



2025 Canberra Delegation

Report

Anne Chater

Walking the Hallowed Halls

ICPA Federal Councillors recently spent five busy days in Canberra for a packed program of Board meetings, our annual delegation to Parliament House and other government departments, report writing and a deeply moving Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial. During the ceremony, Louise Martin and Anna McCorkle laid a handmade wreath with the card reading – Lest We Forget – “Branches from our Branches from ICPA Australia – representing remote and rural students” - a moment that grounded our visit in reflection and respect.

This was my first time in Canberra wearing my ICPA FC hat, and aside from my ongoing struggle with Canberra’s unpredictable weather, the experience was uplifting and energising. Getting to know the other councillors—their backgrounds, expertise and unwavering commitment—gave me a deeper appreciation of how Federal Council operates and just how much work goes on behind the scenes.

One thing stood out above all else: the extraordinary level of organisation that kept our week running like a finely tuned machine. From accommodation and meals to scheduled meetings with parliamentarians, to navigating the secure corridors of Parliament House, everything unfolded with impressive precision. It reinforced for me that ICPA is, without doubt, a well-oiled organisation.

Our meetings with politicians were brief—approximately 30 minutes each—so being clear, concise and focused was essential. Across these sessions, we covered key issues including the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC), Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor (RICS), In-Home Care (IHC) and Youth Allowance.

I had always believed I understood how our parliamentary system worked, particularly around legislation. Let me say this: I was mistaken if I thought I could walk into Canberra and simply expect legislative change because we made a case for it.

In reality, an Act or legislation is the high-level rule book. Beneath it sit the regulations, which provide the detailed instructions for how the rule book should be followed. Then come the guidelines, ideally written in plain English, to help interpret those rules.

For many of the educational challenges facing rural, remote and geographically isolated families, it is the **regulations** that need adjusting. These are where inflexibilities can most affect equitable access to education. I strongly encourage Branches to continue pressing both State and Federal Members of Parliament, drawing attention to where the current regulations fail our rural students.

One clear takeaway from our meetings was that politicians are genuinely hungry for real-life stories. They want to hear, in practical terms, what families face in educating their children across vast distances. So consider inviting a politician to your property to witness firsthand the realities



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of remote education. Branches might even host visits from Ministers and their departmental teams responsible for the education portfolios.

Better still—consider joining Federal Council yourself. There is no better place to influence understanding and help shape policies that will truly support successful educational outcomes for students and educators living in the bush.

Anne Chater
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