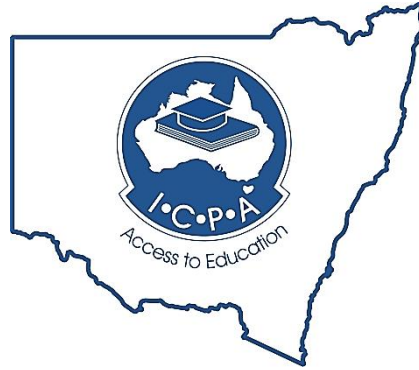


THE
ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION
OF NEW SOUTH WALES INC



Annual Conference

Moree – 2020

*Agenda & Motions
Programme*

THE ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION
OF NEW SOUTH WALES INCORPORATED

Wednesday 18th March 2020		DAY ONE
8:00 am	Registration Max Centre Balo Street, Moree	
8:30 am	Welcome and explanation of Conference	Claire Butler
8:40 am	Welcome to Country	Gail Sampson
8:50 am	National Anthem St Philomena's School Moree Moree Christian School Moree East Public School Moree Public School Moree Secondary College	
8:55 am	Opening of Conference Moree Branch Life Member	Jane Woods
9:00 am	Shire Welcome to District and Conference Mayor of Moree Plains Shire Council	Katrina Humphries
9:10 am	Introduction of Conference Convenors Convenors Announcements Introduction of NSW State Council Distribution of voting cards Introduction of invitees Adoption of the Minutes of the 2019 Conference as circulated electronically Adoption of Apologies as received and as posted in the conference room	Deb Castle Sarnia Walker Deb Castle
9:20 am	ICPA-NSW President's Report	Claire Butler
9:30 am	Guest Speakers Executive Director, Information and Ticketing, Customer Technology and Services Division – Transport for NSW (TfNSW) Point to Point Commissioner – Transport for NSW (TfNSW)	Lewis Clark Barbara Wise
10:00 am	<u>MORNING TEA</u>	
10:30 am	Travel Report Agenda Motions	Michael Davis and David Butler
11:00 am	Guest Speaker Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning	The Hon. Sarah Mitchell
11:20 am	Early Childhood Report Agenda Motions	Sue Gordon and Skye Bragg

NOTE: PROGRAMME IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PRESIDENT

- 12:00 pm **LUNCH**
- 1:00 pm **Video Presentation** The Hon. Bronnie Taylor
Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women
- 1:10 pm **Guest Speaker** Wendy Baldwin
Teaching Director, Gwydir Mobile Children's Service
- 1:45 pm **Rural Schools Report** Annabel Strachan
Agenda Motions
- 2:15 pm **Video Presentation**
Bernie Shakeshaft – Australian of the Year 2020 Local Hero
- 2:25 pm **Allowances Report** David Cameron and Tanya Mitchell
Agenda Motions
- 3:00 pm **AFTERNOON TEA**
- 3:30 pm **Guest Speaker** Duncan Taylor
CEO, Managing Director, Country Universities Centres (CUC)
- 3:50 pm **Tertiary Report** Duncan Taylor and Tim Fletcher
Agenda Motions
- 4:15 pm **ICPA (Aust) Report** Wendy Hick
ICPA (Aust) Immediate Past President
- 4:25 pm Agenda Motions
- 5:00 pm Collect voting cards and close of Day One
- 5:15 pm Buses leaving for motels when full

The Conference Dinner will be held at:

Max Ballroom, 6:30 pm.

Dress: Semi Formal/Smart Casual

Thursday 19th March 2020		DAY TWO
8:00 am	Start of Conference Members sign AGM attendance sheet	
8:15 am	ICPA-NSW ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	
9:15 am	Close of AGM and welcome guests to their seats	
9:30 am	Guest Speaker Northern NSW General Manager, Telstra	Mike Marom
10:00 am	<u>MORNING TEA</u>	
10:30 am	Communications Report Agenda Motions	Caroline McDonald and Libby McPhee
10:50 am	Guest Speaker Leader, Rural and Distance Education, NSW	Mike Tom
11:10 am	Distance Education/ AHVISE Report Agenda Motions	Caroline McDonald and Skye Bragg
11:30 am	Guest Speaker Chairman, Bush Children's Education Foundation of NSW (BCEF)	Richard Dougan
11:45 am	Special Education Report Agenda Motions	Claire Butler
12:20 pm	Video Presentation Boarding Schools Expo	
12:30 pm	<u>LUNCH</u>	
1:30 pm	Video Presentation	
1:40 pm	Guest Speaker NBN Co, Chief Development Officer for Regional and Remote	Gavin Williams
2:00 pm	Agenda Motions	
2:15 pm	Guest Speakers <i>'Life of a Country Boy at Boarding School'</i> CEO, Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA)	James Treweeke Richard Stokes
2:30 pm	Boarding Schools, Hostels and Agricultural High Schools Report Agenda Motions	Irene Lund

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3:00 pm **AFTERNOON TEA**

3:30 pm **Guest Speaker**
Gwydir Chiropractor & Physiotherapist

Rachel Assef

3:45 pm Agenda Motions

4:30 pm Farewell to Departing Councillors

5:00 pm Closing Formalities

The Post Conference Canapes will be held at:
Bank Art Museum, 25 Frome Street, 6:00pm
Host to the 2019 Archibald Prize and Young Archies Regional Tour
Dress: Smart Casual

Allowances

A1. Nyngan

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) in requesting the Federal Government to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children Boarding Allowance to more closely reflect the real costs of educating isolated students.”



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

A2. Moree

“That the ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to request the relevant ministers to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance in alignment with the increasing cost of boarding school fees.”



Explanation: The rate being paid for AIC in 1993 was \$4,386 and the rate being paid in 2020 is \$8,557, this shows that this allowance has increased by approximately 2% - 2.5% over the past 27 years. This shows that the AIC allowance is not increasing in line with the CPI and as a result families are being forced to leave our community to access affordable education.

A3. Broken Hill

“That ICPA NSW assists ICPA (Aust) to lobby the relevant Department to increase the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) for students undertaking secondary education at a boarding school.”



Explanation: After the completion of Primary School, geographically isolated students have few options available to them for their secondary education. Usually there are just two choices, continue distance education or go to a boarding school.

Often boarding school is the only choice, as distance education for secondary school can prove to be too difficult to manage for many families.

The costs associated with boarding schools, as many people are well aware, are hugely expensive. Not just the actual school fees but also the day to day expenses.

One family in our branch spent \$3,000 at the beginning of this term before they had even dropped their child at school. This money paid for a computer, uniforms (summer only), school supplies, text books and other necessary supplies. Of course on top of this there are the school fees and

many ongoing costs. There is also the cost of fuel and accommodation when visiting your child and/or bringing them home.

We understand that it is a family's choice to send their child to boarding school and there are other options available but, as mentioned, distance education is not often a viable choice.

Children raised on remote properties are wonderful assets to the wider community, they are hard-working and resourceful. I think an investment from the government to help their families give them the best opportunities in their secondary education is a wise and worthy one.

Our branch and many surrounding area have been in drought now for three years and families are struggling. It seems extremely unfair that children who have a lot to offer our community may miss out on the best education they can get, because of where they live. Yet with the continued rising costs of boarding school and the continued drought, many children will be missing out because parents can no longer afford boarding school.

Sending a child to boarding school places many burdens on isolated families, both financially and emotionally, yet often it is the only option for a quality, enjoyable and successful secondary education. An increase in the AIC would greatly help ease the financial burden that paying for a boarding school education places on families.

A4. Broken Hill

"That ICPA NSW assists ICPA (Aust) to lobby the relevant Department to increase the Allowance for Isolated Children (AIC) for students undertaking secondary education via distance education."



Explanation: After the completion of primary school through a distance education school, families are required to return furniture and teaching resources to the school in which they were enrolled for the primary years. Families then have to set their students up for secondary schooling via distance education with new furniture, technology needs, of which there are more in secondary schooling, and teaching resources. Also, some families may only have one Department of Education computer connected to the internet. If there are primary schooled age students in the home using the school computer and the secondary student is required to use the internet, which would be a large proportion of their day, then the student must use the family's internet, which is often costly and of limited availability.

All of these costs are all the responsibility of the student's family.

With students moving into secondary schooling through distance education it will quite often mean that the school is a much further distance from their home. This makes travel and accommodation expenses a lot higher. It also makes it more difficult for families to ensure their students are able to attend school events. For example, many of our ex Broken Hill School of the Air students attend Dubbo Secondary school of Distance Education. Dubbo is an 8 hour drive from Broken Hill, even further for remote families on stations. There is very limited public transport access to Dubbo, and it is not a familiar town to many of our families. Therefore parents would feel very uncomfortable sending their students alone on the bus that leaves at 4 am. So parents have to leave their family and business, pay for fuel and accommodation for what will probably be a weeklong trip away to make sure their child can attend school functions and be with their classmates.

The current drought has seen our families struggling for a number of years and the rise of costs to educate our children through distance education is becoming greater. An increase in the AIC for

students attending secondary school via distance education would greatly help families meet these additional costs and help ease a huge burden placed on geographically isolated families.

Our distance education students should have the same opportunities as their peers to access a public school secondary education without adding any burden to their families because of where they live.

A5. Walgett

“That ICPA-NSW request the NSW Minister for Education to place Walgett Community College on the list for Bypassing from Years 7-12 from 2020 and beyond as a matter of urgency.”



Explanation: The issue of the placing Walgett Community College on the list for Bypassing has been on the agenda for far too long. The impact it is having on our community has reached crisis point, particularly with the ongoing drought having such a huge impact on finances in every business within our community.

We acknowledge the huge effort that has been made by NSW Council to address this issue. Sadly most of our members in need of this assistance will not benefit from the changes that have been made to the Statement of Support process.

Allowing Bypassing of the Walgett Community College is supported by the Walgett community and is the best and most appropriate step to take to ensure students are able to access an education that meets their needs.

Walgett Community College must be placed on the 2020 ‘Limited Schools Programme’ list so families living in or near Walgett, are eligible for AIC to ensure our towns survival.

A6. 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.

A7. Walgett

“That ICPA-NSW assists ICPA (Aust) to request the relevant Federal Ministers to alter the current criteria for the Relocation Scholarship under the Youth Allowance scheme. We would ask that rural and remote students, who received the AIC in their High school years, due to proven geographical isolation be eligible for the Relocation Scholarship regardless of meeting the Youth Allowance criteria or not.”



Explanation: Under the current system of eligibility for the Relocation Scholarship, rural and remote children are not able to apply for this scholarship unless they have met the criteria and been approved for the Youth Allowance.

We do not want handouts. Justice and equality in access to education will only be achieved when these students who must live away from their homes are given the difference in cost between living at home and away.

In denying these students access to the Relocation Scholarship the Government is limiting them to careers and futures not beyond their Secondary education.

Rural and remote communities so desperately need these children to further their education. We all live in the hope that one day these very students will return with the necessary skills, to fill the many gaps we all experience in the most basic of service providers.

This Scholarship is misleading in nature as of course rural and remote students have to ‘relocate’ as they are unable to live and study from their family home like their city counterparts.

A8. 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 family. Commodity prices and sale of stock due to drought can exaggerate figures. Consideration needs to be given to the fact that most income goes back into the running of the farm or into Farm Management Deposits for restocking and/or taxation reasons because of the forced sale of stock. We are not wanting to include students moving out of home because they feel like moving. The students we represent 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.

A9. NSW State Council

“That ICPA-NSW assist ICPA (Aust) with their request to establish a Rural Hardship Education Fund.”



Explanation: The Introduction of a Rural Hardship Education Fund is desperately needed to assist the many families in drought-stricken areas who are struggling to afford to educate their children, and ensure rural and remote students' education continues unchanged in times of drought and other rural hardship whether they are boarding away from home, attending a local rural school/kindergarten or studying via distance education.

There is precedence for government assistance in previous droughts and times of rural hardship through the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) scheme and other initiatives. In 2005, during a period of drought, there was a major increase in the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance. In the next drought, the Exceptional Circumstances Program, which no longer exists, added a supplementary payment to the AIC Additional Boarding Allowance, during the years 2008-2011 before reverting back in 2012. Financial assistance to lessen the burden of educational costs must be established urgently for rural families battling to keep their children at school.

The Federal Government is currently offering drought assistance funding to independent boarding schools, where the schools apply for funding (schools need to know families financial situations) and can assist students they identify, but that this does not guarantee that assistance gets to every student needing it, for example it leaves out rural small schools, distance education and tertiary students.

A10. NSW State Council

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Government, as a matter of urgency, to establish an Education Grant for all students accessing education from hardship areas throughout NSW.”



Explanation: There are many drought and fire affected areas across NSW. Families in these areas are struggling with the cost of educating their children. Many of the government and charity sector financial aid programs are for specific purposes and do not allow the money to be spent on education expenses. There have been previous instances where there have been one off payments made to affected households who were impacted by natural disasters. We are in need of an allowance for all farming families, and the rural business families (including shop owners, contractors) to ensure all students get the necessary education whilst living through the current drought. The current NSW DPI Drought index map is incorrect and needs to be corrected first to ensure that the funds go to those in the greatest need.

A11. Walgett

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) to request the Minister for Families and Social Services and the Minister of Education for a change in the distance criteria to the Assistance for Isolated Children, (AIC) funding for all families in current extreme drought affected areas so as to enable all those families to be eligible for funding.”



Explanation: Due to this ongoing severe drought it is increasingly onerous to keep families in our rural and remote towns especially those families with skills. Our towns have suffered more than most with seven out of eight years in drought. We need all the assistance we can get for those wishing to educate their children away at boarding school. If our families were able to access the AIC funding it would be more attractive for the families to stay. It is absolutely imperative that we keep professional and skilled labour in our rural towns so as to help in the rebuilding of these communities after the drought breaks. Too many people are leaving our communities to educate children elsewhere and this has to be stopped. The ongoing movement of families to the larger regional center's or to the cities will leave our smaller communities continuing to lose their population at an unsustainable rate.

A12. Wentworth

"That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education and the Minister for Agriculture and Western NSW to develop a one off drought payment for Geographically Isolated students receiving AIC payments."



Explanation: The NSW Government have delivered Local Land Service rate cuts and Freight Subsidies and there has been some drought measures for preschool (although not very remote pre-schoolers) and maintaining teacher numbers in schools, but there has been no assistance for geographically isolated students particularly those in high school. The economic return of investment in education is almost immeasurable yet families who cannot access a local high school through geographic isolation are finding it financially devastating to provide any form of education to their children. A drought education payment to geographically isolated children may be the difference between that child being able to stay in school.

A13. Bourke

"That ICPA-NSW assists ICPA (Aust) to lobby the Federal Government to find a solution to prohibit waiting times to make contact with Department of Human Services staff when making or needing information regarding allowance applications."



Explanation: Students and families have found themselves waiting ridiculously long periods on the telephone to speak to staff at Centrelink to enquire, chase up and submit information. The majority of these families live hundreds of kilometres from Centrelink Offices. The local Human Services office does not have expertise or are not permitted to answer Youth Allowance questions, hence the need for confirmation by telephone. We also have several instances where staff have not been able to liaise with applicants as they are friends of the family in the local community.

Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools and Hostels

A14. Moree

“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant Ministers to provide more hostel style accommodation facilities in larger rural towns to enable children and families access to affordable education closer to where they live.”



Explanation: With the worsening economic and environmental conditions in rural areas, families that are unable to afford to send their children away to boarding schools are left with little choice for a quality education for their children. There are distance education options available, but this can put children at a serious disadvantage when their class size can be as small as three other students. These students may also not have access to team sports or extra-curricular activities, parents and care givers in many cases feel unable to support the students learning, creating extra stress and burden on families. If more hostel options were available in larger towns in rural and regional NSW this would give parents the option to be able to board their children in these safe, managed environments and allow access to a quality education with the ability to be involved in sport, extra-curricular activities and learn the skills they need to adjust socially to a broader environment.

A reference point for setting up and maintaining these hostels could be taken from the Western Australian model, where there are nine hostels, housing 550 boarders across WA. These hostels are called residential colleges and are run by the Western Australian Department of Education, and staff working in these facilities are trained in safe management practices of children. These hostels have proved very affordable and successful and no doubt beneficial to the communities in which they are placed as they enable families to keep their children closer to home and support smaller local communities.

A15. 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.

A16. North West Slopes

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education to open a Government Girls Agricultural Boarding School in North West New South Wales to allow equal opportunity of access to such facility that is at present available solely for boys.”



Explanation: In the 21st Century, many girls from rural and remote areas of Australia are still missing out on the opportunity of education at a Government Boarding School. In NSW we have Hurlstone (in South Sydney) and Yanco at Leeton (in the South of the state). These are selective Agricultural State Schools, both of which offer boarding equally to boys and girls.

In the North West of NSW there is Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School, which offers education for day and boarding students – but access is available only for boys. There is no access to a New South Wales Government Boarding School in the North West of NSW for female students. Presumably many of the male students who board at Farrer MAHS have female siblings who also have need of government boarding facilities.

A17. Moree

“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant Ministers to provide more state boarding school options for girls in NSW.”



Explanation: State boarding in NSW is limited to three state boarding schools and the only state boarding school in the north of NSW is limited to boys boarding. This means that girls are unable to attend and leaves children and parents with the only other option of sending their child to Yanko or Hurlstone boarding schools a considerable distance of at least six hours further from Tamworth. By only offering a boys only state boarding facility in Tamworth could be considered sexist and a serious disadvantage to all eligible female students in the region.

A18. Moree

“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant Ministers to increase the number of state boarding school options available in the North and North West of NSW.”



Explanation: The only state boarding school option available to isolated families in the north and North West of NSW is located in Tamworth and it is limited to boys only. Families living in rural and isolated areas need to be able to access affordable state boarding school options to send their children to. Families are being forced travel almost the entire length of the state of NSW to get their child to a state boarding school or pay for a private boarding school option, which for many families in the current economic conditions is simply unattainable.

A19. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to investigate the reasons why at Yanco Agricultural High School there has been no significant investment in buildings since 1994.”



Explanation: Yanco Agricultural High School (YAHS) has been a corner stone of public agricultural education since 1922. Since the introduction of co-education in 1993 enrolments have increased steadily and peaked in 2013, '14 and '15 where numbers were consistently around 380 with a fairly even split between male and female students. The current capacity for the school is 360 students in a fully co-ed boarding facility and our aim is to make sure all students are housed in permanent buildings with reverse cycle air conditioning. YAHS is the only boarding school in Australia that has obligate weekly and termly boarders, there are no day students. Hurlstone aside, with only 30 boarders in total, YAHS is the only public co-ed boarding school in the state and certainly the only facility catering for the needs of families in western NSW.

The last new dormitory constructed at YAHS was in 1994, a new girl's dorm so all the buildings at the school are aging. Some of the demountable dorms that the girls are using are in a very poor state of repair, meaning there are times when due to high temperatures the girls need to be moved elsewhere as the buildings are too hot. The school was told in 2011 that continued high enrolments would be required to see more investment. When that was met, the new target was HSC results, now we are back to enrolments; what will the next target be? With poor infrastructure our 2020 enrolment figures are around 250 and the Yanco P&C do not accept drought as the primary driver of low enrolments. The low enrolments are being felt through the school in reduced subject choices, especially in Years 11 and 12, reduced sport options at the school, inability to field teams in some age groups and no doubt less staff at the school and as a consequence the broader economic impacts on the local community.

Communication

A20. Balranald

"That ICPSA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to give a time frame for when the remaining satellite schools will be transferred onto the NBN Sky muster satellite."



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 satellite internet such as the NBN where many families in the area have become connected and noticed significantly improved internet speeds and improved reliability.

A21. 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 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 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 login placing added pressure on the Teaching Principal who already has a challenging workload and on the School Administration Manager.

The school has installed a 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.

A22. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW requests Telstra to confirm the establishment date of the small cell tower at Clare.”



Explanation: After many years of lobbying, Balranald Branch would like to thank Telstra for successfully applying to build a small cell tower under the Mobile Blackspot Program at Clare Public School. Balranald Branch would also like to acknowledge the hard work of ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) in advocating for small rural schools to have reliable mobile coverage.

It would be helpful to Balranald Branch to know when the small cell tower will be erected.

A23. Namoi

“That ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) request the relevant ministers to provide a rebate for rural and remote customers who will need to upgrade equipment (aerials and boosters) to change from 3G to 4G.”



Explanation: We feel that with the changing over from 3G to 4G that the cost should not be a further burden on rural and remote customers. In some areas in the North West there are large gaps or distances between towers and some towers have been upgraded to 4G and others are still 3G. If you have old aerials and devices they do not work on the 4G system. This is not a cheap exercise and in some cases we are doing this just to get some service – not even a great service!

A24. Namoi

“That ICPA-NSW continues to liaise with Telstra to ensure that there is a direct line as a point of contact within Australia for all rural and remote customers.”



Explanation: We understand that there should be a direct line within Australia for customers who are 100 kms from their nearest Telstra shop. In our experience this has not happened and we ask Telstra to clarify if the 100 kms is by road or as ‘the crow flies’ and what relevance it is to a Telstra shop? Trying to explain complex issues about aerials and towers and distance etc. to a call centre overseas is both time consuming and frustrating.

A25. Monaro

“That ICPA-NSW assists ICPA (Aust) to continue lobbying all telecommunication companies and governments for mobile service coverage in rural and remote blackspot areas.”



Explanation: While it is appreciated that the government's Mobile Blackspot Program is rolling out to provide better mobile coverage for rural families it is primarily going to benefit the more regionally placed families rather than the remote families. Remote families often do not have the choice of landline and they rely solely on mobile phone and internet for communication and many do not have the access.

A26. Namoi

“That ICPA-NSW continues to assist ICPA (Aust) to advocate for better mobile coverage in rural and remote areas.”



Explanation: As there are still many areas in NSW and the North West of the state that have poor or limited mobile phone access with large distances between towers, we need to continue to push for these gaps to be filled and more towers to be allocated to these rural and remote areas. We are using the mobile and internet services to conduct our business and there is a big disadvantage to rural people who struggle with poor, expensive and limited service.

Distance Education

A27. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to provide preschool places at the Bourke Walgett School of Distance Education (BWSODE).”



Explanation: Currently, the Bourke Walgett School of Distance Education (BWSODE) does not offer Preschool. Students in the area covered by the BWSODE, are required to undertake Preschool through Dubbo School of Distance Education (DSODE), Broken Hill School of The Air (BHSOTA) or in some cases to the north of the Bourke Shire, Charleville SOTA.

Parents who have more than one child are having to choose between staying at the above schools or split their families and enrolling their students into two centres (e.g. the pre-schooler in Dubbo, and their year one student in BWSODE) which is practically challenging in a school room and logistically demanding.

Therefore, students are continuing their education through the other centres and not returning to BWSODE.

To overcome students going to other centres, the distance education modules of preschool should be rolled out through the BWSODE to ensure local students attend their local Distance Education centre.

A28. Louth

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



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

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 (DE). Successful DE requires a tutor and an appropriate place in which to study.

Currently children in this category are unable to access Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC), In Home (CCB) or financial aid for the employment of a home tutor. The Distance Education Allowance may financially cover the setting up of a school room however some students are without a space to 'set up'. There have been instances whereby indigenous high school students

could access two hours a week tuition but that was at the discretion of the distance education centre and two hours a week is nowhere near enough time.

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 (Year 7).

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. The model has varying precedents. In the 1980s and 90s DE students could come to school and quietly complete their leaflets. In another instance students were tutored in an un-air-conditioned village hall! Recently indigenous students were given permission by the generosity of the principal to come to school and the DE centre provided a tutor, for two days of the week. These arrangements have been advocated for privately and are ad hoc. Therefore, in some instances, remote families are anxious when their children are nearing stage four (Year 7).

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 6. 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.

A29. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to support incentives, such as recognition of work experience, for graduate teachers who accept work as 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 a number of 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 recognised 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?

Early Childhood

A30. Wentworth

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



Explanation: It has now been three 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 observed that not only did children in remote and rural areas repeatedly present as having the poorest developmental outcomes, but that they were also significantly more likely to be exposed to the adverse social determinants of health and development.

The report also 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 for delivering preschool education where small numbers exist and allow for the provision of preschool in small schools where possible.

A31. 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 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 that could facilitate pre-schooling in remote villages for three and four year olds.

Weilmoringle has opened its preschool in October 2017 and yet, it remains the only operational preschool in a remote village despite the Department of Education’s announcement of Louth and Wanaaring also being approved 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 the 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 approach towards resolving this educational inequity.

A32. Balranald

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



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 180 kms 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. It allowed the children to have access to education 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.

A33. 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: Four 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 (3 year old) and two days the following year (4 year old) accessing the recommended 600 hours across two years instead of one. This would benefit small rural preschools through increased funding for three year olds who would not be able to attend 15 hours as four 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.

A34. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW request the Minister for Education to either bring Mobile Services that were previously Budget Based Funding (BBF) back under the control of the NSW Education Department or request the Federal Minister for Social Services to issue long term contracts to these services.”



Explanation: There are a few mobile services left that were unable to transition to long day care or preschool when Budget Based Funding ceased to exist. These services operate in the most remote locations in the state and provide the only form of regular face to face Early Childhood Education to these isolated children.

These services now operate on a two year contract that expires in July with no news of future funding, so staff are never guaranteed a long term position. There is no secret as to how extremely difficult it is to find qualified educators in remote areas, and this is made all the more difficult when you cannot guarantee your funding from year to year.

These services are vital in remote communities and the current system of funding undervalues the critical role these services play in educating our vulnerable rural and remote children.

Rural Schools

A35. Louth

“That an ICPA-NSW representative meets annually with each regional director 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 lobby. However, this motion is really too old as it was first presented and carried with Department of Education acclaim in 2011. It is a simple initiative to action.

It has come to our attention however that new directors responsible for ‘ICPA 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 is working towards.

A36. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Executive Director of Public Schools NSW to ensure that the regional directors actually physically attend the rural, remote and very remote 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.

A37. Louth

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



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.

A38. Hillston

"That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education to consider subsidising the cost of Telehealth speech pathology services or the implementation of a trained speech pathology service within rural and remote schools."



Explanation: Hillston Central School has children attending school with speech issues that are not being dealt with. If a child is unable to speak correctly, this has a knock-on effect with reading and writing thus making it harder for these children within the classroom. Staff find that our youngest students are presenting at school with more significant speech (articulation, expressive and receptive language) problems. Academic progress in the early years is limited due to speech problems. (Ideally a speech therapist to attend weekly would help).

The school has had access to Royal Far West (RFW) video conferencing, but this is costly, with limited success due to connectivity problems and availability of school personnel to attend lessons and administer programs. Low Social Economic Status (SES) means that many parents do not see the value and cannot afford speech therapy, available monthly or at a distance away. Speech therapy is increasingly becoming the responsibility of school teachers.

Enabling students to have access to a trained speech therapist with weekly visits to the school will help us to meet the Premiers expectations for Literacy and Numeracy progress.

A clear policy and timeframe where the area director responds in writing detailing action taken to address the situation would alleviate problems. Parents need to know that complaints are treated with appropriate consideration and respect.

A39. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education and the Minister for 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.

A40. 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 lucky 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 12 months. 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 trial with the 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 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.

A41. Hillston

"That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education to ensure that rural and remote schools have the appropriate amount of time allocated to face to face counselling sessions and implementation for students."



Explanation: Hillston Central School over the years has found inconsistency with the counselling program, such as not always having a counsellor attend the school weekly or even continual changing counsellors. Last year the school found that they had a consistent counsellor, but with the number of children and time it takes to do assessment and implement the program, not all children were able to utilise the program. Our current school community presents with many more mental health issues than ever before and our staff are struggling to provide adequate academic and social programs to cater for them. The drought, socio economic conditions, families moving into the area to access cheaper housing, poverty, lack of other services available locally, low education of parents etc. all contribute to mental health crisis.

A42. Rankins Springs

"That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to ensure that the Rural Area Relief (RAR) 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 Rural Area Relief teacher when covering teaching staff on leave or who are attending professional development. These positions are filled on a temporary basis and at the end of each contract the position is reviewed. School principals are continually fighting for the positions to continue as casual teacher availability is extremely low in rural areas. These positions are vital in ensuring schools remain operational in the event of an unexpected illness and/or leave. TP1 and TP2 schools have a low number of staff and do not have the ability to split classes in the event of an unexpected absence.

A43. Rankins Springs

"That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister of Education 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.

A44. Hillston

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education to implement initiatives to assist rural and remote schools to access quality new graduates and temporary/casual staff.”



Explanation: Currently Hillston Central School has noticed that new graduate teachers are quickly and efficiently employed by independent schools, leaving Department of Education Schools without much choice. Department procedures make accessing the best new graduates difficult and time consuming, which sometimes means we are not accessing the best possible applicant. Initiatives put in place to retain permanent staff in rural areas are beneficial (and appreciated) but we need initiatives in place to encourage new and temporary teachers to travel to rural areas. (Monetary incentives, links with universities.)

A45. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests 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 their permanent position for whatever reason it can stretch to years in time. Obviously, the relieving principal is then a significant person in the school life of a child.

Louth ICPA feels 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.

A46. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education to ensure that there is always a 'hand over' between principals in TP1 schools particularly the learning program.”



Explanation: It has been the practice in small western schools, for the succeeding principals not to have ‘crossed over’.

NOTE: PROGRAMME IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PRESIDENT

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.

A47. Louth

"That ICPA-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 stay 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 ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Department of Education to ensure that teacher housing is maintained to a high standard in a very remote school such as Louth.”



Explanation: Because of the isolation and distances from amenities and trades persons it is imperative that teacher housing be maintained at such a level that is comfortable and safe so as the Principal and their family can make it a home throughout their time at the school. For example, the Louth School house has been there 30 years without any real upgrades to essential amenities such as kitchen and bathroom. As an incentive for Principals to want to come out to these very remote schools the house needs to be of high standard as they will be making it their home for the next two years or so.

A49. Louth

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



Explanation: Louth ICPA 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 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 is 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 very 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. Wentworth

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Department of Education implement (or make available) a clear and timely dispute resolution process between parents and teachers, principals and area directors.”



Explanation: Our members have advised that on several occasions, serious complaints have been made regarding staff and have not been followed through satisfactorily or in a timely manner. This is damaging for all involved and leads to rumours, negative publicity and allows situations to quickly escalate unnecessarily.

A clear policy and timeframe where the area director responds in writing detailing action taken to address the situation would alleviate problems. Parents need to know that complaints are treated with appropriate consideration and respect.

A52. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education and Minister for Health to invest in the availability of on the ground youth and adolescent sexual assault health services in rural schools and communities, furthermore, 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. The shame associated with sexual assault is debilitating for anyone let alone a child in a small community. This in turn has a carry-on effect throughout their entire life. By not providing incentives for specialists to remain in our communities 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.

A53. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Education and Minister for Health to invest in the availability of on the ground youth and adolescent Mental Health services in rural schools and communities, furthermore, 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 specialists to remain in our communities 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.

A54. Monaro

“That ICPA- NSW requests the NSW Minister for Education and NSW Minister for Health to continue the roll out of the Wellbeing Health In Reach Nurses (WHIN) throughout regional schools, with a particular focus on areas affected by drought and bushfire, following the demonstrated success of the pilot program in Cooma, Young and Tumut.”



Explanation: The Wellbeing Health In Reach Nurse (WHIN) is a registered nurse who provides a range of support and coordination 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 children, young people and families to coordinate appropriate assessments, and developing referral pathways into relevant services. All three WHINs are part of a two year pilot until June 2020 and are employed by NSW Health with a significant financial contribution from Snowy Hydro Limited.

A55. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW thanks the Minister for Education and the Minister for Regional NSW for the support provided to children in drought affected communities through maintaining staffing entitlements at public schools following reduced enrolments due to the impacts of drought.”



Explanation: The number of families living in our communities have decreased following reductions in work and business opportunities available in our agriculturally reliant communities. As families have moved away, enrolment numbers at rural schools have decreased. This reduction is expected to be temporary; families will return to capitalise on work and business opportunities when seasons improve. Knowing our local schools have the capacity to retain skilled and dedicated staff during this time helps give our children the opportunity to be the best they can be.

A56. NSW State Council

“That ICPA-NSW, by acclamation, thanks the Minister for Education for implementing the Rural Experience Program that brings experienced teachers to rural and remote areas.”



Explanation: For many years, ICPA-NSW State Conference motions have centred around the need for experienced teachers in rural and remote areas. ICPA-NSW is heartened when we hear that the 2020 intake of experienced teachers leaving their city posts to teach in rural and remote areas under the Rural Experience Program has now hit 150 teachers. The rural experience teacher is an additional teacher at the new school and can return back to their old position after the twelve months they have spent out in the bush, or if they love it they may choose to stay in rural and remote areas. ICPA-NSW thanks the Department of Education for addressing the teacher shortages with this program.

Special Education

A57. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Health to consider 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 300 kms 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.

Tertiary

A58. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW considers working with the Universities Admission Centre (UAC) towards condensing tertiary training, such as at Marcus Oldham Agricultural College, for 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 kilometres away to access training/studies.

In most instances the study/training institutions’ location 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 these expenses 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.

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 in the western region, considering offering that flexibility to condense their studies too.

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 example 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 onsite lecturers.

Another benefit would be students possibly returning in a smaller time frame to their remote communities with their skills.

A59. Moree

“That ICPA-NSW requests the relevant ministers to ensure that universities providing teacher training include a standalone mandatory unit on Autistic Spectrum Disorders in their curriculum.”



Explanation: With the alarming rate of increase in the diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) the chance of a newly graduated teacher having a student with ASD in their class is significant, therefore knowing how to manage this condition with an appropriate level of skills and knowledge in behaviour management strategies for ASD would provide beneficial outcomes for all students in the class.

This early training could also lead to a reduction in the high level of early ‘burnout’ with between 40% - 50% of teachers leaving in their first five years of teaching, because they feel that they don’t have the skills to deal with the challenges of having children on the Autism Spectrum in their class.

Educating teachers at the undergraduate level would be more cost effective than having to provide post graduate training during the first few years of teaching. This could also reduce the amount of time teachers need to take out of the classroom for Professional Development. In some rural areas, teachers are simply unable to take time out for such training because there is a lack of relief teachers available to allow for this, or they are required to travel considerable distance to attend training workshops which is often not an option for them.

Very little learning happens when children are not engaged. Teachers need the training to recognise when a student’s coping skills are not working. They need to recognise the signs and be able to avoid the melt-down before it happens. They need to be proactive so that they won’t have to be reactive. Dealing in a reactive way when a student has lost the ability to cope creates a stressful situation for everyone. But with adequate training a teacher learns to create the environment that will reduce the likelihood of a melt-down.

A teacher can learn these things the hard way over many years, but by then, coupled with the complex curriculum and extra curricula activities expected of them, they’re looking for the door. The cost of the four year degree is wasted, not to mention the toll on the teacher’s health. But the biggest cost is in the damage that is done to the students, not only those with an ASD, but to every child whose education was impeded by a teacher, through no fault of their own, who didn’t have the necessary skills and support to teach the wide variety of students who are now in every classroom.

The reason we have chosen in particular Autistic Spectrum Disorder is because the behaviour issues related to a child’s inability to cope with learning, that are displayed as a result of ASD are very similar to that of children diagnosed with Dyslexia, Asperger’s, Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHA), Axis II Personality Disorder (APD) and many others, so by training to understand the ASD behaviour related issues a teacher would have a strong grasp of a student’s inability to cope regardless of their disability and have the skills to deal with the situation.

A60. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW works with the Universities Admission Centre (UAC) to ensure that an adequate level of support be delivered by university/tertiary educators.”



Explanation: Louth ICPA 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.

A61. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW requests 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. Louth

“That the conference floor recognise by acclamation the Certificate III Education Support course for TAFENSW.”



Explanation: This course was offered for the first time in 2019 and is open for applications through TAFENSW Bourke through Connected Learning Centre (CLC) delivery, therefore is accessible from anywhere. The course caters for the needs of students and is a national requirement for home tutors, students learning support officers or TAFE education support officers.

A63. Monaro

“That ICPA-NSW thanks the NSW Minister for Regional NSW and the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education for the provision of funding to expand the Country Universities Centre (CUC) to new regional locations in NSW, and requests the Ministers to continue to support the establishment of further new Country Universities Centres.”



Explanation: The NSW Government has provided funding to establish centres in locations including Cooma, Broken Hill, Narrabri, Moree, Griffith, Grafton and Leeton, to support university students who wish to have opportunities for university study while remaining in their local communities. The Australian Government has co-contributed to this NSW Government investment to enhance this expansion. Monaro Branch wishes to thank the Minister for Regional NSW and the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, for supporting the CUC model for

regional students. Numbers studying through the model are well beyond targets, and the model has been shown to be generating academic successes beyond even campus face to face study.

While thanking the Ministers for their support to date, we encourage the Ministers to further support the CUC establishment to expand to further regional communities so that our students can have the option of accessing higher education while remaining in their community and having the benefits of the academic and administrative support, technology, connectivity and community of learning that a CUC provides.

Travel

A64. 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 TfNSW again looked at community owned bus runs where feasible, which would be less expensive to support.

A65. 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 now in 2020 we find families are seeking for it to be reinstated.

A66. Lightning Ridge/ Goodooga

“That ICPA-NSW requests 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 SDS and the SSTS.”



Explanation: Distance is currently a barrier for 4 year old children 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.

A67. Balranald

“That ICPA-NSW asks the Minister for Transport to fast track the inclusion of preschool children in the school drive subsidy (SDS).”



Explanation: By being able to access the School Drive Subsidy parents that are already - or will be - travelling substantial distances to access preschool education for their children will face less financial pressure. Balranald Shire has a huge geographical area and combined with the impact of drought, being able to access the Early Learning Centre in town - up to 190 kms 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.

A68. Rankins Springs

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport to allow preschool children to travel on rural and remote bus runs in the year prior to commencing school, enabling them to be included in the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) or the School Students 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 (TfNSW) could provide some further information on the results.

A69. Nyngan

“That ICPA-NSW request the Minister for Transport to provide the School Drive Subsidy for rural and remote pre-schoolers.”



Explanation: Face to face preschool education for children in rural and remote areas is a challenge to achieve. It comes at great financial and time cost to families. With the ongoing drought, many families are time and money poor and are unable to get their children to face to face preschool as the cost is too great. Early childhood education is vital for the development of our children prior to commencing school. Travel assistance is a small investment in starting children on the best pathway for learning.

A70. 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 the 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.

A71. Namoi

“That ICPA-NSW continue to lobby the Minister for Transport to ensure that all school bus runs are maintained to a safe standard at all times and work towards having all school bus runs on sealed roads.”



Explanation: In areas of the North West there are large sections of poor gravel, black soil and unsealed roads. During harvest and these continued dry times the dust can be horrendous and there can be times of zero visibility, creating real safety concerns. During harvest with road trains often on these roads, that are difficult to navigate at the best of times, it becomes a heightened safety risk, both for the children and driver.

During wet periods these roads are either closed by the council or too wet to get down anyhow. This results in many missed days of schooling, in some cases and areas the equivalent of a term of school has been lost throughout the year, due to the roads being unsafe or not being able to get down them due to the wet boggy conditions.

We are asking that all school bus runs are maintained and upgraded to ensure the safety of our children and bus drivers.

A72. Hillston

“That ICPA-NSW requests that the Minister of Transport reviews the School Drive Subsidy online platform so you can make changes and/or add more journeys in one session instead of waiting for approval.”



Explanation: Once you have made any changes to your personal information or added a journey you are unable to view any settings, personal information or add any additional journeys. It would be great if you can make several journey claims/changes to personal details at one time then request approval.

A73. Hillston

“That ICPA-NSW urges the Minister of Transport to review the School Drive Subsidies approved journeys to ensure that they are the most practical and safest route.”



Explanation: The approved journey provided by the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) is not necessarily the safest and most practical route. In instances some families in our branch, have found the approved journey is down unsealed and not all-weather roads, when there is a suitable all-weather road alternative which is the family's common route. Driving on these unsealed roads also incurs extra costs for families with general wear and tear, tyres and the personal safety of parents and children.

A74. Nyngan

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport to provide Tertiary Students with a travel subsidy, similar to the School Drive Subsidy, but providing a subsidy based on the distance from their home to the tertiary institution at a kilometre rate, assisting with travel costs at the start and end of each semester.”



Explanation: Dependent tertiary students still live at home with their parents but are required to move away from home during semester time to access their tertiary education. With limited access to transport links in rural and remote NSW it is an equity issue that these students have access to travel allowance similar to the School Drive Subsidy for travel at the beginning and end of each semester.

A75. Lord Howe Island

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Transport to change the system whereby flights are booked for travel between Lord Howe Island (home) and mainland (Boarding School).”



We ask that the following options be available:

- 1) Fully Flexi fares are purchased to enable unforeseeable necessary changes to bookings;*
- 2) The ability to book straight through Flight Centre Management Travel group (FCM);*
- 3) For parents to purchase tickets themselves and forward invoice to Student Travel for reimbursement.*

Explanation: Currently we have one point of contact, an email address, to book flights for our children to travel between Lord Howe Island and their mainland Boarding School.

Often parents have to wait weeks for a response, or longer if departmental officer is on leave. Parents have sent reminder emails and chasing emails to urge a response to book flights.

On an occasion in December 2019 the two boys at Boarding School needed to change their flights to an earlier date. One child was granted the change and the other was not, forcing the latter to purchase a new ticket.

Case Study:

We have forwarded a request to the departmental officer today (15th January 2020) requesting a procedure of which we are to follow in order to receive a prompt reply regarding bookings for our children. The response was:

Thank you for your email.

I had planned on sending an email end of last year to advise all Lord Howe Island parents to lodge an enquiry through our online feedback form. However, one of the issues I'm having is that we do not have a category on the feedback form for Lord Howe Island enquiries which is what we are currently working on implementing so that there is less confusion regarding what options to select. This is the reason I am still accepting emails, however, any parent who advise what the proper procedure is will be advised to lodge an online enquiry form <https://transportnsw.info/contact-us/feedback/concessions-feedback>.

Once we are able to add this category for Lord Howe Island enquiries which will most likely be within the next few weeks, I will send out a formal email to advise the correct procedure.

In the meantime, you can continue to send through enquiries directly to me and I will respond immediately or you can use the feedback form and select the following options:

Miscellaneous

A76. Bourke

“That ICPA-NSW lobbies all relevant Ministers and 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.”



Explanation: 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 continues to feel the significant impact of the prolonged drought both economically and socially.

The funding payments anticipated for the Bourke and District Children’s Services (Preschool, Mobile & Childcare) for the three licences were a third of what was received due to assessment determined by the 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.

A77. Moree

“That the ICPA NSW request the relevant ministers to bring equity to the drought assistance packages to enable families to access funding that may help them to stay on their farms and in rural areas.”



Before reading this explanation, we would like to offer strong support, compassion and understanding for all those affected by fires in the recent months. We are sincerely sorry for your loss and this explanation in no way reflects any ill feelings to those seeking funding for fire damage, we are in complete support of your access to this funding.

Explanation: Families in our community are frustrated that community members affected by drought must go through a lengthy application process to access loans, which are quite often unsuccessful, while those affected by fires are being offered grants which obviously don't have to be paid back. How can the government prioritise one natural disaster above another by basically providing ‘no strings attached’ assistance to one group of affected Australians and conditional assistance to another?

On the Rural Assistance Authority’s website, fire affected NSW farmers can apply for a Special Disaster Grant - Bushfires to a maximum value of \$75,000.00. This funding is provided through a joint Disaster Recovery Funding Agreement between states and territories and the Commonwealth Government, for bushfire relief only.

We have families struggling to remain in rural communities as a result of little or unattainable support from our government, why can't the government acknowledge all natural disasters equally and support them in the same manner.

A78. Moree

"That ICPA-NSW assists ICPA (Aust) to request the relevant ministers to make the necessary changes to the drought assistance packages to enable families to access funding that may help them to stay on their farms and pay their educational expenses and keep children in our local schools in rural areas."



Explanation: Many families are being forced off their farms and out of small communities because they are unable to access any government support, either because they are ineligible or it takes so long for the approvals to come through that the family can't continue to sustain their existence for the time that it is taking the government to process paperwork.

One example in our community that is resounding of many, has forced a family of eight leave our district, leave our schools, sporting events and community. The family were unable to access Farm Household Allowance (FHA) because the husband was working casual, seasonal work, off farm. They received a call from the Department of Human Services advising them that in order to receive the FHA they needed to either stop working off farm or ask their bank for a letter stating that they were going to freeze the business accounts and foreclose on them.

The family then applied for the Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) Loan. However after another six months of feeding livestock and working off farm to pay the bills, having not heard anything from the government, the family were left with little choice but to take permanent work interstate. With the plan of still being able to return to their farm in the future they pursued the RIC loan but were constantly told that even with all the paperwork in order, the single staff member allocated to their application was on sick leave, on holidays or still processing their application. After 12 exasperating months and no progress on their loan application the family made the heartbreaking decision to sell their farm. The day the farm was advertised for sale they received an email from the RIC loan office saying that their loan had 'progressed to the next step'. Unfortunately the family felt they had little faith in the government's bureaucratic processes and sold their farm and our community loses another family.

Other families have left the district because they are unable to access government support because they have an unusable water right that is considered an off farm asset, if the family sell this water right, then when the season turns around they will not have the ability to use it for future income and farming stability.

The government needs to understand that the current criteria and process are too slow, totally unattainable and they are killing our communities and destroying the farming history and knowledge, that have sustained agriculture in these areas for generations. If all the media releases were real and the money on offer was actually being allocated to the farmers in need then we don't believe this would be a problem, however we think we hear a fiddle playing here and Nero on the throne!

A79. Hillston

“That ICPA-NSW supports ICPA (Aust) in asking the Minister for Health and the Federal Treasurer, to extend the Medicare rebate to include patients wishing to access speech pathology and paediatrician appointment through telehealth deliveries.”



Explanation: At the Federal Conference the motion of telehealth from the Kindon Branch (QLD) was passed. It is important for our children in rural and remote Australia to have access to services that they need! Worldwide we are relying on the internet more and more, so we should be moving with the times. These services are available and ready to be used, if the government could include them in the Medicare Rebate more families and even school would be able to access them. Currently, the cost is high, and some families are unable to access the service due to the cost. We need to ensure that our children are not being disadvantaged because of where they live.

Case Study:

Laura Stalley: We live approximately 65km from the nearest town and our children are educated through School of the Air. Currently my son requires Speech pathology, we have been using a telehealth service. We have an hour appointment weekly with his therapist, which we have been able to ensure is first thing in the morning and we can tailor into his School of the Air program.

Having access to telehealth has meant that we have not had to miss any school time or drive lengthy distances to ensure our child is getting the help he needs.

But it comes at a cost! We do get some rebate from Private health insurance, but this runs out quickly when you are doing this weekly. Our lessons costs \$185 per hour, and with another child needing speech pathology this becomes costly.

A80. Central West Plains

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister for Health to include the travelling expenses for consultations with Allied Health Professionals to be included in the IPTAAS scheme (Isolated Patient Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme) for children to access these professional services which support their educational development.”



Explanation: For the parent of a child with special needs, there are numerous trips to Allied Health (as well as general health and Specialists). Allied Health is usually delivered in blocks of ongoing therapy. For patients living some distance from a regional centre, this can be a huge travelling expense. If the therapies are listed on the patient's primary health care plan, or their mental health care plan and supports their continuous educational development, this expense should be covered by IPTAAS if this is the closest Allied Health Service.

For children, the Allied Health team can be quite specialised and it may not visit every little outlying town in NSW! We have travelled 250 km round trip every week for the last 14 years to access Allied Health and I am sure we are not the only parents in this situation. Not all small towns have access to Allied Health professionals, and not all Allied Health Service can be delivered via internet.

A81. North West Slopes

“That ICPA-NSW lobbies the relevant State ministers in our Government, to ensure that once a referral to a specialist is handed to a patient, that all relevant information pertaining to reimbursement of fees including travel, accommodation and appointments be included.”



Explanation: When we are presented with the need to take our children to other towns/cities for appointments we are then presented with the added weight of having to not only look after our child, but also get them to the appointment and then home again. Included in this trying time; is loss of income, accommodation expenses, travel expenses and medical bills. The cost of this is something that we never think we will need to come across, however these costs are never cheap, financially.

In speaking with families, it is seen that the cost is too much and therefore sometimes the appointments/ surgeries simply don't happen, therefore then sometimes it is left till it is too late for the patient.

Giving Parents/ Guardians the knowledge prior to leaving the initial appointment where referral is obtained, can make the process all that smoother and enable them to be able to make the load a lot more affordable and easier to sort.

As a branch we really feel that to get the best medical and educational advice/ help for our children, we need to travel to major centres, to go to the people that can help our children more. At this point we are all years into trying times, and little things like passing on information up front, can ease our burdens that little bit.

Case Study:

A mother with children with learning difficulties has been travelling to Sydney for a decade, with the only reimbursement been that of her Health Fund and Medicare for the appointments, which still leaves a gap. Her Health Care fund has covered \$100 for each trip. In speaking with other parents recently she found out that she could use IPTAAS, which apart from the excessive paperwork, has made these twice-yearly trips more affordable and not so stressful.

A82. Louth

“That ICPA-NSW asks the relevant Ministers to delay announcing initiatives until they are ready to be actioned”.



Explanation: The establishment of preschools by the NSW DoE and Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate (ECECD), in very remote NSW was announced at the 2017 ICPA-NSW State Conference in Mudgee. To date there is one operational of the ten identified by ICPA-NSW.

A83. Moree

“That ICPA-NSW requests the Minister of Education to support youth education programs running in NSW”



Explanation: We know that organisations in regional and remote NSW, like BackTrack Youth Works, are doing ground breaking work in the area of educating some of our most marginalised youth. Not only do these organisations educate but they also work tirelessly to increase the self-esteem needed to afford these youth meaningful employment in the future. If we talk about ‘Equity of Access to Education’ there could be nothing more important than helping the most vulnerable in our society. The evidence of the success of these programs speaks for itself.

A84. Hillston

“That ICPA-NSW requests the NSW Minister for Health to highlight the need to extend the Medicare rebate to include patients wishing to access speech pathology and paediatrician appointment through telehealth deliveries.”



Explanation: We have children in rural and remote NSW that need access to speech pathology but are not accessing it due to the cost of telehealth but also the distances they must travel. If we can get these services added to the Medicare Rebate, these children will have access to services that will help them with their education and language, further supporting emotionally and help their self-esteem.