ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

2026 FEDERAL CONFERENCE
TERTIARY PORTFOLIO
MOTIONS

A68. Winton Branch (QLD) **CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Federal Department of Education (DoE) to ensure time spent working under the Permission to Teach (PTT) program or equivalent programs, counts towards the time required to access the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt reduction scheme in very remote areas."

Explanation:

In Queensland, a range of rural teacher incentives currently exist to attract teachers to rural placements and are made available to PTT staff. One key incentive for teachers to work in remote schools is to access the HELP debt reduction scheme after completing four years of rural employment. At present, the time spent working under the PTT program does not count towards this four year period.

Case Study:

A teacher in Winton moved to town in 2024 as part of the Permission to Teach (PTT) scheme. They worked full-time at Winton State School in 2024 and 2025 while completing their tertiary studies (teaching a 0.9FTE). Upon completing their studies, they have continued in their position at Winton State School. As Winton is classed as 'very remote', teachers working for the Department of Education are eligible for the HELP debt reduction scheme after four years of service; however, time working as a PTT does not count towards this service. Therefore, this teacher would have to complete six years of service in a very remote location, whereas a teacher with provisional or full QCT registration working in a very remote location would only be required to complete four years of service.

A69. Dawson Valley Branch (QLD) **DEEMED COVERED BY A68**

"That ICPA (Aust) seek clarification from the Department of Education as to whether teaching service undertaken under Permission to Teach (PTT) arrangements qualifies toward service requirements for the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt reduction initiative for teachers in very remote areas, and advocate for its inclusion if it is currently excluded."

Explanation:

The Australian Government HELP debt reduction initiative aims to attract and retain teachers in very remote areas by offering:

- waiver of indexation on HELP debt, and
- reduction of accumulated HELP debt after four years (1,400 days) of eligible service

Eligibility requires teachers to:

- hold a completed teaching qualification enabling registration, and
- be employed in a face-to-face teaching role in a very remote location as defined by the ABS https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-loan-program/reduction-help-debts-teachers-very-remote-areas

Permission to Teach (PTT) arrangements allow pre-service teachers to undertake classroom teaching in these same locations while completing their qualifications, often in response to workforce shortages. However, there is limited clarity as to whether this service is recognised under the HELP debt reduction framework.
Clarification and inclusion would:

- ensure equitable recognition of all teaching service in very remote areas
- strengthen early-career pathways into rural and remote teaching
- improve attraction and retention in hard-to-staff schools
- align federal incentives with workforce realities in regional Australia

A70. Dawson Valley Branch (QLD) **CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Education for the expansion of the HELP debt reduction initiative for teachers to include remote schools, beyond those currently classified as very remote."

Explanation:

The current HELP debt reduction initiative is limited to teachers working in very remote areas as defined by the ABS Remoteness Structure.
https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-loan-program/reduction-help-debts-teachers-very-remote-areas
However, many small rural schools outside this classification continue to experience significant challenges in attracting and retaining teachers.
These schools often operate with:

- smaller staffing cohorts
- multi-age classrooms
- reduced access to services and professional networks

Recent policy discussions and reviews have highlighted the need to extend incentives beyond very remote areas to address workforce shortages more broadly across regional Australia.
Expanding eligibility would:

- improve teacher attraction and retention across rural and remote Australia
- provide more equitable support across varying degrees of remoteness
- strengthen educational outcomes for students in small and isolated communities
- better align incentives with workforce demand and service delivery challenges

With around 70% of people repaying a HELP debt being 35 or younger—a critical stage for financial stability, home ownership and family commitments—those who choose to teach in regional communities should not be disadvantaged. Extending this initiative would provide meaningful financial relief, strengthen the appeal of rural teaching pathways, and play a practical role in addressing ongoing workforce gaps across small and remote schools.

A71. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW) **CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate the Minister for Education and the Federal Treasurer to change the timing of debt indexation for study and training support loans."

Explanation:

The indexation of Higher Education Loans Program (HELP, or also known as HECS) and other study and training support loan debts has long been an issue for graduates. Although these loans have been promoted in the past as 'interest free', the loan has always had indexation applied at the rate of the current CPI (Consumer Price Index) or WPI (Wages Price Index) (whichever is lower) at the time of indexation, 1 June. A recommendation from the Australian Universities Accord (2024) is to change the timing of indexation. Once a graduate earns above the compulsory repayment threshold (currently $69,258 in 2026-27), repayments are deducted from wages through the tax system and held

by the government until the graduate lodges their tax return when the funds are then applied to reduce the debt. The total amount deducted from wages over the financial year is not applied to the loan until after the graduate lodges their tax return. The unjust issue is that indexation is applied to the debt on 1 June, which is before the repayments have been applied to the loan, disregarding the fact that the graduate has had repayments deducted from their wages over the previous 11 months. This is not like a bank loan which applies the repayments immediately.
We understand that this is a complex system for the tax office to administer, but we feel that the timing of the indexation of the debt is unfair. Applying indexation after the lump sum repayment has been applied to the debt would be far more equitable.
This could be remedied by indexation being applied 1 November each year after the Individual Tax Return due date of 31 October. If this indexation date was adopted, any repayments deducted from wages during the previous tax year would be included in the balance of the student loan debt before indexation is calculated and applied.

A72. North West Branch (SA) **CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate to the Department of Social Services and Services Australia to amend the Youth Allowance guidelines to enable eligible tertiary students to retain their qualification for Youth Allowance payments throughout the course of their degree."

Explanation:
Students in receipt of an eligible Commonwealth income support payment (ISP) such as Youth Allowance or Austudy are eligible to receive the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) and are not subject to the Need to Work Income Test. However, there are occasions where students work and earn too much to receive actual weekly income support payments but continue to keep reporting to Centrelink. This reporting enables their information to remain in the system and able to receive the CPP when they attend their mandatory university placements and must forgo paid employment. However, if the Youth Allowance payment reduces to $0 for 12 consecutive fortnights due to income, eligibility for Youth Allowance is cancelled and a new application must be submitted. No information is rolled over.
Student income is often casual in nature and can fluctuate greatly over a number of weeks. If the qualification for Youth Allowance and the continued reporting to Centrelink could extend to the duration of a student's degree, it would assist in stream lining the process for Youth Allowance and the CPP.

A73. Bourke Branch (NSW) **CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) request the Federal Government to 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 by the Liquid Assets criteria."

Explanation:
Students who choose to save their earnings during their gap year should not be disadvantaged due to the Liquid Asset Waiting Period. Many students work hard to save their earnings but instead must use their savings to support themselves and pay rent while attending university until the Liquid Asset Waiting period is fulfilled.
The Liquid Asset Waiting Period applies if the applicant has more than $5500 in liquid assets prior to application for Youth Allowance and means waiting a number of weeks based on the amount of liquid assets. It tapers from $5500 to $11,500 meaning there may be a maximum 13 week waiting period before Youth Allowance payments begin.

Fellow students who earn the amount required to be considered eligible for Independent Youth Allowance but spend everything they earn, are eligible for the allowance straight away but those who have saved and have money in the bank are not eligible for the allowance until after the required waiting period, and therefore not eligible for Rent Assistance either until payments begin.

A74. Port Augusta Branch (SA) **CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for the Federal Government to increase the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) to reflect the current cost of living and the additional expenses incurred by rural and remote students undertaking mandatory placements as part of their tertiary studies."

Explanation:

The Commonwealth Prac Payment provides financial support to eligible students undertaking mandatory placements in a bachelor's or master's degree in teaching, nursing, midwifery and social work. While this payment is welcomed, the current rate does not adequately reflect the cost of living or the financial pressures faced by students undertaking compulsory placements.

Many placements extend for six weeks or longer, during which time students are often unable to undertake paid employment due to the full-time nature of their placement commitments. This loss of income can place significant financial strain on students who must continue to meet everyday living expenses while receiving limited financial support. For students from rural and remote areas, the cost of fuel and travel associated with attending placements can add a further financial burden. Combined with increasing costs for accommodation, food, utilities and other essential expenses, the current payment is insufficient to offset the financial impact of undertaking mandatory placements.

Increasing the CPP to better align with the current cost of living would provide meaningful support to students completing compulsory placements and ensure that financial pressures do not become a barrier to successfully completing their studies and entering the workforce.

A75. Louth Branch (NSW) **CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the University Council of Deans to continue to look at the way credits and advance standings could be transferred from one academic transcript to another when a rural and remote student moves from one university to another."

Explanation:

Louth ICPA 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.

When degree courses are certified by DoE, we feel the lack of unit acknowledgment is an inequitable deterrent for students' success in achieving qualifications; requiring more time to complete (increased accommodation costs) plus having to pay twice for the unit.

A76. Port Augusta Branch (SA) **CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate for the Federal Government to establish a rental assistance program for rural and remote university students that is not means-tested against parental income and provides support while undertaking full-time study."

Explanation:

Students from rural and remote areas face additional financial pressures, as they are frequently required to relocate significant distances from home to attend university. Many families incur substantial accommodation costs while also maintaining the family home, creating a considerable

financial burden. The current system's reliance on parental income can disadvantage students whose families may not be in a position to provide ongoing financial support, despite being assessed as having the capacity to do so. Many agriculture focused families hold substantial assets but have limited cash flow.
Given these challenges, there is a strong case for establishing a dedicated rural and remote university student rent assistance program that is independent of parental income and assets. Such a program would better recognise the unavoidable costs faced by students who must live away from home to access tertiary education and would provide greater financial security while they complete their studies. It would also support students' wellbeing by reducing financial stress and helping them remain connected to their families and communities throughout their education.

A77. Alice Springs Branch (NT) **CARRIED**

"That ICPA Australia advocate to the Australian Government Department of Education to expand the eligibility criteria of the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship Program to allow students who are currently enrolled in teaching degrees to apply for a part-scholarship for the remainder of their study."

Explanation:

The Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship Program is currently only available to students who are commencing their studies in the first semester of the year in which they apply. This excludes students who are already part way through their teaching degree or those studying part time.
Given the significant and ongoing teacher shortage across Australia, particularly in regional, rural, and remote communities there is a need to support all future teachers, not only those at the beginning of their studies. Students already enrolled in a teaching degree face financial pressures that may delay completion or force them to withdraw altogether. Expanding the program to allow enrolled and part-time students to access a part-scholarship for the remainder of their study would provide meaningful financial support, improve study retention and help increase the number of qualified teachers entering the Australian workforce.

Case study

My family and I manage a remote cattle station, approximately 6.5 hours south of Alice Springs. As well as managing the station, I act as a Home Tutor, supervising my younger child as they complete their distance education through the Alice Springs School of the Air. At the beginning of 2026, I commenced a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) in an online, part-time capacity, the only capacity I currently have to be able to complete study around work and schooling commitments. With my younger child heading off to join their older sibling at boarding school in a couple of years' time, I intend to increase my study load to full-time. Under the current eligibility criteria of the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship Program, I am currently unable to apply due to my part-time study load. I will also be unable to apply for this in the future, as, when I switch to a full-time study load, I will be about halfway through my degree, not at the very beginning as the eligibility criteria currently requires. While I am thankful for the fact that my degree falls under the Commonwealth Supported Place subsidy, the cost of studying is still quite prohibitive, and this will be exacerbated when swapping to a full-time study load. Completing placement later in my studies will require me to take weeks off work, travel a significant distance, and pay for accommodation for the duration of my placement period, due to having no potential placement locations within 150km of my home.
Remote students face a variety of extra costs due to living in remote locations, including extra materials such as printer ink and setting up a learning space, providing their own fast and reliable internet service to be able to attend lectures (often more expensive in remote areas than in urban locations), and travel and accommodation costs in regards to completing placements, attending face-to-face study, etc. Many remote students are likely to be seeking work in the remote locations where they live upon completion of their study, areas that often struggle to attract teachers. By supporting remote students to be able to complete their studies, you would be supporting remote areas in being able to retain teachers who have community and family connections.

A78. Dirranbandi Branch (QLD) **CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates to relevant departments and government bodies to establish a dedicated 'rural and remote assessment team' within Centrelink to ensure consistent, informed and equitable decision-making for financial assistance programs, including the Tertiary Access Payment, AIC etc. by requiring assessors to have appropriate understanding of rural and remote circumstances and applying clear, consistent criteria for eligibility, or a team who can sort through any 'grey areas' that are specific to rural and remote areas."

Explanation:

Families in rural and remote areas are currently experiencing inconsistent and inequitable outcomes when accessing Centrelink-administered financial assistance, due to a lack of understanding of rural contexts and inconsistent interpretation of eligibility criteria. Cases have arisen where applications within the same family receive different outcomes—such as one child being deemed eligible for the Tertiary Access Payment while another is not—based solely on who assesses the application. This inconsistency creates confusion, financial strain, and a lack of confidence in the system. A dedicated 'rural and remote assessment team', staffed by appropriately trained assessors, is essential to ensure fair, transparent and consistent decisions that accurately reflect the unique circumstances of geographically isolated families and support equitable access to education.

A80. Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA) **CARRIED**

"That ICPA (Aust) advocate that the Federal Government through Services Australia recognises the adversity geographically isolated students face when living away from the family home to access a tertiary education, by reviewing and simplifying criteria for assistance."

Explanation:

Geographically Isolated students have already typically endured 6 years boarding away from home. They are expected to live independently to attend higher educational institutions, this should be recognised.

We suggest the following changes to criteria:

- allowing geographically isolated students to automatically access Youth Allowance & Rent Assistance as independents so that students can focus on the task at hand and complete their studies without having to work several part-time jobs to earn enough to establish themselves as Independent.
- increase the amount that they can save for going to University. - The current limits are discouraging students from saving.
- eligibility for Assistance for Isolated Children and BAHA to carry over into Tertiary Studies if commenced immediately following School - or eligibility for these payments automatically qualifies students for Youth Allowance and Rent Assistance.

F1. McKinlay Branch (WA) **CARRIED**

"We would like to thank ICPA (Aust) for their advocacy regarding Paid Practicums for Tertiary students and request your renewed advocacy for those Rural and Remote students studying Medicine and Veterinary Science".