2021

	Notes	2021 \$	2020 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	206,405	233,192
Trade and other receivables	5	1,426	910
Inventories	6	5,325	5,325
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		213,156	239,427
NON CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	7	2,421	3,223
TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSETS		2,421	3,223
TOTAL ASSETS		215,577	242,650
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	8	32,378	36,753
Current tax liabilities	9	-	3,916
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		32,378	40,669
TOTAL LIABILITIES		32,378	40,669
NET ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)		183,199	201,981
EQUITY			
Opening Balance		201,981	148,542
Accumulated profits / (losses)		(18,782)	53,439
TOTAL EQUITY		183,199	201,981

The above statement of financial position should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN 68 132 394 867

Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended 31 December 2021

	Notes	2021 \$	2020 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from customers		191,290	177,896
Payments to Suppliers and employees		(217,442)	(120,828)
Interest received		-	59
NET CASH INFLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	14	(26,152)	57,127
CASH FLOWS USED IN INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Payments for property, plant and equipment		(635)	(4,298)
NET CASH FLOWS USED IN INVESTING ACTIVITIES		(635)	(4,298)
CASH FLOWS USED IN FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Repayment of Borrowings		-	-
NET CASH FLOWS USED IN FINANCING ACTIVITIES		-	-
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		(26,787)	52,829
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		233,192	180,363
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT END OF PERIOD		206,405	233,192

The above statement of cash flow should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN 68 132 394 867

Statement of Equity

For the year ended 31 December 2021

	Retained Profits	Total
	\$	\$
Net Profit for the year	53,440	53,440
Balance at 31 Dec 2020	201,981	201,981
Net Loss for the year	(18,782)	(18,782)
Balance at 31 Dec 2021	183,199	183,199

The above statement of changes of equity should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN 68 132 394 867

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 December 2021

Note 1: Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

This financial report is a general-purpose financial report prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporations Act of New South Wales. The committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity. The financial report has been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical costs and does not take into account changing money values or, except where specifically stated, current valuations of non-current assets.

The following significant accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless otherwise stated, have been adopted in the preparation of this financial report.

(a) Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.

(b) Revenue and Other Income

Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable after taking into account any trade discounts and volume rebates allowed. For this purpose, deferred consideration is not discounted to present values when recognising revenue.

Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest rate method, which for floating rate financial assets is the rate inherent in the instrument. Dividend revenue is recognised when the right to receive a dividend has been established.

Grant and donation income is recognised when the entity obtains control over the funds, which is generally at the time of receipt.

All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST).

(c) Goods and Services Tax (GST)

The ICPA is registered for GST.

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN 68 132 394 867

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 December 2021

	2021 \$	2020 \$
2 REVENUE AND OTHER INCOME		
Membership Revenue	15,901	11,573
Other revenue		
Interest	9	59
Sundry Income	55	305
Donations	1,899	1,409
Education Support Grant	64,693	95,247
ICPA Australia Subscriptions	3,640	-
NSW Memberships Subscriptions	2,978	-
Sale of Merchandise	1,427	-
FRRR Grant	33,406	-
Newsletter Advertising	8,963	6,750
Paypal	-	15,651
Affiliation Fees	120	190
Federal Conference Account	327	-
State Conference Income	25,141	31,290
State Conference Uniforms	-	136
Sales of Product Income	12,300	-
Services	3,510	-
	158,468	151,037
3 DEPRECIATION	1,437	1,684
4 CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS		
Business Cash Maximiser	89,030	89,021
NAB ICPA Cheque Account	75,867	64,696
ICPA NSW Lone Members Account	24,117	26,304
Unexpected Donations Trust	9,494	9,494
Merchandise	6,025	4,455
ICPA NSW Conference Account	741	33,654
Paypal Account	731	5,168
Opal Cards	400	400
	206,405	233,192
5 OTHER CURRENT ASSETS		
Accounts Receivable	515	910
GST	911	-
	1,426	910
6 INVENTORIES	5,325	5,325

Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN 68 132 394 867

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 December 2021

	2021 \$	2020 \$
7 PROPERTY, PLANT & EQUIPMENT		
Plant & Equipment		
- At cost	18,218	17,583
- Less: Accumulated Depreciation	<u>(15,797)</u>	<u>(14,360)</u>
Total Plant & Equipment	<u>2,421</u>	<u>3,223</u>
8 ACCOUNTS AND OTHER PAYABLES		
Trade Creditors	80	-
Credit Card - Shennah Joiner	-	955
Lone Members Trust	22,804	26,304
Unexpended Donation Lab	<u>9,494</u>	<u>9,494</u>
	<u>32,378</u>	<u>36,753</u>
9 TAX LIABILITIES		
GST	-	3,916
10 AUDITORS' REMUNERATION		
Remuneration of the auditor of the corporation for:		
- auditing or reviewing the financial statements	<u>1,600</u>	<u>1,000</u>
11 CONTINGENT LIABILITIES AND CONTINGENT ASSETS		
As at 31 December 2021, the corporation has no contingent liabilities and no contingent assets (2020: NIL)		
12 RELATED PARTIES		
Transactions between related parties are on normal commercial terms and conditions no more favourable than those available to other parties unless otherwise stated.		
13 FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT		
The financial instruments consists primarily of deposits with banks, short term investments, accounts receivable and payable.		

	Note	2021	2020
Financial Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	206,405	233,192
Trade and other receivables	5	<u>1,426</u>	<u>910</u>
Total Financial Assets		<u>207,831</u>	<u>234,102</u>
Financial Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	8 & 9	<u>32,378</u>	<u>40,669</u>
Total Financial Liabilities		<u>32,378</u>	<u>40,669</u>

The nature of the operation of the association does not result in substantial financial risk. The assessed risk lie primarily in credit risk, liquidity risk and market risk. The board of directors overall risk management strategy seeks to assist the association meet its financial targets while minimising potential adverse effects of financial performance. Risk management policies are approved by the board, these include credit risk policies and future cash flow requirements.

All financial liabilities and financial assets are due for maturity within 1 year.

Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN 68 132 394 867

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 December 2021

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
14 CASH FLOW INFORMATION		
Reconciliation of result for the year to cashflows from operating activities		
Reconciliation of net income to net cash provided by operating activities:		
Profit for the year	(18,782)	53,440
Cash flows excluded from profit attributable to operating activities		
Non-cash flows in profit		
- depreciation and amortisation	1,437	1,684
Changes in assets and liabilities		
- (increase)/decrease in inventories	-	-
- (increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	(516)	(910)
- increase/(decrease) in trade and trade payables	(8,291)	2,913
- increase/(decrease) in employee benefits	-	-
Cash flows from operations	<u>(26,152)</u>	<u>57,127</u>

15 GOING CONCERN

The directors have prepared the financial statements on a going concern basis.

The mitigating factors to support the going concern basis are due to the material cash reserves the association still maintains and the absence of any long term debt commitments. The association is still able to pay all debts as and when they fall due.

The directors are continually monitoring results and are consistently trying to improve the clubs income.

16 EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

There were no significant events after the reporting period.

Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN 68 132 394 867

Statement by Members of the Committee For the year ended 31 December 2021

The Committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this General-Purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the Committee the Statement of Profit & Loss, Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Cash Flows, Statement of Equity, and Notes to the Financial Statements:

1. Presents fairly the financial position of Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc as at 31 December 2021 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the association will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

The Committee is responsible for the reliability, accuracy and completeness of the accounting records and the disclosure of all material and relevant information.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:

President

Treasurer

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

ABN: 68 132 394 867

Independent Audit Report to the members of Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a general-purpose financial report, of Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc (the association), which comprises the Statement by Members of the Committee, Income and Expenditure Statement, Balance Sheet, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.

Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The committee of Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc are responsible for the preparation of the financial report and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1, is appropriate to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act and is appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The committee's responsibilities also include such internal control as the committee determine is necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We have conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the association's preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view, in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the association's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Auditor's Opinion

In our opinion, the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc as at 31st December 2021 and its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, and the Associations Incorporation Act.

Basis of Accounting

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

Signed on: 15th March 2022



Vickie Newton CPA. B.Com. (Acc)

Director

Audit & Risk Solutions Pty Ltd

Motion 04.03.22 *“That the 2021 audited financial statement of ICPA-NSW Inc. and the accompanying Treasurer’s Report be accepted.”*

Moved: Shennah Joiner

Seconded: Annabel Strachan

Carried

Motion 05.03.22 *“That a family membership of ICPA-NSW remain at \$18.00 for the 2022 Membership year.”*

Moved: Shennah Joiner

Seconded: Irene Lund

Carried

General Business: NIL

NSW Membership Officer Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the NSW Membership Officer’s Report.

- At the end of 2021 ICPA-NSW had 830 financial members which includes 101 new members. At the end of 2020 we had 847 financial members.
- Branches are informed of any new or renewing members who have used the online portal.
- New Member Welcome Packs are mailed to new members and new school contact people within a short time frame of joining.
- We have an occasional new member who nominates one of the branches in recess. Anyone nominating one of these branches is looked after by NSW/Vic Lone members and an email sent to the new member explaining why and given the opportunity to perhaps choose another branch.
- address labels for the Top Wire were printed and mailed to Kerrie Johnston.

Thank you to everyone for their help and support and particularly to the hard-working Branch treasurers. Please don’t hesitate to ask any questions if you need information

Irene Lund

Membership Officer

Motion: 06.03.22 *“That we retain the lone member membership fee at \$65 for 2022-2023”*

Moved: Irene Lund

Seconded: Tim Fletcher

Carried

Lone Members Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Lone Members Report.

NSW/Vic Lone Members is the one of the biggest group of members within ICPA-NSW. Lone Members are usually members who live too far from a branch to attend meetings and may be involved in educating isolated children or interested in supporting those who do. A number of Boarding Schools in NSW and Victoria also hold membership as many of their boarders come from regional and remote areas and the schools wish to support the aims of ICPA.

Two of the highlights of 2021 for NSW/Vic Lone Members were the awarding of Life Membership to both Lindy Kitto and Caroline McDonald. Caroline was lured to a park for morning tea on the pretext of asking advice but was instead presented with her badge and certificate and Lindy was presented with her badge and certificate at the Hay conference with the attending Lones present. Both were surprised and delighted to be so honoured.

Lones have continued to being kept in touch about ICPA happenings and issues via semi regular newsletters. Again, as in 2020, we had an influx in numbers with many new Lone members impacted by the border closures. ICPA was able to help many of them resolve issues over movement of students to and from interstate boarding schools. At the end of 2021 we had a total of 81 family members and 55 school/organisation members.

It has always been a pleasure to talk with a Lone Member, either by email or by phone. It has also been a great privilege to be on State Council and count everyone as special friends. Thank you to all the Council members who have given me so much advice, help and encouragement during 2021 and in previous years. As I prepare to stand down from this position, all the very best for the next NSW/Vic Lone Members Officer.

Irene Lund
Lone Members Officer

Merchandise Report

Merchandise sales over the past year has been slow to say the least. The year started well with the Hay Conference, marking down some stock lines assisted in reducing stock levels of those slow to move items and some larger sizes. Due to state border issues, I was not able to attend the Federal Conference in Longreach, as a result there were no sales.

With the reduction of stock levels, the merchandise is contained in one large suitcase weighing in at 25kg. This will make it easier for traveling to conferences. There has been an issue with purchasing a stock of shirts and polos late last year with both the supply and postage, the parcel did a round Australia trip and didn't arrive till December. On arrival the embroidery company sent it back as they have decided not to do outside work as they sell their own shirts.

Only this week (early February) have I been able to organise the embroidery of the shirts as the format from one company was different to another.

I am pleased to attend the Bourke Conference and plan to attend Federal Conference with merchandise.

Please note the following breakdown of merchandise on hand:

ITEM	February 2022		Purchases		October 2021
Polo Shirts					
Men's	4		2		6
Women's	3		7		10
RB Sellars Shirts					
Women's	25		2		27
Men's	6		2		8
Rugby Tops*	2				2
Beanies	3				3
Stubbie Holders	24				24
Men's Neck Ties	8				8
Caps	74				74
Scarves	17				17
Pens	<i>Not counted</i>				
Keyrings	<i>Not counted</i>				

* The remaining Rugby Tops will be checked prior to the next event.

David Shrimpton
Merchandise Manager

Top Wire Report

Madam President, Distinguished Guests, and fellow members of ICPA. It is with great pleasure I present to you the Top Wire report for 2022.

Firstly, congratulations once again to the ICPA-NSW State Councillors for their commitment and dedication as they advocate for issues around the education of rural and remote families in NSW, and in particular, navigating the uncharted waters of issues concerning Covid-19. A tremendous effort indeed and you can read all about their efforts in each edition of the Top Wire as they helpfully contribute their reports.

Thank you to the branches who have contributed articles in the Around the Waratah section of the Top Wire again throughout 2020. However, it seems that there are the regular or the 'usual' branches contributing so I would encourage *every* branch to consider contributing at least once a year. The size of the article is irrelevant as ICPA-NSW members are keen to learn about the lives of rural and remote families.

A special shout out needs to be mentioned this year to Kate Treweeke, the ICPA-NSW Archivist who has spent many hours pawing over pages and pages of collected history items to contribute so much interesting information about the last 50 years of ICPA-NSW to each edition of the Top Wire for the last 12 months. Many thanks Kate! Thank you once again to Irene Lund, our ICPA-NSW Membership Officer for posting the address labels to me for mailing each edition and for keeping the address database of members up to date. Irene also has had the arduous task of continuing to liaise with the

school's wishing to be included in our November bumper and full coloured edition of the Top Wire to ensure the information included is current and relevant to families thinking about boarding opportunities for their children.

Finally, many thanks once again to the Rankins Springs Branch who heed the call every three months to come together and package and post each edition of Top Wire along with the annual ICPA-NSW calendar and Boarding School Expo inserts for your reading pleasure.

Kerrie Johnston
Top Wire Editor

Publicity/Webmaster Report

Another year that has brought with it many challenges for our members none more so than the continuing cross border boarding school issues that have caused much angst for families over the past 18 months. The enormous amount of work that has gone into bringing to fruition the National Boarding School Code needs to be commended. I like to use the saying "**Team work makes the dream work**" as I feel it sums up ICPA-NSW State Council perfectly. I feel very privileged to have been a part of such an amazing team over the last two years. I know without doubt that ICPA-NSW State Council will continue to do amazing things making a real difference for our members. What a milestone to be celebrated, 50 Years of ICPA-NSW. The changes that have happened over that time are enormous.

Conference & AGM 2021

A little different this year as they were held separately some weeks apart unlike historically of course when they are held over the same time during conference. We were extremely lucky to be able to host our State Conference in all its entirety in person at Hay in March 2021. The convening committee sure did raise that bar high in their enormous efforts in hosting all of us in Hay. Thank you, Hay team.

Conference welcomed many guest speakers over the two days including Minister Sarah Mitchell, Senator Perin Davey, Roy Butler MP, Helen Dalton MP, also including our keynote speaker Lana Masterson from "Down the Track" Youth Program at Lake Cargelligo, who shared her incredible story of the work she does with youth, just to mention a few.

Social Media

ICPA-NSW continues to utilise social media to share information to members and other interested parties via Facebook and our new website.

Top Wire

A huge congratulations once again to our awesome Editor, Kerrie Johnston, for her continued publication which is no small task, however enjoyed by all our members. Countless hours of behind-the-scenes work takes place to make it all happen. Thank you, Kerrie.

Main Deputation

Deputation 2021 evolved further this year with only a handful of state councillors able to be together in the one location. However, the entire meeting schedule was conducted over zoom with various meetings over the course of a few days. Hopefully later this year we can resume our meetings in Sydney and have all of State Council together for face-to-face Deputation.

ICPA-NSW continues to strive to provide a strong voice advocating for our rural and remote families driven by passion, tenacity, pride, and a want to make a difference for our members.

Gabie Le Lievre
Publicity Officer/Webmaster

Election of Office Bearers

All positions were declared vacant, and Sue Kingwill, Contact Inc., took the Chair for the elections.

Sue Kingwill, CEO Contact Inc.

Thank you for the honour of being your Returning Officer once again for the 2022 AGM and I declare all positions vacant at this present time. I have been thinking a lot about our gathering this year and it is certainly about celebrating 50 years of all that has been before us and where we are today and I have been reflecting about our highs and our lows and where we have come from to be in such a strong position today.

This gathering is also about longevity. It's about dedication. It's about tenacity and I think it is about creativity because you couldn't have achieved things you have without thinking laterally and coming at the different challenges in different ways. I think, more than anything, ICPA is also about friendship and, in many instances, lifelong friendships. I've also been reflecting on our purpose and I believe the purpose of access to education and lifelong opportunities for the children who are part of the ICPA collective has been achieved one hundred percent if not more.

I certainly also think about another part of ICPA that is also part of that whole jigsaw and it's what you do to support the families who are the members of ICPA and give these families a sense that they belong and that they can achieve what they want for their children. So, I just want to acknowledge that as well. To the state councillors who have stepped down at this AGM as part of our processes, I sincerely want to congratulate you on all that you have achieved and for your tireless efforts. I can tell by the reports and also just hearing the joy of being together and celebrating what you have done that you have certainly worked tirelessly and achieved all that you set out to do. Congratulations and I just wanted that thanks to be acknowledged. Could we do that as a collective. (*Applause*)

Now, my job as the Returning Officer is to go through official processes, step by step. Going through the nominations I have received but before we get to the nominations for the State Council, as you would be aware, there are three Trustees for the ICPA and the three trustees are Lindy Kitto, Joan Treweeke and Anne Milliken. Within that process there is a cycle where different Trustees at different times have to present themselves for consideration for renomination if they wish to continue and this year it is Lindy Kitto's time to be considered for election as Trustee.

Lindy is a NSW/Vic Lone Member and she has been nominated for another three-year tenure as a Trustee by Deb Castle and Seconded by Shennah Joiner. So, thank you Lindy and welcome as a continuing Trustee for the Council.

Election of Trustee:

Trustee for 2022 three-year tenure: Linda Kitto

Nominated by: Deb Castle

Seconded by: Shennah Joiner

Accepted

Sue Kingwill, CEO Contact Inc.

Now, onto the election of the office bearers and committee members. We have a process of the election of a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary and Treasurer. The election of an Assistant Secretary, Lone Members Officer, Publicity Officer and then the potential of six committee members. I can attest that each of the nominations have been duly presented to me in the due time of your constitutional requirements and they have all been duly signed and seconded as is required of the nomination process. I will move through all the nominations and then we can say welcome to each and every one of you as

a whole new Council at the end. The election of Officer Bearers and Committee Members for the State Council of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales Incorporated proceeded as follows:

President:

Kate Warby. Nominated by Irene Lund Seconded by Shennah Joiner Accepted.

Vice President:

Tanya Mitchell. Nominated by Tim Fletcher Seconded by David Butler Accepted.

Vice President:

Robin Beckwith. Nominated by Kate Warby Seconded by Shennah Joiner Accepted.

Secretary:

There is no nomination for Secretary and so I declare that as a casual vacancy for Council to consider when you reconvene as a group.

Assistant Secretary:

Gabie Le Lievre. Nominated by Laure Stalley Seconded by Bree Wakefield Accepted

Treasurer:

Shennah Joiner. Nominated by Irene Lund Seconded by Deborah Castle Accepted

Lone Members Officer:

Amanda McLaren. Nominated by Irene Lund Seconded by Shennah Joiner Accepted

Publicity/Webmaster:

Kellie Turnbull. Nominated by Deborah Castle Seconded by Irene Lund Accepted

Committee:

Myfi Kellahan. Nominated by Lindy Kitto Seconded by Kerrie Johnston Accepted

Libby McPhee. Nominated by Tim Fletcher Seconded by Tanya Mitchell Accepted

Annabel Strachan. Nominated by Laura Stalley Seconded by Bree Wakefield Accepted

Laura Stalley. Nominated by Bree Wakefield Seconded by David Butler Accepted

David Butler. Nominated by Annabel Strachan Seconded by Tanya Mitchell Accepted

Bree Wakefield. Nominated by Laura Stalley Seconded by Gabie Le Lievre Accepted

Sue Kingwill, CEO Contact Inc.

That is all the nominations I have received and, with your permission, I would like to move that these nominations be accepted and congratulate you, each and every one of you on your appointment and wish you well for the year ahead. Thank you very much.

Kate Warby, President.

Thank you Sue and with that now having taken place I shall declare the 50th Annual General Meeting of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW Inc. officially closed at 9.04 am.

All business of conference was concluded and there being no further agenda items, the 50th Annual Conference of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales was concluded on Thursday 31st March, 2022 and was officially closed at 4.35pm.

NOTES TO THE CONFERENCE:

It is to be noted that the video message presented by Roy Butler MP was not recorded and therefore not included in these transcribed minutes of the 50th Annual Conference of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales.