
Distance Education Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Distance Education Portfolio Report.

As my first year on State council comes to an end, it has been a privilege and a learning curve to represent like-minded parents, you our members from across NSW. Firstly, I would like to thank all of State Council for your help, patience, and support over the last year as I have learnt the rope. Secondly, thank you to our member for allowing me to represent the issues we face in Distance Education.

Having not been a typical year for anyone, we have embraced technology to its fullest and have had many internal, department, government meetings and Federal conference over Zoom. We have faced some issues along the way, but overall, this method has proven successful for us to continue to voice your motions to the relevant stakeholders during COVID-19.

Some of the things that we have been working this year include the following:

- Mark Latham's Parliamentary review of the New South Wales School Curriculum – we were able to use our motions to help support our suggestions, this was then taken to the next level and ICPA-NSW was invited to speak in Canberra at Parliament.
- Rural and Remote Strategy Group, NSW Department of Education – we made suggestions on how to improve their survey to get the most out of their results.
- Advocating the importance of getting home isolated Distance Education children back into their various education centres after COVID-19.
- Meetings with Department of Education relating to Preschool Distance Education and what that would look like moving forward, we were able to give feedback and comment on some of our motions particularly on the Bourke Walgett School of Distance Education having access to in person preschool through Dubbo, and them attending school functions/classrooms.

Following the motion regarding School of the Air Broken Hill P &C unable to hold meeting via online/tele-conferencing, we wrote a letter to P&C Federation to see if changes could be made to their constitution. We were told that this was already in the pipeline due to the restrictions of COVID-19. On the 26th May 2020 P & C Federation announced that “due to restrictions on public meetings, P&C Federation has advocated on behalf of the NSW P&C Associations to amend the Prescribed Associations (the constitution of P&C Associations that are incorporated) to allow P&C Associations to meet virtually.”¹ There are a few requirements, these can be viewed on their website.

¹ Amended Constitution for Incorporated P&C Associations, 26/5/2020 from <https://www.pandc.org.au/amended-constitution-for-incorporated-pc-associations-2/>

It was also a very exciting year with the first Geographically Isolated Distance Education Day on the 1st December 2020. This is a day to celebrate those children, parents, and supervisors who educate their children at home due to their location and work hard to ensure these children get quality education.

After months of teleconferencing or Zoom meetings, State Council was finally able to get together in August. This an important meeting for us to discuss vital component of ICPA-NSW was greatly beneficial for me to get my head around the finer details and procedures of being on State Council. We were able to organise what Deputation might look like for 2020, and the outcome was Zoom meetings.

I was unable to attend Deputation in person due to personal commitments (teaching my children through DE), but I was able to dial into several important meetings. These meetings were highly successful, and we were able to put forward the issues our children are facing in the Distance Education portfolio.

At the end of 2020 start of 2021 we worked on a survey for our members to complete in regards to Distance Education technology resources after becoming aware many families were having issues. We/have will use this information and will continue to present this to the relevant departments.

Thank you to Hay for hosting, we appreciation the time, hard work and effort all your members have put in to make this a successful conference. 2020 was such an uncertain year, and to be able to be here is a feet in its own! So, for 2021, after the whole of Australia experienced what Distance Education is like and the challenges we face daily, lets use that to continue to promote and improve Distance Education for our isolated children.

Laura Stalley

Distance Education Portfolio