



## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

01 February, 2021

**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia**

**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Queensland**

**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales**

**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Northern Territory**

**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Western Australia**

**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of South Australia**

### **COVID border barriers to education can't become the new normal**

As the 2021 school year commences across Australia and complications continue to arise from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) is sending a message of appeal to all levels of government asking decision makers to ensure rural and remote students have access to education institutions, regardless of where they live in our vast nation.

In a single nationally united voice, ICPA State Councils from New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, along with ICPA branches and members across Australia have backed their federal body, ICPA Australia who are advocating for reassurance that a collaborative, nationally consistent and long-term approach to border restrictions and guidelines is high on all government agendas.

ICPA Australia President, Mrs Alana Moller appreciates the forward thinking and collaborative approach proposed by the Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education, Hon Andrew Gee MP and other members of Parliament along with Senators, individuals and organisations including the National Farmers Federation, but parents of rural and remote students, especially those who attend boarding school out of necessity, remain anxious.

Mrs Moller explains, "Following on from the disruptions and uncertainty experienced by rural and remote boarding students in 2020, ICPA continues to call on all levels of government for a nationally-consistent, compassionate framework to ensure these students can access education within Australia, regardless of state borders. Given geographically isolated Australian families already face a range of barriers to accessing education, and these same families have the unique ability to isolate in ways that urban families cannot, specific exemptions could easily be considered".

Whilst urban schools may have been closed for weeks during hotspots of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, many rural students were not able to return to their boarding school for months, even several terms due to border closures.

ICPA is hopeful that a nationwide, workable solution will be established as a matter of urgency to ensure the concerns which arose in the 2020 school year are not repeated.

"Geographically isolated boarding school students should not be further disadvantaged by inconsistent and inhibitive processes and procedures which impact their access to equitable educational opportunities" says Mrs Moller.

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