
Special Education Report

Distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Special Education Portfolio Report for 2021.

It does feel like we have lost a year with 2020 being so disruptive, however the NSW Department of Education has been able to continue facilitating the Disability Strategy Reference Group via online meetings. ICPA-NSW was very pleased to be included as a stakeholder in this group, the positions were much sought after with over 100 applicants.

In October 2019, whilst attending the Sydney Deputation, ICPA-NSW State Councillors visited the Royal Far West headquarters in Many. Royal Far West has scaled up services to support country children with a disability and this will be of great benefit due to lack of access to paediatricians, allied health and mental health professionals. Royal Far West are also working very closely in the Telehealth sphere which includes speech therapy.

The Centre for Effective Reading enrolments and use of professional literacy services are being well utilised, as in the past ICPA-NSW has received feedback that many schools did not know about CER and the referral process. ICPA-NSW will continue to ensure that members are aware of this vital service and more importantly that rural and remote schools utilise it.

In both 2019 and 2020, State Council has met with NESAs and the NSW Department of Health and the Minister for Education and Early Childhood and Learning to discuss the special needs of rural and remote children with disabilities and those requiring specialist help.

It is interesting to note the increase in motions this year requesting access to allied health services. These services are vital for young children to access should the need arise for early intervention. Usually, it is an early childhood educator who alerts the rural / remote parent to the need for speech therapy, occupational therapy or other specialised service, the struggle then begins to access that service.

On the back of the Tertiary Motion at Buronga asking for an assurance that universities provide teacher training to include a mandatory stand alone unit on Autistic Spectrum Disorders, ICPA-NSW will continue to advocate for this with NESAs and relevant Ministers.

ICPA-NSW sits on the NSW Department of Education's Disability Strategy Reference Group and will continue to advocate for our most vulnerable rural and remote children.

Kellie Turnbull
Special Education Portfolio