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## Allowances

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### A1. Bourke

*“That ICPA-NSW assists 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.”*

#### **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 just as they are not only unable to access Youth Allowance but are also ineligible for the Relocation Scholarship.

### A2. Bourke

*“That ICPA-NSW assists ICPA (Aust) to lobby the Federal Government to change the criteria for gaining Independent Youth Allowance so that all rural and remote students who have to leave home to study at tertiary level are eligible for Independent Youth Allowance once enrolled.”*

#### **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 student. 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 have to move hundreds of kilometres to major regional centres or cities and pay inflated rent and utilities for accommodation near their university. Having to move so far away from the family home and 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.



### A3. Broken Hill

*“That ICPA-NSW assist ICPA (Aust) to lobby the relevant department to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) for geographically isolated students undertaking secondary education via Distance Education.”*

#### **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 students school.

All of these expenses are the responsibility of the student’s family.

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## **Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools and Hostels**

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### A4. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

*“That ICPA-NSW requests that acceptance letters to state boarding schools be distributed earlier in the year to align with acceptance of scholarships and paying of deposits at private schools.”*





## Explanation:

For families in rural and remote areas, the decision-making process around accessing secondary education for their children is difficult to navigate. Parents research options available to them considering the social, geographical and financial issues before applying to the schools which are a best fit for their children and personal circumstances. Often applications to several schools are made, particularly in the case of their oldest child. Before deciding on the best option available, parents wait anxiously for not only letters securing a place for their child at selected schools, but also letters offering scholarships. Inconsistent acceptance dates for secondary schools, particularly state boarding schools, makes this decision-making process difficult. Often a scholarship to a private school needs to be accepted and a deposit for the following year paid before acceptance letters to state boarding schools are made available. By government schools bringing their acceptance process forward and sending out acceptance letters earlier, parents will be better placed to make the best choice for their child by comparing all the options simultaneously.

### A5. Hay

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant authorities to create a standard essential traveller exemption for rural and remote boarding school students and their parents and tertiary students that live in a different state to their educational institution, if border closures occur due to a pandemic.”*

## Explanation:

During the 2020 COVID pandemic many rural and remote 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 to be able to focus on their studies. Some families were forced to fly their children home at the end of the school term, placing the children and their families at risk of being infected with COVID-19, not to mention the financial stress this caused. These children were taken from COVID free areas into cities with large numbers of COVID-19 cases, placed on a plane and taken to another city with large numbers of COVID-19, their parents then having to travel 1,600 km from COVID free areas to pick up their children.

If a standard border crossing exemption is in place for these rural and remote students, they will be able to focus on their studies and it will reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 into these rural and remote areas.

### A6. Broken Hill

*“That ICPA-NSW continues to advocate for those students who board interstate to have equitable access to education by being deemed as essential travellers.”*

## Explanation:

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen State Governments shut their borders to prevent the spread of disease. This meant that many students from NSW, who attend schools in SA, VIC and QLD, were required to quarantine, on returning to school interstate. Some children had to quarantine up to three times, which meant in 2021 some students spent over six weeks of their year in quarantine!





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Apart from the fact they are missing valuable face to face learning there is no doubt the negative, dramatic affect this is having on their mental health. The anxiety these kids face every time a school holiday is coming up is plain to see, and it is growing each day as this epidemic continues. The anxiety of not knowing if the borders will suddenly be closed and if they are going to be able to get home to see their family. There is also the added pressure for kids, some as young as 12 and 13, having to decide whether they come home and see their family, all the while knowing that if that is the decision they make, they may have to return to quarantine when school resumes.

No child that age should choose between seeing their family or going as long as months on end not seeing them. Families would be happy to meet half way with governments and work their livelihoods and businesses around making this work. Even if it means for example, that families (if an outbreak is happening at the time) have their children quarantine at home for the holidays and no one comes or goes from their place. If it means our children can get the education they deserve without the anxiety and extra pressure of possible quarantine.

We need a long term, sensible and common-sense approach so these children can access their education freely and without the stress and anxiety of worrying about state borders!

A large majority of these students are from rural and remote areas that have had no COVID-19 cases for over a year. For example, Broken Hill reportedly had two positive cases in March 2020, and yet there was no community transmission from these cases and there has not been a single case for over a year.

Students living in these areas pose little to no threat of transferring COVID-19 interstate. Forcing them to quarantine is completely unjustified.

#### **A7. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW asks both NSW and interstate Ministers of Health for rural and remote parents to be considered essential visitors to boarding houses at our boarding schools for start and end of term.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Unpacking a child at the beginning of term is an essential part of the process of the return or collection from school each term. Especially those that have had no COVID-19 in their Shires. Clearly COVID-19 caution conditions would need to be adhered to. Ie: declaration of no visit to hot spot or symptoms for the prior 14 days.

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## **Communications**

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#### **A8. Collarenebri-Mungindi**

*“That ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) ask Telstra to review it’s customer service telephone assistance lines to more effectively assist rural and remote students and their families.”*

#### **Explanation:**





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The current 13 22 00 line for support is inadequate. After you have punched in all the numbers for account purposes the message tells you a link has been sent to your mobile for you to follow and chat with a Telstra assistant. That rarely happens. If you want to get a new SIM for your phone you have to present to a Telstra office with ID before purchasing a new SIM for your phone. This is not very helpful for rural and remote customers.

#### **A9. Collarenebri-Mungindi**

*“That ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) ask Telstra to urgently expedite the moving of all Telstra call centres to the mainland of Australia, to assist students and their families.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Rural and remote students and their families have experienced problems with the call centres for far too long. All Telstra call centres need to be moved back to Australia urgently, so that they can effectively assist customers needing to troubleshoot issues.

#### **A10. Balranald**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to give an establishment time frame for when the remaining satellite schools will be transferred onto the Fibre Optic (FO) internet.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Currently Clare Public School is experiencing very slow internet on the satellite provided by the Department. Some days download speeds are only 1mb/sec which makes any form of online learning useless. For example, to download educational programs on the smart board such as Behind The News, the program needs to be played first to stop buffering and then it can be replayed fully. This is very time consuming in a learning environment with children waiting for the lesson to begin and impacts on learning.

To connect to another classroom or to a live music lesson is very ‘hit and miss’. The new financial system is cloud based and requires reliable and fast internet. The internet often drops out. Therefore, productivity in the administration office is also negatively impacted. Balranald Branch would like the Department of Education to give a date as to when remote schools like Clare will be transferring to better internet such as the Fibre Optic as was announced by Telstra in October of 2020 for 13 small schools in NSW.

#### **A11. Balranald**

*“The Balranald ICPA Branch would like to thank and acknowledge Telstra for the installation of the Small Cell Tower located at Clare.”*

In 2013 Balranald Branch moved a motion at the Cooma ICPA-NSW conference that small rural schools in blackspot areas be prioritised for future roll-outs of the mobile footprint. It is reassuring to have this motion acted on. The branch also thanks ICPA State and Federal Councils for their advocacy.





## A12. Rankins Springs

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

### **Explanation:**

At our local TP1 Primary School, Naradhan Public School, the satellite internet connection at the school is unsatisfactory. The internet connection is slow and at times unstable, which inhibits the students and staff accessing essential resources and data. In the classroom, a number of programs requiring an internet connection are unable to be accessed due to slow internet speeds.

The Connected Classroom equipment is vital technology for a small isolated school and requires an efficient internet connection. Students and staff regularly participate in video conferences to access a variety of learning experiences, competitions, professional development and meetings. There is a significant delay from the school’s end making it difficult to converse with other participants. A warning symbol is often displayed on the screen indicating a poor connection and quite often drops out, requiring the school to attempt to dial back in. The school has also been unable to participate in the NAPLAN Online trials.

The principal was informed that a satellite option would be made available, however has now been told that Naradhan Public School is on the list of schools that require an upgrade to access NAPLAN Online. The school has recently rolled over to Learning Management and Business Reform (LMBR), the Department’s new finance system. Staff have found it difficult to access EBS: Central, the Student Administration tool used to manage Student Attendance, Student Behaviour, Curriculum, Student Finance and Student Health Records. It often takes many attempts to log-in placing added pressure on the Teaching Principal who already has a challenging workload and on the School Administration Manager. The school has installed a Wide Area Network (WAN) optimisation appliance as a trial to attempt to enhance the satellite internet connection. After a number of trials of this appliance had taken place, it was deemed a failure.

There are now other satellite options available in the area, as accessed by local residents, with much better connection speeds. However, no specific information can be given to determine when the situation will improve. We understand an announcement has been made about these schools being upgraded to Fibre Optic internet access and request that Telstra and Minister Mitchell, the Education Minister provide a timeframe of when this project will be completed.

## A13. Wentworth

*“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Education Department (DoE) provide the results of completed NBN trials using Remote Education And Conferencing Tool (REACT) and provide a clear time frame for implementation of an updated system.”*

### **Explanation:**

For a number of years we have heard that trials are being conducted on the suitability of using NBN and REACT in the home school room, but nothing further ever eventuates.





Three questions now need to be answered:

- Have the trials actually been completed?
- If successful when will the roll out occur?
- If not successful how long do our students have to continue using ineffective methods of delivering lessons before another option is considered?

#### A14. Broken Hill

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to provide a time frame of when geographically isolated students enrolled in Distance Education will be switched over to the NBN.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Families living in geographically isolated areas educating their children through Distance Education are still waiting to be informed of when they will be moved over to the NBN. A lot of students are experiencing a multitude of problems using the current satellite internet provided by the NSW Department of Education.

Families that have moved their home internet to NBN have found a significant improvement in the speed and reliability of their internet.

As the demands of the school curriculum requires students to be online for much of their school day, it seems appropriate that the internet provided to students reflects their educational needs. Having a time frame for the transition to NBN will help ensure families have a goal to look forward to, to ensure our children are going to have access to the best education possible.

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## Distance Education

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#### A15. Louth

*“That ICPA-NSW follows up with the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to ensure that a Preschool teacher from Dubbo School of Distance Education (DSODE) attends all Bourke Walgett School of Distance Education (BWSODE) functions.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Currently, the BWSODE access preschool through DSODE. Therefore, students are continuing their education through the other centres and not returning to BWSODE, due to the logistics. Parents who have more than one child, are having to enrol their students into two centres (e.g. a preschooler in Dubbo, and their Year 1 student in BWSODE) which is practically challenging in a school room and geographically logistically demanding.





With the restructure of Distance Education Preschool, children will have to be enrolled through Dubbo DE, but if a preschool teacher from Dubbo attends all BWSODE functions and classroom this will help families logistically, and keep these families at BWSODE.

#### A16. Broken Hill

*“That ICPA-NSW lobbies the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to make Distance Education Schools a priority when upgrading bandwidth in schools, to improve internet services and therefore directly improve lessons when using Remote Education and Conferencing Tool (REACT).”*

#### **Explanation:**

Currently students enrolled in primary school through the NSW Department of Education via Distance Education are having daily difficulties in relations to connecting to REACT lessons. Students are unable to connect and a consistently being logged out of lessons due to the system not coping. All students attending NSW Department of Education Schools should have equal to access to course content and learning experiences.

Students enrolled in rural and remote Schools, such at White Cliffs Public School are able to use the internet daily without interruption. All students are able to access video conferencing and interactive live shows with ease. Students all have their own laptops and are able use the internet simultaneously without any trouble. This is currently not the case for Distance Education students due to issues with REACT on a daily basis.

Bandwidth is described as the maximum data transfer rate of a network or Internet connection. It measures how much data can be sent over a specific connection in a given amount of time. Schools require large bandwidths and can run into service problems when students and teachers are accessing the internet. By increasing the bandwidth for Distance Education Schools this will directly impact the amount of data that can be transferred through the schools connection and therefore improve the quality of REACT lessons.

This will ensure that all students are able to access equal education opportunities no matter where they live.

#### A17. Louth

*“That ICPA-NSW urges NSW Department of Education (DoE) to implement an initiative to ensure practical access to high schooling for geographically isolated stage four students, using the existing primary school facilities in remote and very remote areas.”*

#### **Explanation:**

For many years NSW DoE has not provided practical high schooling options for some isolated children who are beginning high school.







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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 high school is by Distance Education.

Successful Distance Education requires a tutor and an appropriate place.

Currently children in this category are unable to access AIC, In Home CCB or financial aid for the employment of a home tutor. DE 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 high school 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 four students.

It is unreasonable to expect or imagine a student having any success completing the DE or SOTA high school curriculum without a literate adult to support them and an appropriate environment to learn in.

Many students whom this motion addresses are living within sight of a DoE primary school which are resourced to meet their needs. Therefore, in some instances, remote families are anxious when their children are nearing stage four (year seven).

Latterly with the increase of regulations accessing the primary schools' facilities for studying high school has been more difficult.

This situation has led to parents arranging for their children to repeat year six. In some instances, the whole community worries and wants the year six 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 ICPA recognises the complexities with enrolments in dual schools however we ask the NSW DoE 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.

## **A18. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to support incentives, such as recognition of work experience, for graduate teachers who accept work as governesses tutoring Distance Education students in remote areas.”*

### **Explanation:**

Many families who have more than one student in the home school room may employ a governess. Usually this is an untrained person or backpacker. In supporting graduate teachers to be employed as a home tutor in a distance education school room there are several benefits. For the students, they are being supervised by someone who is a graduate teacher. The advantages for the graduate teacher is that they have a full-time job, including full board and keep, they are working in the





industry they have trained for, they are working under the guidance of an experienced teacher, they are gaining experience working in a multistage classroom and would be gaining recognition work experience.

For the family, they are able to afford to employ a qualified supervisor to help educate their children. This has the potential to encourage qualified teachers to move to the bush. The government is saying that the amount of funding for education is continually rising with the standard of education getting further and further behind. Could this be a way of helping close the gap in education between the rural, remote and metropolitan schools?

#### **A19. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW asks the Minister for Education to change the policy to ensure that isolated home secondary students of School of Distance Education (DE) have access to their peers and teachers in person each term.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Currently in DE primary school it is policy that students access their peers and teachers each term. 2020 was a year like no other, however, even though our rural and remote high school students were not in COVID-19 shires they did not have any face-to-face opportunities with their teachers or fellow students other than three days in term one before COVID-19. Even when all other high school students were back to face-to-face learning Dubbo DE High school students were not afforded the same option.

#### **Case Study:**

For example in 2020 there was a remote family with two students studying Year 7 through Dubbo School of Distance Education (DSODE) and other than three days in Term 1 at the residential camp held on school grounds in Dubbo, which was before COVID-19, they had no further contact in person with either their teachers or their peers for the remainder of the 2020 school year.

Even after every other NSW student returned to in person learning after COVID-19 restrictions had eased, these DE students were not afforded the same option, even though the DE primary component was able to gather as a group for camps at the school site in Dubbo.

#### **A20. Wentworth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Education of Department to urgently address the technology and delivery platform provided to School of the Air (SOTA) and Distance Education (DE) students.”*

#### **Explanation:**

In 2020 all students in Australia moved to online learning and parents of existing SOTA/DE students were astounded at what was made available in mass and with such a short time frame. 2020 also showed significant problems arise with the existing technology provided to SOTA/DE students.





Many lessons were cancelled due to satellite and/or Remote Education and Conferencing Tool (REACT) problems and no alternate lesson platform was offered. When the rest of the country are allowed to use other platforms to deliver effective lessons, why can this not be offered to children who have to receive their entire education via this means for their entire school life? Our children cannot return to face to face learning and catch up, so we must get this right to begin with. Numerous cancelled lessons is completely inadequate.

The hardware provided is also outdated and inadequate. Children should have access to a larger screen that allows for their lessons and worksheet to be displayed at the same time. Access to WiFi is also essential in a functioning classroom, which would allow the effective use of printers, scanners and ipad/tablets.

Many parents who are still recovering from drought are going to extraordinary lengths and expense to be able to access basic technology and internet in their school room to ensure their children can access a functioning level of education. This situation is not acceptable.

#### **A21. Wentworth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Education of Department (DoE) consult with parents and supervisors before updating the technology provided in the School of the Air and Distance Education home school room.”*

#### **Explanation:**

It is imperative that the DoE consult with a core group of parents or supervisors from a range of schools to ensure appropriate technology is provided to enable lesson delivery in the home school room.

Consultation must involve the people who are in the home school room using the technology day to day, to get an effective understanding of the problems that are hindering the education of our children.

It is the understanding from the home school room that is imperative to getting this right.

#### **A22. Broken Hill**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobbies the Department of Education (DoE) to make NSW Department of Education Distance Education Schools a priority when upgrading bandwidth in schools, to improve internet services and connectivity for geographically isolated students studying through Distance Education.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Currently students enrolled in primary school through the NSW Department of Education via Distance Education (DE) are having daily difficulties in relations to their internet service. These difficulties include, but are not limited to - trouble connecting to Remote Education and Conferencing Tool (REACT) lessons and being logged out of lessons, extremely slow download speeds, very slow loading of web pages and difficulty watching online videos as it takes a long time to load and buffers throughout the video.





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All students attending NSW Department of Education schools should have equal access to online course content and virtual learning experiences, but geographically isolated students studying through DE seem to be experiencing difficulties where others are not.

Students enrolled in rural and remote schools, such as White Cliffs Public School, are able to use the internet daily without interruption. All students are able to access video conferencing and interactive live shows with ease. Students all have their own laptops and are able to use the internet simultaneously without any trouble. This is currently not the case for DE students who are encountering difficulties with their internet, especially with their satellite lesson platform, REACT.

White Cliffs is a very remote and isolated town and some students studying through Broken Hill School of The Air (BHSOTA) live on stations not too far from White Cliffs, so it is hard to see how the internet is not of equal reliability for all students who live in remote areas.

Bandwidth is described as the maximum data transfer rate of a network or Internet connection. It measures how much data can be sent over a specific connection in a given amount of time. Schools require large bandwidths and without it can run into service problems when students and teachers are accessing the internet.

By increasing the bandwidth for DE schools this will directly impact the amount of data that can be transferred through the schools connection and therefore improve the quality of education for geographically isolated students studying through Distance Education.

This will ensure that all students are able to access equal education opportunities no matter where they live.

### **A23. Broken Hill**

*“That ICPA-NSW asks the Department of Education (DoE) to investigate whether Remote Education and Conferencing Tool (REACT) is the most effective video conferencing platform for the delivery of essential satellite lessons to Distance Education (DE) students.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Technology and the part it plays in our lives has evolved dramatically over the past few decades. We rely on technology in all aspects of our lives but DE students, especially those who are geographically isolated, rely on technology more than most. DE students have been so fortunate to have had access to video conferencing satellite lessons for approximately 20 years. The REACT program has been invaluable in allowing students to see their teachers and peers, show their work and engage in satellite lessons that can make them feel like they are in the same room with their teacher and peers.

However, the REACT program does not seem to be evolving and changing as our technology demands increase.

Case Study:





**PROGRAMME IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PRESIDENT**



“I have been using REACT since I started our DE journey eight years ago and unfortunately I have found that the quality of satellite lessons delivered using REACT have deteriorated rather than improved as other technology available to us improve.

I am not the only one who has experienced this. Many, if not all, families enrolled in Broken Hill School of The Air (BHSOTA) have had difficulties using REACT.”

Broken Hill Branch asked SOTA families to complete a log book of issues they experienced with REACT late last year and there was a multitude of problems. Students are unable to be heard, their microphones are delayed or won't turn on. The teacher is unable to turn a student's video tool on as it distorts their audio, so the student can be seen but not heard.

Students working on Google classroom to complete work interactively have difficulty, especially younger students as they need to have their REACT screen open to hear instructions from their teacher but also have the Google classroom screen open to complete the work. This can cause a lot of difficulty and stress for students trying to navigate their way between the two programs.

The most common problem was that students are being logged out of their lesson by REACT with no warning or reason. Unfortunately, from evidence given by families, this is happening during most lessons. Students are being logged out during the lesson, they then have to spend time quickly logging back on before they miss too much. For younger students this can be very distressing, as their satellite lessons are often quite short and they feel they are missing out, as it can take some time to log back on to the lesson.

These problems seem to be quite unacceptable, especially children being 'kicked out' of their classroom during a lesson. Imagine if this was happening in a face to face classroom with a teacher kicking students out of the classroom with no reason on a daily basis. The community would be in uproar.

As technology changes our connectivity and ability to communicate and complete tasks online has significantly improved. Yet unfortunately REACT doesn't seem to be improving at the same rate as other available technologies. For this reason we would like to perhaps see an investigation into whether or not REACT is actually the best platform available for our DE students, or whether there will be changes made to REACT, as it is a 20 year old program.

We want to ensure DE students have access to the best technology possible.

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## Early Childhood

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### A24. Louth

*“That ICPA-NSW requests that the Minister for Early Childhood establish preschools in small isolated schools where there is no other access to preschool for three and four year olds.”*

#### **Explanation:**





Several remote schools have been identified as servicing areas without access to pre-schooling. This is despite an on-going effort to collaboratively find a system with sustainably which could facilitate pre-schooling in remote villages for three and four-year olds.

Weilmoringle has opened its preschool in October 2017 and yet that is the only operational pre school despite the Department of Education's (DoE) announcement of them being approved and actioned in March 2017.

We believe that the process could be hastened if the three key elements (site/venue, staffing and provider) were worked on at the same time.

Louth Public School is one of those schools. Louth Branch ICPA, along with many western communities is no longer able to be anything other than insulted by the Department of Education's Early Childhood and Education and Care Directorate's (ECECD) approach towards resolving this educational inequity.

#### A25. Bourke

*“That ICPA-NSW lobbies all relevant Ministers and State Government Departments to 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 for early childhood education.”*

#### **Explanation:**

An example of how the inaccuracy is causing disparity is Bourke was assessed at the lowest rate of drought impact as at 30 June 2019. As most people would be well aware, this is indeed far from the case, and that Bourke still 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 and Childcare) for the three licences were a third of what was received due to assessment determined by the CDI. 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 the ongoing drought.

The use of the CDI 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.

#### A26. Louth

*“That ICPA-NSW request the Minister for Education and Early Childhood to address the lack of salary parity between four year trained early childhood teachers and four year trained primary and high school teachers.”*

#### **Explanation:**





It is necessary for the Department of Education (DoE) 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 high schools.

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 high schools.

#### A27. Bourke

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

#### **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. \$10,000pa)
- 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) (\$10,000pa)

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.

#### A28. Bourke

*“That ICPA-NSW lobby Minister for Education and Early Childhood to explore options for better governance models for Early Childhood Services in Western NSW.”*

#### **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.

#### **A29. Louth**

*“ICPA-NSW asks NSW Government Ministers to not announce initiatives which they have actioned until those projects are ready to be commenced.”*

#### **Explanation:**

The establishment of preschools by the NSW Department of Education in very remote NSW was announced at the 2017 ICPA-NSW State Conference in Mudgee. To date there are two (perhaps three by the time of this conference!) operational of the ten identified by ICPA-NSW.

#### **A30. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to include children from remote and very remote settings in the priority group for three-year old’s so that they can access preschool.”*

#### **Explanation:**

We would like remote and very remote children to be included in this criteria primarily due to the cost, time and other vagaries associated with travel in remote and very remote areas - this would enable the child/children to access 600 hours of preschool over two years.

This also allows time for children to complete any intervention programs which may need to be delivered.

#### **A31. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW communicates to the The Smith Family review into attendance strategies for early learning, the idea that 600 hours preschool accessed through the universal guarantee could be done across a two year period prior to school in rural and remote areas.”*

#### **Explanation:**

4 year olds attending face to face preschool 15 hours a week, often across three separate days, is not always a financial or physical possibility for families in rural and remote settings. This is primarily due to the cost and time associated with travel to access early childhood services. Families may be able to access one day the first year (3yo) and two days the following year (4yo) accessing the recommended 600 hours across two years instead of one. This would benefit small







rural preschools through increased funding for 3 year olds who would not be able to attend 15 hours as 4 year olds. It would also allow students more contact time with educators who may be able to recognise if early intervention for students with developmental delays may be required.

### A32. Louth

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to incentivise students who are studying Early Childhood qualification by assisting with study costs, to enable remote preschools to be staffed adequately.”*

#### **Explanation:**

After a protracted process Louth Branch is delighted to have (pending at the time of writing this explanation) three of the original ten sites identified as needing practical access to preschool, actually running as preschools. These are at Weilmoringle, Louth and Wanaaring and staffing is a critical component to their success. It is obvious that in these areas there is a dearth of Early Childhood certificate, diploma and degree qualifications amongst the people who live there. While there are local people interested in training to take these positions, they will need to be supported financially to complete the required training.

### A33. Wentworth

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education to provide preschool within the school environment, where numbers and continuous population are considered too low to fund an independent preschool.”*

#### **Explanation:**

For the past few years, Pooncarie parents have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure their children can access some form of face-to-face preschool. The mums meet regularly for mothers’ group in Pooncarie and there are a number of children looking for preschool in the coming years.

It has now been four years since Reporting the Health and Development of Children in Rural and Remote Australia was prepared by the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute.

The report states that ‘Given that Early Childhood is the period of greatest developmental plasticity with profound long-term influences, access to timely and quality Early Childhood Education and Care service such as preschool and Early Childhood Intervention services such as allied health can prevent the avoidable and address presenting issues from the onset.’

With little change or progression to preschool in remote areas since the release of this report, it is now time to reconsider the options to delivering preschool where small numbers exist and allow for the provision of preschool in small schools where possible.

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## Rural Schools

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#### A34. Bourke

*“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to advocate that permanent Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item numbers for telehealth consultations that are 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.”*

#### **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 sometimes travel long distances only to have the appointment cancelled
- lengthy waiting lists to access practitioners are 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 are unfamiliar with metropolitan areas when accessing treatment
- many people needing National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plans are unable to navigate the system and without access to services they are unable to utilise their plans.

Utilisation of telehealth services can be of a 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 accessed 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.

#### A35. Collarenebri-Mungindi

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to change the numbers of students registered at the school for the limited schools program be lowered to 20 students.”*





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### **Explanation:**

The limited schools program minimum number of students registered at the school is currently 25. In rural and remote areas this number is preventing families from being able to apply for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) under the limited schools program. This program is designed to help rural families living in rural and remote towns access assistance under the AIC. The registered number (not attending) of students in these small schools is too high and therefore preventing families from being eligible to apply.

### **A36. Balranald**

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

### **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 the early transition program the NSW Department of Education would be allowing children to have some preschool education before attending primary school. The Balranald Branch would like to thank the NSW Department of Education and the Principal at Clare Public School for implementing an early transition program.

### **A37. 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’ calendar.”*

### **Explanation:**

When we have education issues in the bush, we are always aware of how fortunate we are to have ICPA as a voice through which we are able to advocate. However, this motion is really too old as it was first presented and carried with Department of Education (DoE) acclaim in 2011. It is a simple initiative to action.





It has come to our attention however that new directors responsible for 'ICPA areas' are sometimes aware of ICPA 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 Directors, newly appointed or not if they'd had the opportunity to meet with State Council and or members from their area and at least, heard of some of the issues ICPA-NSW is working towards.

### A38. Louth

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Executive Director of Public Schools NSW to ensure that the director educational leadership actually physically attend the rural, remote and very remote TPI schools in their area, at least twice a year.”*

#### **Explanation:**

There are many reasons for which the Louth and Wanaaring School communities feel that the Director 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 then also (and perhaps this is the most integral part of the overseeing role of a principal) 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'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.

### A39. Louth

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

#### **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 has resulted in issues with throwing out of and reordering school resources.





We feel that Directors 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 directors to help local people induct principals with a strong sense of the need to collaborate in an inviting way with communities to enable them to make decisions with which they are genuinely comfortable.

#### **A40. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW urges the Executive Director of NSW Public Schools to ensure an interview process is undertaken when a TP1 school's relieving principal's position is to be filled for longer than two terms.”*

#### **Explanation:**

When a principal is away from his/her 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 ICPA 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.

#### **A41. Balranald**

*“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to monitor and encourage consistent information at handovers of Principals in TP1 rural schools”*

#### **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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.





#### A42. Louth

*“That ICPA-NSW urges the Director Educational Leadership, to ensure that there is always a ‘hand over’ between Principals in TPI Schools particularly in the program.”*

#### **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 his/her 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 schools’ 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.

While obviously this is the most important task, often it is the one which the teacher is not able to do expediently as he/she are having to mentally grapple with and make decisions about other issues which also require immediate attention.

This has resulted in poor coordination of programs, resources and staff rosters; generally a longer period of time for the community and Principal to feel comfortable as co-workers in an isolated setting which has led to any dispute/misunderstanding/ being presented as a complaint; a ‘program vacuum’ being created (as in no set outcomes’ adjusted program being followed daily); awkward staffing arrangements; new resources being unnecessarily purchased and a myriad of other negatives... most of which could be prevented by the outgoing Principal inducting the incoming Principal.

#### A43. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

*“That ICPA-NSW ask the Minister for Education and the Minister for Regional NSW if the agreed 2019 staffing levels for 2020 and 2021 not be immediately or gradually removed but remain in place in public schools.”*

#### **Explanation:**





The support that was provided to children in drought and bushfire affected communities by maintaining staffing entitlements at public schools was a godsend to many communities over the past few years. For some schools they were able to reach goals of providing a wider range or elective subjects. Take this away and we will see families moving away and enrolment numbers still decreasing. Knowing our local schools have the capacity to retain skilled and dedicated staff during these times of hardship helps give our children the opportunity to be the best they can be. It is acknowledged that some areas have come out of drought but it must be also noted that it takes some years for families/communities to regain their footing.

#### **A44. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobby the ministers for education and health to invest in the availability of on the ground youth and adolescent Mental Health services in rural schools and communities, further more provide incentives for these specialists to remain in our communities.”*

##### **Explanation:**

While there is some access to services, supply in many rural areas does not meet demand, to the point of failing to refer and lack of disclosure. If these services are not available locally, the expenses and continued trauma associated with travelling to access services are prohibitive for many families. By not providing incentives for specialist to remain in our community's it creates a fly in fly out mentality, a perception of a lack of care and a continuation of a lack of referrals and disclosure.

#### **A45. Walgett**

*“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Minister for Education to place Walgett Community College (WCC) on the list for bypassing from Years 7 – 12 commencing 2021.”*

##### **Explanation:**

We acknowledge the effort made by ICPA-NSW State Council to address this issue over the years but sadly our members and our community are still in need. We continue to lose valuable community members, some of whom have lived in the area for generations, in pursuit of an appropriate education for their children in the secondary years.

For 2021, 19 Queensland (QLD) Schools (see attached) were on the list for bypass and only two schools in NSW. In comparison with information collected from Educate Australia most of the 19 schools in QLD have a better educational opportunity and a better socio - educational Advantage than Walgett Community College.

Once again we have lost a Principal with this making it in the last seven years an average loss of one Principal per year. Up to nine staff are not returning for another year so this unrest and instability is a major disadvantage with staff losses reaching 60% turnover per year over the last five years.

We all know the figures, that 88% of students are in the bottom quartile for socio-educational





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advantage and that only 19% of students attend for 90% of the time. The curriculum has been significantly modified to meet the needs of the students attending the school and the prospect of achieving a Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) almost impossible, with only five Senior secondary students awarded a Senior secondary certificate on completion (as per information provided on the My School website 2019).

In 2019 WCC received approximately \$4 000 000 from the State Government and \$1 500 000 from Australian Government recurrent funding, therefore 106 students on average cost the Australian Government \$6 000 000. This information is freely and openly supplied on the Myschools website. This therefore makes the \$114 000 for six families averaging three children requiring the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance seem comparatively insignificant.

Out of the 2020 graduating students from the local Catholic Primary School none are attending the WCC and only seven from the State Primary School.

#### **A46. Walgett**

*“That ICPA-NSW request that the NSW government change the criteria for bypass to not be based on subjects alone but to include socio educational advantage and individually assess a school.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Once again we acknowledge the effort made by ICPA-NSW State Council to address this issue over the years but sadly our members and our community remain in need.

Walgett Community College (WCC) should be the most obvious choice for bypass in NSW and added to this existing list of two schools. This is not an option for these families and this is becoming and always has been a great injustice. We also accept this isn't just a school problem but an entire community battling alcohol, drugs, abuse, domestic violence and generational government dependency and this creates an environment that makes it difficult to learn in.

The criteria for bypass includes subject restrictions and as most subjects are available, there are very few, if any students doing them.

We understand and are willing to accept that as stated on the Department of Education Procedure for Bypass printed by the Queensland Government that it would need to be assessed every two years. We also see on this document that the HR assesses student enrolment numbers and that for Years 11 and 12, criteria is given to schools with less then 25 students in Years 11-12. This also makes WCC eligible.

The list of criteria should also include student behaviours. The WCC has a history of assaults to Teaching staff and to other students. After receiving documents by going through the Freedom of Information Act we were made aware of Police being called to the school on a number of occasions with weapons, drug exchanges, assaults on students and at least four teachers assaulted in 2019 alone. In 2019 we noted a serious assault where a student physically harmed a teacher. There are many of these incident reports available and these are increasing every year. This doesn't include injury to staff who are trying to protect other students from assault.

Of the five applications for a statement of support for Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) only







one student was successful and that was because they were in Year 12 and the subject was not available.

In November 2019 we were made aware that a teacher after trying to save another student was assaulted leaving the staff member with two broken vertebrae leading to surgery and of course, as we all would, mental and physical trauma. We feel that these statistics and incident reports and student safety issues should assist WCC in becoming eligible for the bypass and should be added to the required initial criteria by the NSW government to support all students residing in the Walgett Shire.

#### A47. Louth

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

#### **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.

#### A48. Louth

*“That ICPSA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to ensure that teacher housing is maintained to a high standard in remote and very remote schools by insisting the relevant authorities respond immediately to any reasonable requests.”*

#### **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 School house has been there 30 years and the recent upgrade did not include a dishwasher. The installation of a new stove and oven is also necessary as the current one is about to die. While in Louth the Principal and family are happy with the renovations 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 rain water 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.

#### **A49. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to include an appropriate vehicle for the Louth Public School.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Louth ICPA Branch requests as a matter of urgency a car that could transport all of Louth Public School (LPS) students to extracurricular activities. For example, a car could transport the students to activities such as team sports, sports carnivals, swimming carnivals, excursions, any cultural activities they may be invited to attend, other small school cluster days and the like. All these activities require at least a 200 km round trip on dirt roads. Students’ access and participation in these activities is a crucial part of their development. Currently parents have to drive those long distances requiring time away from work and other family commitments in order for their children to participate. Therefore, quite often attending such events are logistically impossible.

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 have or buy an appropriate vehicle. Therefore, without a vehicle attached to the school, these very remote students are at a disadvantage.

#### **A50. Louth**

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

#### **Explanation:**

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





### A51. Rankins Springs

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

#### **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 (RFW) 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 RFW 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.

### A52. Rankins Springs

*“That ICPA-NSW urges the Department of Education (DoE) 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.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Our local schools currently have access to a Hub and Spoke Program (formally Rural Area Relief {RAR} program) teacher when covering teaching staff on leave or who are attending Professional Development (PD) days. 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.

### A53. Rankins Springs





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

**Explanation:**

Currently the Assets Management Unit identify what projects will be funded with the Routine Planned Maintenance funds whilst the Principals of TP1 and 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.

**A54. Wentworth**

*“That ICPA-NSW congratulate the Minister for Education on the success of the Rural Experience Program and request the program be further extended.”*

**Explanation:**

Many small schools have reported enormous benefits from being provided with an additional teacher with different experiences. Some teachers have decided to continue in rural and remote communities.

Benefit would also be gained if rural and remote teachers were encouraged to take part in an exchange program. This would provide those teachers with experience in a larger mainstream setting where they are exposed to many and varying teachers and methods that they can learn from, adapt and bring back to their home school.

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## Special Education

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**A55. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobby the ministers for education and health to increase available allied health services in rural schools and communities.”*

**Explanation:**

While there is some access to specialised allied health services such as Occupational Therapists and Speech Pathologists, supply in many rural areas does not meet demand. If these services aren't available locally, the expenses associated with travelling to access services are prohibitive for many families. As the NSW Government have been unable to facilitate practical face to face early childhood education for numerous children in Western NSW, we have students in need





missing out on vital early interventions which has a carry-on effect throughout their school life. This lack of educational experiences and socialisation results in children starting school without the required language and other social skills required to succeed. It also means children requiring early intervention are not being identified until they start formal schooling.

**A56. Balranald**

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

**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 services, 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. Balranald Branch therefore requests that more incentives be offered to allied health professionals to work in rural and remote localities.

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## Tertiary

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**A57. 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, which would benefit very remote students.”*

**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/studies.

In most instances the study/training 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 would be alleviated if the courses could be completed in a shorter time frame, such as at Marcus Oldham. Louth ICPA members would like to see public universities considering offering that flexibility to condense their studies too.





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Louth ICPA members would like to see that remote students have access to (some of whom find study more difficult) an accommodation institution at which they study on 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 smaller time frame to their remote communities with their skills.

#### **A58. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW works with Universities to ensure that an adequate level of support be delivered by university/tertiary educators.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Louth ICPA 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 penalised 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.

#### **A59. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) in requesting the Federal Government to increase Centrelink rent assist payments.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Obviously 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 and is often prohibitive therefore to study for example in a larger city or it may mean that a student has to work so much that their course suffers.

#### **Fortnightly Example:**

If a student is over 18 years of age, has no children and the single Youth Allowance is \$304.60. Until March 2021 there is a Corona Virus supplement allowance of \$150.

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
- Coff’s Harbour Southern Cross University - \$400 without board
- Women’s College Sydney University - \$1200 with board





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- University of New England - \$350 without board
- Sydney rented share accommodation - \$600 without board
- Larger regional NSW town/city rented share accommodation - \$320 without board.

#### **A60. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education to review the way credits and advance standings can be transferred when a student studying an accredited teaching degree moves from one university to another.”*

#### **Explanation:**

Louth ICPA 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.

For example, 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 (CSU) in Dubbo. He then discovered that only two units from Notre Dame were acknowledged in his primary school degree at CSU. As a result this student has ceased his training.

These degree courses are both certified by Department of Education (DoE) so 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.

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. Obviously 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 cost of accommodation.

Thus the lack recognition of passed units is particularly frustrating for bush families.

#### **A61. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobbies the NSW Department of Education to investigate alternate delivery modes to video conferencing at small rural TAFE campuses.”*

#### **Explanation:**

TAFE campuses in rural towns offer courses by video conference. This delivery method does not suit the learning style of many students. In order for courses to run they require large numbers of students but in an area with small population it is almost impossible to get the numbers in order to have a face to face teacher. We would like to understand if any other delivery methods have been considered and if not, can they be.





## A62. Monaro

*“That ICPA-NSW calls on the NSW Government to support recommendations 17 and 18 of the NSW Parliament’s Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education report into The Future Development of the NSW Tertiary Education Sector.”*

### **Explanation:**

On 22 January 2021, the NSW Parliament’s Education Committee released its report into The Future Development of the NSW Tertiary Education Sector with its strong endorsement of the Country University Centre (CUC) model and its centres. ICPA-NSW had provided a submission into the inquiry supporting the CUC and its role in regional development in NSW.

The Chair’s Forward at page x notes:

*The Committee was highly impressed with the CUC model. In a NSW education system overloaded with problems and challenges, it is refreshing to find a successful, community-led innovation like CUCs.... Their targeted attention to student learning needs is a sharp departure from large, impersonal campus education. The more CUCs grow and succeed in NSW, the more our higher education system will flourish.*

After reviewing a Case Study on the CUC, the Committee comments at paragraph 3.38 on page 36:

*The committee was very impressed by the CUC model and found it to be a compelling community-driven initiative that was delivering high-quality tertiary education opportunities to its students. The committee commends the CUCs around the state for their efforts thus far and encourages the NSW Government to further explore ways to contribute to the future success of the CUCs, and other similar models.*

This endorsement has led to Recommendations 17 and 18 of the Parliamentary Committee:

- Recommendation 17: That the NSW Government prioritise support for CUCs in its forthcoming Higher Education Strategy.
- Recommendation 18: That the NSW Government engage with the CUCs about where future centres should be located, and support CUCs to provide careers guidance and advisory services.

ICPA-NSW was instrumental in developing the student learning and support models for the CUC, particularly through the involvement of people like Caroline McDonald, Jesse O’Donoghoe and Jilly-Ann Strother. ICPA-NSW should take great credit and satisfaction from the Committee endorsement of the CUC model.

With government acceptance of the Parliamentary Committee recommendations, the CUC will be inserted into future strategic planning of higher education in NSW and ICPA-NSW will have the opportunity to engage with the NSW Government about the future location of CUC Centres.

A full copy of the Report can be found at

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2597/Report%20No%2041%20->







[%20PC%203%20-%20Future%20development%20of%20the%20NSW%20tertiary%20education%20sector.pdf](#) .

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## Travel

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### A63. Rankins Springs

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

#### **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 2, 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 1, 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.

### A64. Wentworth

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport to reconsider minimum numbers required to start and maintain bus runs in small rural communities.”*

#### **Explanation:**

There are currently several small schools in our area that would benefit from a school bus service. Pomona Public School is one such school where new families are considering School of the Air over attending the local school due to travel commitments.

The Pomona bus was discontinued in 2017 and we find families are seeking for it to be reinstated

### A65. Rankins Springs

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



### **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 the Department of Transport 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 SDS 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. Families should be able to receive either the SSTS or the SDS, not necessarily both. We understand that some trials were conducted around this and perhaps Transport for NSW could provide some further information on the results.

### **A66. Balranald**

*"That ICPA-NSW asks the Minister for Transport to fast track the inclusion of preschool children on the School Drive Subsidy (SDS)."*

### **Explanation:**

By being able to access the SDS parents that are already or will be travelling substantial distances to access preschool education for their children will face less financial pressure to access an early education. Balranald Shire has a huge geographical area and combined with the impact of drought, being able to access the Early Learning Centre in town - for some, up to 190km away - is getting more and more challenging. Enrolments and attendance would improve if families could receive a subsidy to drive their children to preschool - and would help them to reach the universally recommended 15 hours per week.

### **A67. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*"That ICPA-NSW request the Minister for Transport to make provision for preschool students in rural and remote areas in the year prior to school to be included in the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) and the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS)."*

### **Explanation:**

Distance is currently a barrier for 4 year old's accessing preschool in isolated areas of NSW. The choice is currently between preschool via Distance Education or a long drive to the nearest service at the parent's expense. The former requires a committed tutor and limits students contact time with other children and the opportunity to develop important social skills. It also limits contact time with educators who may be able to determine if early intervention is required for students with developmental delays. While face to face preschool addresses these needs, the costs and time associated with travel exclude some families from accessing services. Early childhood education is the best investment we can give our children prior to them starting full time-school, no matter where we live.





**A68. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga**

*“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport to supply adequate funding and encourage local councils in rural and remote areas, to prioritise and maintain unsealed roads that are travelled on by families accessing schools and school bus routes.”*

**Explanation:**

Children in the Lightning Ridge and Goodooga region are often required to travel long distances along unsealed roads to access schools and school bus routes. It is recognised by local families that there are risks associated with these trips and it is important that these trips are as safe as possible.

While members are aware of the importance of driving to the conditions, they believe improving the maintenance programs conducted on these access roads will greatly decrease the risks associated with the frequent trips. Without giving priority to roads that families travel on to access schools and school buses, accessing face to face education becomes difficult and dangerous.

While Distance Education is a valuable alternative, many families do not have the time to commit to providing the necessary school room supervision or be in a financial situation to employ a suitable supervisor. For these families, travel on poorly maintained unsealed roads becomes an exhausting daily task for students and parents, impacting on school attendance and classroom performance.

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**Miscellaneous**

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**A69. Bourke**

*“That ICPA-NSW lobby NSW Minister for Health for Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) to be made available for rural and remote students travelling to access face-to-face specialist Allied Health services.”*

**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.

**A70. Louth**

*“That ICPA-NSW urges the Department of Education to recommend that their remote staff connect with ICPA-NSW as an information source for understanding isolated education processes and difficulties that may be incurred due to remoteness.”*





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### Explanation:

Louth ICPA Branch 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.

### A71. Monaro

*“That ICPA-NSW thanks the NSW Minister for Education and NSW Minister for Health for the expansion of the Wellbeing and Health In-reach Nurse (WHIN) program in NSW schools.”*

### Explanation:

The Wellbeing Health In-reach Nurse (WHIN) is a registered nurse who provides a range of support and coordination of health services with the aim of contributing to improved education, health and wellbeing outcomes for children, young people and families. Tasks undertaken by the WHIN may include identifying and triaging health needs of students and coordinating appropriate assessments and referral pathways into the relevant services.

There are currently six positions in NSW with a further 100 position to be established over the next four years.

