

**The Isolated Children's Parents'**  
**Association of Australia**  
**ICPA (Aust)**



**2016 Federal Conference**

**REPORTS**

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## **WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**Liz Sudlow**

Madam President, distinguished guests, ICPA members and friends, it's my pleasure to present on behalf of ICPA WA.

I want to begin my report with a sincere thanks and vote of congratulations to Federal Council and to sing the praises of our organisation. The degree to which ICPA (Aust) has been able to generate publicity and some momentum for change to the legislation in the last 12 months has been amazing. The way that members of ICPA across Australia work together as a team to share information and tackle issues is not to be underestimated.

I want to give you an example. At the end of June, I very kindly had an email from Adriana Smerelli, the Secretary of Hyden to ask if I'd heard anything about Barnaby Joyce making an election promise regarding increasing the AIC and proposed changes to the length of time a student is required to work to qualify for Independent Youth Allowance. No, I hadn't, I'd actually been grocery shopping, preparing for an ICPA working weekend at my house. The next morning I had a call from the local WA Midwest ABC producer, asking me the same thing and would I make a comment on the morning program in about thirty minutes. Wanting to ensure that I knew what I was talking about, I rang Publicity Officer, Nikki Macqueen to ask if she could give me any information and after a quick conversation when she said she was just in the process of sending out a statement to members, within ten minutes I had a written statement that I was able to brief myself on and tackle the radio interview in a relatively informed way.

For a group of volunteers, I think we do incredibly well. We don't have Executive Officers or PAs to assist us. We don't even have a proper office or working hours. As a state president, one of the things I find most difficult is receiving those phone calls out of the blue, when I could be busy in the cattle yards, involved in one of the myriad of farm and other duties or heaven forbid, playing parent to one of my 4 children. In a second it is necessary to change hats and be on top of the ICPA content. As ICPA has grown in stature and strength more and more is asked and expected of the organisation. And as an aside, Nikki had the concern and interest to ring me later that night to chat about how it had all gone. Equally, I know that had Wendy not been just getting back from the Northern Australia Conference, I could also have contacted her for information, advice and a chat. So if you are involved in any way in the ICPA team, do not underestimate the part you play in the overall strength of the organisation.

The last twelve months has continued to see tough economic times in WA. As with all sectors, education has been expected to achieve at least the same with less.

### **School Funding:**

2015 saw a student based funding model applied to many government schools in WA, with some extra allocations for disability, aboriginality, socioeconomic standing, language and locality. After some initial dissatisfaction, particularly from those schools who had their budgets adjusted downwards, most schools appear to have adjusted to the change. The new system has seen greater autonomy for individual schools to plan strategies that match their individual circumstances. In the main, this is good practice, but it does require responsible and informed leadership of school principals.

This year a further 50 schools will have the opportunity to apply to become Independent Public Schools, adding to the 445 schools and bringing to a total of 70 per cent of staff and students in WA

government schools, currently operating in this way. Earlier in the year ICPA WA submitted to a review by the WA Education and Health Standing Committee into this state government initiative.

It is concerning that many small primary and district high schools continue to decline in numbers and therefore capacity to deliver a wide range of curriculum delivery. Perhaps as a result, or because fewer staff want to work in the more remote areas, or perhaps because there is too much responsibility on Principals, some of who are not well enough equipped to manage large budgets and people, we are seeing a situation where some schools are finding it difficult to attract long term school leaders. It is imperative that real support is made available to new and aspiring Principals and that schools are adequately monitored.

We believe there are a number of schools in our state that should be able to be bypassed, and still be eligible for the boarding allowances, as they are not able to offer an adequate breadth of curriculum to all students.

On a positive note, we are very fortunate in WA that we do have a number of government residential colleges which provide accommodation to students from government and independent schools, most of which in recent years have had significant renovations and upgrades. However, many of these facilities are full to capacity, with an overall 68 per cent capacity across all the colleges in the state. There are still regions of WA such as the Pilbara, where there is no accommodation option, and the Broome facility is full to capacity, so we would like to see a government residential facility in the city that would be available to all government school students, not just the academically elite.

#### **Budget Cuts to Schools of the Air:**

Late last year we learned that the Schools of the Air, as of the beginning of this year were to be funded on a per student basis. Undertaking a five year transition process, this will result in a 25 per cent reduction to the 2015 budget figures. This is the greatest adjustment permitted under the new funding legislation and is likely to have an ultimate negative effect on the ability of the schools to deliver a well-rounded curriculum to the student cohort and consequently place greater pressure on home tutors, who are already expected to do far more than parents in regular schools. I acknowledge that the numbers in the 5 SOTAs have declined and that many schools have seen budget reductions, but I believe there does need to be some financial adjustment to the locality allowance, an additional budget allocation. To my thinking, it seems illogical that, if it's a student based funding model, the school site is the criteria for the location allowance, not where the students reside. I don't need to tell ICPA members that the students enrolled in a School of the Air can live hundreds of kilometres from the school site and that distance does cost money.

#### **Communications:**

The erection and upgrade to mobile base stations and announcements of further promises to the Mobile Black Spot Programme have been well received. There was social media euphoria when a tower close to where I live was installed in mid-June.

There appears to be a number of issues with the LTSS. Reports of speeds dropping out, modems not connecting and activations taking a long time to be switched on have been common. In addition, problems with contacting service providers to arrange installations have been reported. On a positive note, those with good connections are reporting fast speeds. The downfall to this is that data limits are being used quickly and most are finding the off peak data impossible to use. Yet again, many are being forced to live with small peak data allowances.

### **Post Compulsory:**

WA has also experienced funding reductions to the post compulsory education sector. In an endeavour to save money, the trend for universities is to have a greater reliance on online learning and spend more of the budget on research projects. At the end of 2015, the University of WA announced, as part of its university reform that up to 300 jobs could be lost. A number of the regional campuses have decreased the breadth of their course offering. For instance, the Geraldton University Centre offers all its courses out of Central Queensland and Southern Queensland Universities.

Over the last couple of years, there has also been significantly less money spent in the TAFE sector, which is really starting to have an effect on student numbers, staff jobs and campus usage. From 2013 - 2014, there has been a drop in student numbers of 9 000. Already 500 staff have been lost in the last four years. Our recent State Budget revealed TAFE fees will go up by a further 4 per cent in 2017, 230 more jobs are to be removed and the 11 colleges (which were previously located in 70 different centres) will be managed by a network of five colleges.

### **ICPA WA State Conference:**

In terms of ICPA WA, I believe we have had a successful twelve months. Our membership sits at 302 which is a slight increase from 288 last year. We again held our state conference in March this year, albeit a lower-key "budget" affair. This was primarily so that State Council could focus its attention on hosting this conference. Our theme "Every Connection Counts" was, I believe relevant and well received. We had speakers from **nbn**, Telstra Country Wide, who generously sponsored us and a workshop presentation by a Journalist/PR expert, Cate Rocchi who gave us tips on how to deal with the media, which many of us found relevant to our businesses as well as community volunteering. Thanks to Emily Gardner who made the journey on behalf of Federal Council.

At our conference, Carina Kopke was awarded a Certificate of Merit for her services to our state ICPA organisation and Roxanne Morrissey was very deservedly presented with Life Membership to ICPA WA for the vast amount of service she has and continues to give.

Since Conference, our council has met at least monthly, via GoTo Meeting teleconferences to discuss state business, and also to plan for this week. In June we again held a working weekend where we were able to offer our councillors and any members who were interested and able to attend, the opportunity to participate in a Grant Writing workshop. We have recently undertaken to survey our members to give us some feedback on our current position and our future direction.

If you want our organisation to remain strong you need to act and contribute to the team. Please think about becoming more active in ICPA. At the moment we are a totally voluntary organisation, which is written into the Constitutions. We either need to secure more help from members on Council and/or consider outsourcing some tasks.

This will be the last time I present to you as the WA State President. My three year term will come to an end next March, when we will see a changing of the guard with the President, Secretary and Treasurer roles all being passed on to others. We are fortunate in WA that we have very capable, new councillors that will be able to fill these roles. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the councillors that I've had the pleasure of working with both at state and federal levels. I have met some amazing people I would never have otherwise met and have been stretched in ways I would never have thought possible. It's been a little like doing yoga with a drip feed of Red Bull!

### **Waves of Change, Oceans of Opportunity:**

When WA first suggested this as a theme for conference, perhaps we were more taken by the noun "opportunity" rather than "change". The definition of change is "an act or process through which

something becomes different" and opportunity is "a time or set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something". Naturally we all want opportunities rather than changes - some of us are a little fearful of changing. But along with change, we can be forced to operate in new and improved ways. We thought the tag line fitted nicely with our mission to tackle issues head on and with a positive approach. As finances have been stretched across Australia, through factors such as the downturn in the resource industry and the drought in the east, changes have been inevitable, ICPA has been successful in highlighting the plight of rural and remote families to access an equitable education for their children. Those circumstances and the traction ICPA has been able to gain with media, politicians and other stakeholders have resulted in "oceans of opportunity" to promote and put ICPA right in the spotlight, which ultimately is to the benefit of rural and remote Australia.

As well, of course it fits well with the connotations of magnificent beaches for which we are so proud of in the West. While you're here, if you do nothing else, please take a run down to Cottesloe or Scarborough to check out the Indian Ocean. West Aussies love the beach and I for one actually enjoy the beach more in the winter when the sea breeze, is not blowing us away.

On behalf of ICPA WA, I sincerely hope you enjoy the 2016 conference and your stay in WA.

# **NORTHERN TERRITORY PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**Tiani Cook**

## **Introduction**

Madam President, Federal Councillors, Distinguished Guests and friends, It is my absolute pleasure to present the Northern Territory ICPA President's Report here in Perth at Federal Conference, 2016.

I am brand new in both my position on State Council and as NT State President. I accepted the role at our last AGM in April this year and look forward to continuing to represent ICPA at the State level.

Home for me is our family owned Cattle Station; Suplejack Downs, 730kms North West of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. I have 4 children who have all studies via School of the Air and Distance Education.

## **State Council Members**

Our NT State AGM in April saw 6 lovely ladies looking for a break and leaving NT State Council. I'd like to say a big thank you to these hardworking ladies for their tireless commitment to NTICPA over the years...Yvonne Bauer, Helen Harding, Jodie Solczanuk, Lisa Goldsworthy, Gail Auricht and Immediate Past President, Andi Bracey recently resigning to pursue a political career.

Sally Sullivan continued on and I'd like to make note of her ongoing commitment, insight and knowledge. What would we do without you Sal? Also continuing on State Council are Ruth Woerle; NT 'Down the Track' Editor, Alethea Nicolle; State Secretary, Linda Bowman; Home Tutor Register Coordinator and Sue Shotton; NT Webmaster. Welcome to Sarah Measey, Leza Cook, Kerrie Scott and Julie Richter who join me as enthusiastic State Newbies.

NTICPA consists of 3 branches: Alice Springs and Katherine branches along with the Lone Members which is governed by the state. ICPA membership in Northern Territory remains at \$50 per annum across the state.

## **Annual 2016 State Conference**

The NTICPA State Conference held in April this year was hosted by the Katherine branch at Knotts Crossing in Katherine. The theme was 'Red Dust and Dreams' and so eloquently paraphrased by Wendy Hick when she said 'Let's stir up the Dust and keep the momentum of change going so that our rural and remote children are able to realize their Dreams'.

NT Life member and State Patron Mrs Jan Heaslip opened the conference with a great personal account of her life's journey. Jan, along with the Alice Springs branch of ICPA convened the 10<sup>th</sup> Federal Conference in Alice Springs in 1982. The day before that conference all Northern Territory ICPA branches amalgamated into one Combined State Council and NTIPCA was born. What an amazing lady with so much passion who has experienced over 35 years of ICPA history!

We were honoured to have Federal President Wendy Hick and Secretary Jane Morton in attendance. It was great to get a Federal update from Wendy who was very engaged with local branch members and personally offered her support to members after the motions were spoken to.

Our very enthusiastic Champion of Distance Education, the Executive Director of Schools South, Arthur Townsend spoke about the Distance Education Review which has a major focus on improving rural and indigenous education outcomes. Distance Education provisions will be aligned, based on a global school budget model. Arthur was instrumental in the renaming of prominent NT Distance Education

School NTOEC; Northern Territory Open Education Centre to NTSDE: Northern Territory School of Distance Education. The name change will coincide with the Official Opening of the new \$11mill Building at Bullocky Point Education Precinct in Darwin, in late July this year.

There were 21 motions and 4 floor motions presented and carried at the conference. There were motions regarding the need for a NT Living Away from Home Allowance, the extension of the AIC to include 4 year olds, more In Home Care places for regional areas, the need to nationalise the Working with Children Certificate and motions regarding Communications and Technology. The motions presented reflected our ongoing need for improved educational and financial support, communications and roads.

To close our state conference we were enchanted by our very own, home grown talent Holly Tapp who made it as a finalist of 'The Voice Australia' in 2014 singing a collection of both original and cover song titles.

The Katherine branch hosted a well organised and extremely effective conference; Helen Harding did a fantastic job as Convenor and the event got air time on The NT Country Hour: ABC Radio.

### **Federal F2F**

The Federal Face to Face Meeting earlier this year saw two NT State Councillors make the trip to Canberra. From all reports it was an amazing few days of meetings including the spectacle of Question Time in Parliament House. In the words of Kerrie Scott; "it was inspiring to be in the presence of the amazing ICPA Representatives from across Australia who work tirelessly for equity in education for our remote children." Rest assured that we are part of an organisation that even the most hardened Pollies in Canberra sit up straight and put their listening ears on when the ICPA is in town!

### **Chris Tudor Retired**

Chris Tudor AM is a highly regarded man in the Northern Territory and Australia. The multi-faceted Headmaster of St Philip's College in Alice Springs retired at the end of term 2 after 30 years in the position. Chris's career goal was to ensure that young people living in isolation be given access to a first class education and opportunities to broaden their perspective beyond their town, their state, even their country and to think globally. St Phillip's is recognised in the NT and across Australia and is connected to 140 schools around the world through its membership of 'Round Square'.

Chris's late wife Jill Tudor was principal of Alice Springs School of the Air for many years with a recent memorial being presented to Chris and family on behalf of ICPA Alice Springs and ASSOA. Jill was a valued member of the Alice Springs Community and a highly respected and cherished principal at ASSOA who holds a special place in the hearts of many students and parents.

### **NBN & Broadband for the Bush**

In the Northern Territory, the Department of Education and the schools themselves will manage the Education Ports for Schools of the Air and Distance Education families. I think I speak on behalf of all rural and remote NT families, in breathing a sigh of relief as we watch on while our neighbouring states' families endure the Education Port saga.

On the flip side of the coin many members are frustrated at hearing Retail Service Providers proudly advertise the number of households they've 'hooked up' in regional areas to **nbn™**. It's important to note that in a vast majority of places where **nbn™** has been installed, residents have already had access to mobile and/or ADSL broadband, while many of our families living in the bush sit patiently on their miniscule monthly quota waiting their turn with no mobile service and intermittent land lines.

### **USO - Universal Service Obligation**

In light of the Productivity Commission's Telecommunications Universal Service Obligation Inquiry there are some concerns that Telstra might withdraw their commitments towards supplying Fixed Landline Telephone Services in view that VoIP will suffice once **nbn™** is fully functional.

I recently attended the Alice Springs Community Roundtable for Remote Areas and voiced the concerns of many of our members: the ongoing importance of a standard telephone service where the majority of our members have no mobile coverage or internet contingent on fine weather, is vital! The new USO must not overlook the needs of rural and remote Australians in preference to metropolitan majorities.

### **DoE – New Education Act**

The new Education Act was passed earlier this year by the Northern Territory Parliament and is now the law. All school councils need to update their constitution this year. COGSO and DoE have worked together to provide input to the model council & board constitutions, required to match the new legislation. The updated constitutions need to be finalised and lodged with the department by 30<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Websites & Social Media**

NTICPA are proud to finally have our own website, solely for the use by Northern Territory ICPA and its members to promote ICPA work and achievement. What a fantastic, continuing effort by our Webmaster Sue Shotton.

The NTICPA twitter account was launched just in time for State Conference, it was great to see our members getting involved with lots of tweeting and Facebook updates. All we need now is reliable internet at home to utilise these wonderful technological resources.

### **Grants Program**

NTICPA bursaries, grants and competitions include the Zoetis 'Pastoral Industry' Student Grant, the Post-Secondary Bursary and the FRRR Back to School Competition.

Donations from the Siba Ships and The Wellard Rural Export Group continue to allow NTICPA to offer the 'Bridging the Gap' grants program. Awarded in February and August each year the grant assists in the costs associated for a young person between the age of 15 & 22yrs to attend an educationally based activity, purchase relevant study or career materials or undertake personal development activities.

Both Alice Springs and Katherine ICPA Branches offer a further 4 bursaries each for their individual branch members.

### **Federal Conference Alice Springs 2017**

The Alice Springs Branch of ICPA is very excited to showcase the Red Centre when NTICPA proposes to host the Federal Conference in Alice Springs Northern Territory next year. The Central Australian August weather with fresh cool nights and amazing sun filled days, sitting around 23 Degrees Celsius, is sure to delight!

We have established an enthusiastic convening committee, coordinated by Sarah Cook and preparations for an amazing, memorable 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Federal Conference are well underway.

Finally I would like to extend a big congratulations to ICPA WA on a wonderful 'Waves of Change, Oceans of Opportunity' 2016 Federal Conference.

## **NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**Kate Treweeke**

Since I presented the New South Wales report last year in Brisbane, I have had a busy year representing ICPA-NSW. In September, I attended the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) Conference in Sydney alongside Joanna Gibson from Federal Council. ICPA-NSW submitted a short three minute video on affordability and how this affects members. I also attended a Connected Communities Field Day in Coonamble where all connected community schools were showcasing their schools – a very successful day with plans to make this an annual event as this will show how the schools are progressing.

The time then came for ICPA-NSW to travel to Sydney for the annual deputation in October. ICPA-NSW had 34 meetings over two days. As always State Council came away feeling satisfied with some aspects of our lobby and at other times, repetitive frustrations – but repeat ourselves we must. One such successful moment was with the Department of Education when they told State Council of the rise in the Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA). Transport for NSW stated that there will be NO more reviews into the Private Vehicle Conveyance (PVC) Scheme and that they hope to make an announcement soon - we are still waiting.

ICPA-NSW was able to attend two open days in late November and early December – Yanco Agricultural High School and Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School. This is another opportunity for ICPA-NSW to raise the awareness of what ICPA can do for isolated families.

In November, the Minister for Education, the Hon Adrian Piccoli, announced the sale of the Hurlstone Agricultural High School (HAHS) farm, with expected proceeds of \$165 million. Of this, \$35 million will be invested to move HAHS to the University of Western Sydney campus, on the former Hawkesbury Agricultural College site, with the remainder of the funds to be invested into new schools and classrooms for metropolitan students. In response, ICPA-NSW issued a media release thanking the government for the establishment of the new school, but expressing disappointment that \$130 million will be transferred out of agricultural teaching and learning assets in NSW.

ICPA-NSW feels that a portion of the proceeds should have been reinvested into reinvigorating and recapitalising agricultural education in regional and remote areas of NSW, particularly the school farms of Yanco Agricultural High School and Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School. ICPA-NSW has letters of support from the Yanco P & C, Farrer PT & F and NSW Farmers and is continuing to advocate in this regard.

In my role as President, I attend regular meetings throughout the year as one of the stakeholders with the Department of Education. These meetings can be informative as they show us all aspects of NSW schools and the way these schools are running their programs and how as one of the stakeholders, ICPA-NSW can be of assistance.

In the last week of February this year, I once again set off to represent ICPA-NSW. The week commenced with attending the grand opening of the new CWA NSW building in Mascot, Sydney then jet setting it to Canberra to meet with the other State Presidents and Secretaries and Federal Council Executives. I found these two days with all other ICPA executives very informative and to do it on Federal Council's lobbying turf was great. I then finished this trip off with meeting Leslie Williams, Minister for Early Childhood in Sydney – this was in regard to the pilot program that is currently operating in Wanaaring.

While this is going on, State Council was of course gearing up for the Annual Conference in Griffith. This was hailed a great success for the convening branch Rankins Springs. The theme “Generating the Winds of Rural Education” was very fitting for what ICPA is striving to achieve.

The Conference was opened by Mr David Houston AM, ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust) Life Member. David reminded those attending conference that whilst much has been achieved over the years there is still more to do, quoting the RSL motto “the price of freedom is eternal vigilance” and in the case of ICPA families “the maintenance of access to education also requires eternal vigilance.” The conference heard that in the early days there were 12 000 AIC students in Australia and there are just over 4 000 now. In the space of four decades, rural students have declined by 66 per cent.

Keynote speaker Professor Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO gave a delightful insight into her life growing up as a country girl attending Narrandera Public School and then Sydney Girls High, going on to study medicine. She candidly spoke of how surprised she was to be asked to be the first female governor of NSW.

Once again it was great to see over 21 local schools and boarding schools from Queensland, NSW and Victoria supporting the conference and actively participating by commenting on the motions presented at conference. The willingness of these schools to understand the issues does not go unnoticed.

In early April, ICPA-NSW was asked to participate in the review of the Board of Studies Teaching Educational Standards (BOSTES); I had to travel to Sydney for this and was also able to participate in another Department of Education Panel.

The start of May saw me attending the CWA NSW Annual General Meeting in Cowra, this was a huge eye opener for me and I would say that goes for anybody who has not attended a CWA event. It was very large in numbers – over 600 participants. (Imagine a showground pavilion packed to the gills with chatty women)! After this, I was inspired to ask all State Councillors to join their nearest CWA Branch. This is because ICPA-NSW and CWA NSW believe in a united front to fight the same issues. However, constitutional constraints prevent Bruce and David from joining!

Late in the month, I went to Bathurst to attend a Rural and Remote Conference convened by the Department of Education, again this was an informative two days. I find these great as you get to see the other side of education and know a little more of how we can be of assistance to the department and our members.

By this stage, ICPA-NSW has had its second council meeting – it always good to have face to face meetings throughout the year.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, the ICPA-NSW executive travelled to Sydney for their annual Mini-Deputation and had a successful day with five meetings. These were with the Minister for Transport, joint meeting with Contact Inc and Mobile Children’s Services Association (MCSA), a joint meeting with CWA NSW and NSW Farmers, and two separate departments from the Education Department. All meetings were informative and ICPA-NSW came away with some satisfying answers to some ongoing issues. ICPA-NSW hopes to have answers to more of these issues in September while on the main deputation for 2016.

ICPA-NSW has once again taken part in the Boarding School Expos run by Meg Bennett and which take place during May, June and July. Many of our councillors went to four different locations around the state to man the ICPA booth alongside boarding schools in attendance at these Expos.

September and October is a busy time within the boarding schools portfolio as the coordination of the scholarship and bursary advertisements for the “Top Wire” scholarship section of the November and February issues takes place. These scholarship advertisements make looking for a boarding school a lot easier and, combined with attending a Boarding School Expo, ICPA-NSW is helping families by providing information regarding a good selection of schooling options and the allowances that are available to families.

**In other portfolio news:**

ICPA-NSW has written to the NSW Department of Education requesting a timeframe for when Sky Muster Satellite services will be installed in schools and DE sites. Optus is the current service provider for the department but ICPA-NSW is unsure as to whether Optus will be offering a service on the new satellite as they aren’t listed as a service provider. **nbn** is prepared to prioritise schools and Distance Education sites, however if the NSW Department of Education doesn’t have a service provider, then it is highly likely NSW schools and distance education sites will be installed last instead of the other way around.

ICPA-NSW is aware of satellite internet being so slow at schools with download speeds of under 4 Mbps, that it’s nearly impossible to have a lesson using the internet. This includes watching Behind the News (BTN) on the smartboard etc. Teachers are having to play the program first to get the buffering out, and then replay it for students which is a very inefficient utilisation of time. ICPA-NSW is awaiting a response from the Department of Education.

Mobile Black Spot Programme – the recent budget announcement by the Federal Government did not include any new money for future funding of the Mobile Black Spot Programme and ICPA-NSW issued a media release, strongly stating our disappointment. On 24<sup>th</sup> May 2016, the coalition announced an election promise of \$60 million towards the program, which means if re-elected the program will continue. Telstra has put an application in for the area around Clare Public School with announcements expected after June. There is a new criterion under this round whereby \$10 million must be allocated to remote or very remote areas, so there should be more successful base stations in remote areas this round.

At the State Conference in Griffith, the early childhood motions centred on several issues. The ones of high pertinence are:

- That funding of Long Day Centres/Community Pre-Schools should be sufficient to enable them to be run with confidence of longevity and without the need of significant community fundraising to keep them operational.
- That pre-schooling is accessible in very remote regions where there currently is none, even when demand is intermittent.
- That a discussion is held around the concerns Mobiles have in regard to changes to the mobile play session model as their services transition from Budget Based Funding (BBF) to Child Care Subsidy system (CCS) funding.

The uncertainty around viability of pre-school and long term day care centres still exists despite an extension of time and compensatory “thin market” funding. The Pre-schools for Sustainable Communities Program provides additional funding to eligible services in rural and remote areas where access to pre-school services may be limited and services could also be experiencing viability issues. This new initiative is similar to the transition funding that was provided in 2014 and 2015, but is targeted toward regional and remote pre-schools. This funding will be calculated based on the difference between a service’s previous Resource Allocation Model (RAM) funding level (in 2013) and the 2016 Pre-school Funding Model allocation. Eligible services with no other neighbouring services

within 10 km will receive 100% of the difference, while others will receive 80% of the difference. Mobile pre-schools are also eligible for support under this program.

In November 2015, Member for Barwon the Hon Kevin Humphries, made an announcement of extra funding for western pre-schools in NSW. This was a one-off payment of 2.5% of each funded child's base loading. Mr Humphries also announced a complex system which does favour 'enrolment volatile' centres. If a centre can demonstrate an increase in enrolments or an increase in days an enrolment attends, that centre is eligible for a bonus.

ICPA-NSW has been made aware that this funding, while welcome, will not be a factor to increase centres' sustainability. There are simply not enough four year olds to attract that funding. Professor Brennan proposed that three year olds be included in the funding of these centres. Under these circumstances, centres would have global funding as opposed to child based funding. ICPA-NSW is working with the Department of Education towards solutions for regional three year olds, when they are not using a place that a four year old could have, to be included in the funding allocations. This will be a threefold benefit to regional children as they will have a greater chance of achieving their 600 hours of pre-schooling before school, any early intervention strategies which may be required will have more time to be effective and they will attract funding for their early childhood service.

The second issue listed above pertains to the complete lack of access to early childhood education for some very remote children. While the Universal Access for early childhood education ordains that every Australian four year old has access to 15 hours per week of pre-schooling, ICPA-NSW recognises that this access is not available in the most isolated parts of NSW.

As a way of remedying that scenario, ICPA-NSW in 2015 developed a pilot proposal for a Distance Education Pre-school at Wanaaring. Currently at Wanaaring, there are three pre-schoolers enrolled where they are accessing a curriculum based pre-school program from Broken Hill School of the Air (BHSOTA) delivered by a Student Learning Support Officer (SLSO) for twelve hours a week.

After an assessment of the Wanaaring Pre-school/Playgroup in Term 2 of 2016, unfortunately ICPA-NSW was told that the playgroup/pre-school was in effect withdrawn after a community meeting with departmental representatives because it was brought to their attention that it wasn't legal for these children to be at school without a carer for each child. The system had been to sign the children over to a family member for the day. The sessions theoretically are still happening but the community made it clear that carers are not prepared to attend.

ICPA-NSW and the community are still consulting with the Early Childhood Education and Care Department. ICPA-NSW is also in contact with Queensland where four year olds are receiving fifteen hours of pre-school a week. ICPA-NSW wishes for similar strategies to be adopted in NSW to institute another remote pre-school pilot.

The third issue – the Child Care System, which is replacing the federal Budget Based Funding Programme, is due in July 2017 and is of serious concern for regional, rural and remote NSW mobile resource services as well as those in the other states and territories. In particular, ICPA-NSW has concerns around the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and the Activity Test required in order to receive it. The process for the activity test applied to families, in order to achieve the CCS, is complicated and does not consider the challenges of inconsistent employment in rural and remote areas nor the fact that people involved in the pastoral industry are already 'time poor'. The \$11.55 maximum rate per child is not likely to assist the viability of a service.

Many families have access to the In Home Child Care Benefit and therefore if the mobiles were to be offering a child care commodity, as prescribed in the CCS; the families' existing contracts with their nanny/governess would become complicated. ICPA-NSW believes the CCS will lead to less family

participation in remote mobile services and welcomes a national conversation around mobiles' role into the future.

In relation to the above mentioned early childhood issues, ICPA-NSW is currently involved in a round-table discussion with the Minister for Early Childhood, Early Childhood Education and Care Department, several organisations and Rural and Remote Services to improve service delivery in rural communities of NSW.

In order to fit in with the new funding model, NSW TAFE has a significant Asset Management Plan, under which it plans to sell under-utilised facilities and vacant land and re-invest in new facilities better fitting student demand. TAFE states it is planning to increase its number of outlets. However, delivery points in future may well be council libraries and community centres (in partnership with councils) rather than large campuses. This will lower its costs, make it more competitive with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and allow more of its student fees to be spent on course delivery rather than central administration and asset management.

In the area of Vocational Education and Training (VET), school students may study a course in one of three ways:

- Attend a TAFE or use an off-site RTO (called TVET);
- Attend a course at school (called VET in Schools, or VETiS) or
- Through a school based apprenticeship or traineeship.

Courses are "dual accredited". This means that the course counts for the HSC (and sometimes an ATAR), but the course is also recognised under the Australian Qualifications Network (AQF) framework as a Certificate or Statement of Attainment (usually at Cert II level). The Board of Studies advises that one third of students complete a VET course as part of their HSC. This is likely higher in rural and remote areas. Funding for VETiS and TVET is provided through the NSW Skills Board, and costs the NSW Government \$11-\$12 million per year.

However, this funding tends not to cover the full cost of courses, and the remainder has to be made up by the school. In public schools, TVET operates by schools effectively transferring teaching allocations to TAFE. In private schools, generally the schools charge the student's parents for the costs. The Skills Board is currently reviewing its funding for VET for school students.

If course fees rise (or available offerings fall) at TAFE under the Smart and Skilled policy, then this will have an impact on schools which will be under greater pressure to provide VETiS rather than TVET courses, with the above related problems of course quality and the repeated complaints from industry groups that school students are not attaining sufficient competencies under VETiS.

An Upper House Committee of NSW Parliament recently provided a report on vocational education and training in NSW. State Council wrote a submission for that Inquiry, summarising issues of vocational training in rural and remote NSW. The state government is still to respond to the recommendations of the report. One pleasing recommendation was for the NSW Government to lift the Community Service Obligation of TAFE Institutes operating in rural and remote areas.

ICPA-NSW would like to bring to your attention that new laws for the repayment of Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP) and Trade Support Loan (TSL) debts are now in force. Until now, people who took out a loan and moved overseas did not have to repay their debt as long as they remained offshore.

From 1 January 2016, people with a HELP or TSL debt who leave Australia and intend to be overseas for more than six months, or who have already been overseas for six months, will be required to register their details with the Australian Taxation Office.

From 1 July 2017, people living overseas who have a HELP or TSL debt will be obliged to make compulsory repayments on their loan if they earn above the repayment income threshold. For the 2015-16 financial year, this threshold is \$54 126.

The incentives for apprentices to complete their qualification still remain – a 20% discount will be applied to the final loan repayment if they have successfully completed their qualification. Ensuring that apprentices and students are aware of their obligations before they take out a loan is important. Apprentices, particularly those under the age of 18, need to be aware of the financial ramifications of taking out the loan.

The Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) processes applications for admission to most undergraduate courses at participating institutions (mainly located in NSW and the ACT).

They also:

- Process applications for admission to many postgraduate courses
- Calculate and provide the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) to NSW HSC students
- Administer tertiary admissions tests such as the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT)
- Process applications for Educational Access Schemes (EAS)
- Process applications for some Equity Scholarships (ES)
- Process applications for some Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS).

UAC is committed to providing excellent service to its applicants as well as to tertiary institutions, schools, parents, government education departments, statutory authorities and other bodies.

### **Lone Members**

The role of Lone Members Officer has had three convenors since March 2016 due to unforeseen circumstances, but ICPA-NSW hopes to have that rectified now. As of late May, NSW Lone Members is now known as NSW/VIC Lone Members. As always memberships are largely generated from the ICPA website, Boarding School Expos and hosting State or Federal conferences. There are currently 69 financial Lone Members and while Lone Members' numbers have declined since last year there are a couple of explanations for this.

To conclude, ICPA-NSW is pleased to announce that Louth Branch will be hosting the next annual conference, which will be held in Bourke on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**Lisa Slade**

This year our South Australian State Conference was held in Roxby Downs on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, hosted by the North West Branch. The theme for the Conference was 'Education – A Sustainable Resource' which serves to remind us that education must continue to be a viable and reliable option for rural and remote families which will in turn help to sustain rural communities. Fifteen motions were presented on the day by members, almost half were dedicated to distance education, others related to travel allowances, rural school buses and communications. The Conference was opened by local member Colin Greenfield, who entertained us with stories spanning four generations of distance education in South Australia. Local member Rowan Ramsey MP, Rosanna Lacorcia from NBN Co. and Mark Sutton from Outback Communities gave interesting and informative speeches during the day. Ann Glover (Order of Australia), international education and development specialist and research fellow at the University of South Australia, was our official guest speaker. She mesmerised us with her tales of how she and her colleagues brought education to some of the most remote and marginalised people across Australia and Asia. Her take home message for us was never give up and believe that anything is possible! Helen Williams and Belinda Hatcher completed their four years of service in their roles as Treasurer and Secretary respectively. We thank them for their dedication to ICPA and are grateful to still have them on State Council to draw upon their vast knowledge when needed. Federal Councillor Joanna Gibson was awarded Life Membership of the North West Branch which topped off a great day! Our 2017 State Conference will be hosted by the Marla/Oodnadatta branch in Port Augusta on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March.

This year has been a busy one for our State Council. Below is a brief overview.

### **Early Childhood Convention**

In November I had the opportunity to attend the Early Childhood National Reform Symposium with Federal Councillor Emily Gardner. We felt privileged to have been asked to attend. Professor Ted Melhuish spoke about the importance of Early Childhood Educational Care (ECEC) on the lifelong social and cognitive outcomes for all children, especially disadvantaged children. The Premier, the Hon Jay Weatherill, spoke of his wish for ECEC funding to be given back to the States so they could provide continuity of care from birth to 18 years. We were insistent that geographically remote and isolated families should be considered 'disadvantaged' by funding bodies to receive any benefits that should come from ECEC reforms.

### **Submissions**

We supported both Federal and other State Councils by putting forward a submission in support of the proposed changes to Youth Allowance in the Inquiry into the Social Services Legislation Amendment (More Generous Means Testing for Youth Allowance) Bill 2015. We joined in the celebrations around the country when it was announced that the Bill had been passed in the Federal Senate, a very proud day for ICPA. We have also lobbied our State Government for support of a nationally recognised Working with Children Card (WWC).

### **Country Cabinet**

We met with the Minister for Education and Child Development, the Hon Susan Close MP, at the Country Cabinet held in Port Augusta in late February. We discussed the current issues facing rural and remote families, namely communications and the high cost of education for our rural and remote children, and we found the Minister to be genuinely interested and willing to investigate ways in which her department may be able to help. Of particular interest was the Minister's agreement to a Review of the State Education Allowance.

### **State Education Allowance (SEA) Review**

The SEA is an allowance paid to remote families with children at boarding school to help cover some of the costs associated with sending children away to school. We believe this is grossly underfunded and are presently asking for a substantial increase in line with what other States receive. We issued a Media Release regarding the inadequacies of the SEA in early in 2016, this sparked the interest of the local ABC Radio station and provided us with an opportunity to get our message out to the wider community. Following on from our meeting with the Minister we travelled to Adelaide in April to meet with the Department of Education and Child Development's (DECD) Transport Division (who administer the allowance) to provide information for the Review that was being undertaken at the time. This was also followed up at Delegation in May, but at the time of writing this report, we have not received a response but are confident that our concerns have not fallen upon deaf ears and we will see an increase in 2017.

### **Face to Face Meeting**

In mid-May we held a Face to Face meeting in Port Augusta, which coincided with the School of the Air 'School Experience Week.' We had a total of fifteen councillors attend out of sixteen, which was a great achievement. We had a very productive day and as always it was lovely catching up with old and new friends! Items at the forefront were the upcoming Delegation, Federal Conference, and the 2017 State Conference to name a few. At the moment we are looking at the current structure of the State Conference and are seeking feedback from stakeholders in an attempt to better engage our members.

### **Delegation**

On the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of May, Kerry Williams, Jill Greenfield and myself travelled to Adelaide for Delegation. We met with Julie Taylor (Open Access College Principal), the Hon Minister Close MP Minister for Education and Child Development, Ross Treadwell (Executive Director Infrastructure Division, DECD), Rowena Fox (Assistant Director for Systems Improvement, DECD), Karen Humphries, Ashley Smith and Wayne Mundy (Transport Services Division, DECD), Liberal cross benchers Dan Van Holst Pellekaan, John Dawkins and Shadow Education Minister John Gardner. All meetings were extraordinarily positive, all that we met were sympathetic to our current issues and willing to work with us to enact change. It was the most positive I've felt following a Delegation to date!

### **School of the Air**

We met with Open Access College Principal, Julie Taylor at Delegation. On behalf of our School of the Air (SOTA) families, we thanked Julie for the positive changes that have occurred during this year and particularly the work being done to improve internet reliability for remote students. Open Access College have been funding the installation of mobile towers on remote properties where possible, with great success so far. They are also negotiating with **nbn** service providers with a view to funding the dedicated education port for Sky Muster satellite connections. It is also intended that a SOTA website will be created to help preserve the history and unique identity of SOTA in South Australia. This will be partly funded by a Telstra grant received last year. Issues raised in conference motions were discussed and Julie is very keen to continue working with SOTA staff and families.

### **Volunteers Grant**

We were successful recipients of an Australian Government Department of Social Services Volunteers Grant 2015 for \$5 000 which will be used towards travel for Councillors to and from face to face events.

### **Membership**

One of the issues we currently face in South Australia is that our membership base is restricted predominantly to geographically isolated families. We do have members who live in rural communities, but they are usually on the fringe of being considered isolated themselves. We are looking at this as a State Council and ways in which we can make ICPA relatable to rural families. There

is a great misconception in South Australia that ICPA is an organisation that is of benefit to 'isolated' and hence 'pastoral' families only, perhaps our very name does us an injustice.

The 2015/2016 year has been a very positive one for SAICPA, we believe as a Council we have served the rural and remote families in South Australia to the best of our ability and we hope to continue this momentum into the coming year. SAICPA are pleased to actively support Federal ICPA along with other States in ensuring equitable education outcomes for our rural and remote children. This teamwork culminated in the passing of the Youth Allowance Bill earlier in the year, a truly momentous occasion for ICPA.

## TASMANIAN PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### Emily Gardner

Madam President, honoured guests, fellow ICPA members, ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I present to you the Tasmanian ICPA President's Report for 2016.

At the 2016 AGM on 30th March 2016 the new State Council was elected:

<b>President:</b>	Emily Gardner
<b>Vice President:</b>	Jennie Amos
<b>Correspondence Secretary:</b>	Rae Dowling
<b>Minutes Secretary:</b>	Sarah Fisher
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Mandy Burbury
<b>Public Officer:</b>	Jennie Amos
<b>Publicity Officer:</b>	Cassie Melrose
<b>Webmaster:</b>	Leanne Dann
<b>Lone Member Officer:</b>	Mandy Burbury
<b>Committee:</b>	Alison Wallace, Michelle Loane, Melissa Quinn
<b>Immediate Past President:</b>	Kate Thompson

After the AGM we also delegated some portfolios to councillors for the first time, they are as follows:

Rural Schools – Mandy Burbury  
Tertiary/ Allowances – Kate Thompson  
Boarding – Leanne Dann  
Early Childhood– Emily Gardner

Tasmania currently has three branches: Midlands, East Coast and Lone Members. Midlands was the branch that convened the Tasmanian 2015 State Conference which was held on September 16, 2015 in Ross at the Town Hall. The conference was very successful with over 40 attendees, we were entertained by the fabulous Meg Bignell, the daughter of the current Tasmanian Governor, who talked and sang songs about her childhood experiences growing up in the country and her life now on a dairy farm in Bream Creek. We also were very lucky to have Lalla Mackenzie from **nbn**, Michael Patterson from Telstra Country Wide, Amelia Jones from Square Pegs Dyslexia Support Tasmania, Emma Belfield from the Gonski Reform and Wendy Hick, our Federal President, who travelled all the way from Queensland to open the conference. We had 11 state motions that were all carried, they were focused around:

- 1) Assistance for Isolated Children – that children must be able to have the choice to attend a metropolitan college or school for year 11 and 12, if they cannot study their subjects taught by a subject specific teacher, face to face. That ICPA State Council lobbies the State and Shadow Ministers for Education to ensure that rural students who relocate to access metropolitan colleges for years 11 and 12 are still eligible for the Assistance for Isolated Childrens Allowance (AIC).
- 2) Teaching and the curriculum - that ICPA State Council lobbies the State Minister for Education and the Department of Education to ensure that each subject in the National Curriculum is taught by subject specific teachers. To introduce a incentive bonus to teachers who are willing to take up a position and live in the community in a rural school anywhere in Tasmania. To expand the variety of virtual tours, now on offer to rural and remote schools.

- 3) Accommodation – the Student Accommodation Allowance must be increased to more closely reflect the actual cost of living away from home for students, to access year 11 and 12. That ICPA State Council requests the Minister for Education to have the Accommodation Allowance for Tertiary Students (AATS) reinstated.
- 4) Work, Tertiary and VET – that ICPA State Council lobbies the State Education Minister and the Secretary of the Department of Education to ensure that VET Courses remain on the curriculum for Tasmanian year 11 and 12 Colleges. That the State Education Minister includes and funds, within the introduction of year 11 and 12 into country schools, a program to assist with students to be job ready, this would include assisting the student to apply for a tax file number.
- 5) Communications - to ensure that all Tasmanian students have equal internet access with regard to speed, quality, data availability, capability and cost of the service, to enable students to engage fully with the national curriculum and maximise learning opportunities and outcomes for students.

To date, we have not yet managed to obtain delegation appointments post conference but we will be looking at meetings with the new Secretary of the Department of Education, Jenny Gale, the Minister for Education and Training, Jeremy Rockliff and the Shadow Minister for Education, Michelle O’Byrne. State Councillors attended a forum for the Review of the Tasmanian Education Act to discuss and understand the Draft Education Bill in April this year. The Education Act is a legal framework for education in Tasmania and it is in dire need of an update. Hopefully, this new Bill will form the foundation for Tasmanian Education for another 20 years. The state government aims, with these changes to improve early learning outcomes, increase attendance and participation, improve retention and parent engagement, so students will stay in education for longer and participate more. If you would like more information, below are some links:

[www.education.tas.gov.au](http://www.education.tas.gov.au)

<https://www.education.tas.gov.au/documentcentre/Documents/Education-Act-Review-02-Draft-Bill-at-a-glance.pdf>

<https://www.education.tas.gov.au/documentcentre/Documents/Education-Act-Review-04-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>

Tasmanian State Council was very excited to see the building and subsequent opening of the new university accommodation at Inveresk in Launceston this year. This has always been an issue for Launceston students, with many of the university courses being spread in campuses across the city. These glamorous new apartments are located right next to the Launceston CBD and the Tasmanian College of Arts.

Lastly I would like to thank all the other State Councillors for their hard work in the past year, particularly as we have had a bit more of a focus on fundraising this year across the 2 main branches. The latest fundraiser, a barbeque at Bunnings Warehouse in Launceston on the day of the AFL game between the Hawks and Gold Coast, was a great success, raising over \$1 100. I especially would like to thank Kate Thompson, past Tasmanian President and fellow Federal Councillor, she has been a terrific support to me at both levels plus a great travelling buddy for our many and varied roles in ICPA across Australia.

I would like to leave you with a quote from one of my most favourite Australians, Tim Minchin:

*“Even if you’re not a Teacher, be a teacher. Share your ideas. Don’t take for granted your education. Rejoice in what you learn, and spray it.”*

## **QUEENSLAND PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**Kim Hughes**

Queensland's ICPA year commenced in the NW town of Cloncurry, which was the venue for the 44<sup>th</sup> State Conference. The Cloncurry Branch did a stellar job as convenors and I am sure all attendees appreciated experiencing an iconic small community which embodies the very ideals that ICPA represents. It was at this conference that I took over the President's job from the capable and experienced Andrew Pegler. As I approach the twelve month mark in the driver's seat, I can say that the ride has been relatively smooth, due to the ongoing dedication and camaraderie of the Qld Council as a whole, as well as Andy's ongoing advice and support. Our team's willingness to work together to get the best for the organisation has allowed me to navigate the potholes and pit stops along the way without too many dings and punctures, and when I have had a scrape or two, it has all been a learning experience.

### **Living Away From Home Allowance Scheme**

At the Cloncurry Conference, the Queensland Education Minister the Hon Kate Jones announced a 5% increase above the CPI to the Living Away From Home Assistance Scheme Remote Area Tuition Allowance. For those not familiar with LAFHAS, this is an Education Queensland subsidy which assists with tuition fees for students who fulfil distance criteria and must board away from home to access their education. Coupled with the earlier increase of 7% (excluding CPI) announced in January 2015 by the previous Education Minister, the tuition subsidy for a secondary student attending boarding school in 2016 is \$5 217. The average tuition fee in Queensland Boarding Schools this year is \$11 793.00. These LAFHAS increases have been applauded by Queensland recipients. On the whole average boarding school fees in Queensland have risen to \$29 629.00 with out of pocket expenses increasing to \$16 397 after the AIC and LAFHAS are taken into account. Queensland has 43 independent boarding schools and 2 state boarding facilities.

Queensland have also had success with an allocation in the recent State Budget of \$3.7m over 3 years for students living in drought declared shires or individually drought declared properties to assist with boarding school fees. This allocation was in response to a recommendation from the Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce that assistance for education for drought affected families should be forthcoming. Queensland Council had made a submission to the Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce in in this regard in January 2016, as did the Bollon Branch. We understand that the funding will be available to LAFHAS recipients and will equate to \$1 250 per student per annum in the year the shire or property is drought declared. ICPA Qld has written to the Agricultural Department conveying our appreciation and seeking the opportunity to work with the department to ensure that an inclusive model is adopted to ensure that all drought affected families can benefit from this funding, including those utilising the 2 state boarding facilities in Queensland.

### **Early Childhood**

Significant traction has been gained over the last year around universal access to kindergarten in Queensland. There has always been obstacles in place for children to access kindergarten in rural and remote areas where no early childhood centre exists as State legislation restricts kindergarten being provided by state schools. As a result, local clusters have been growing in numbers, and the standard model has been that the community partners with the local council and utilises the Distance Education eKindy resource, sometimes using a vacant facility at the local state school. Based on this need, in December 2015 Minister Jones announced the introduction of a Rural Kindergarten Pilot Program. At present 11 state schools are participating, and the model brings kindy aged children into the Prep classroom for 15 hours per week. Should this Pilot be successful, it is envisaged that it will be implemented in other rural and remote schools which fulfil the criteria, which is that the school must

be more than 50kms from the nearest early childhood service provider. One of our Vice Presidents and Early Childhood Portfolio leader Tammie Irons sits on the Rural Kindergarten Pilot Program Working Group, and ICPA is the only non-departmental stakeholder acting in this capacity.

The commencement of this Pilot abutted the State Government's announcement that prep would become compulsory in Queensland from 2017. Whilst ICPA Qld welcomes this proposal, we also support the need for flexibility dependent on the individual child's needs. Factors such as child development and the Year 7 move to secondary school impact rural and remote families' decisions on the school starting age, and we believe it is imperative that this flexibility remains.

### **Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce**

Queensland is presently undergoing a transition which will introduce new systems for senior assessment and tertiary entrance, to be implemented in 2018 for students entering Year 11. ICPA Qld is a stakeholder on the Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce, which is providing input to the design of the new system. The Taskforce has been meeting monthly since October 2015 and its Terms of Reference include the provision of a new approach to senior assessment which will combine school-based and external assessment. Given that a system of 100% school-based assessment has operated in Queensland for more than 40 years, this is a significant change. Terms of Reference also include a transition for students seeking tertiary entrance to an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), replacing the current Overall Position (OP). The OP system has been the official measure of overall student achievement used to rank school leavers in Queensland since 1992, so this conversion is monumental for education in our State.

ICPA Qld's key consideration is to ensure that any future model will not disadvantage rural and remote students or schools and that pathways will remain flexible to enable all students to access the career of their choice.

### **Sky Muster and the Education Port**

Queensland's Distance Education students have been the first to benefit from the Education Port feature on the Sky Muster service. Our Communications Adviser Jeff Little has been working tirelessly to collect student data and providing this to **nbn** with a view to priority installation of the Sky Muster service and ultimately the Education Port. At the time of writing this report, 398 students had registered through Jeff, and **nbn** had advised that up to 50 premises had been connected to the Port. **nbn** is continuing to work with ICPA Qld and Education Queensland to ensure full optimisation of the Sky Muster satellite so that students can get the very best out of the technology available. The fact that Queensland has been the first to break ground is, in part, due to the Queensland Education Department's willingness to support the concept from the outset, as well as Jeff's ongoing work with **nbn** and departmental IT staff. Qld Council would like to convey sincere thanks to all parties who made the Education Port a reality as we continue to hear positive feedback from students who are, many for the first time, experiencing the distance education curriculum as it was intended.

### **Schools**

We continue to bring to the department the issues in Queensland for our small schools where the tyranny of distance unfortunately continues to promote disadvantage. The lack of resourcing for specialist staff including Guidance Officers and Learning Support Teachers as well as a shortage of IT technicians is an ongoing issue.

The need for a more adequate transition for children receiving care through Queensland Health for developmental issues upon their entrance to the school system needs urgent attention. Students continue to fall through the cracks as the requirement to verify students again with different education criteria continues to cause delays and confusion for everyone involved.

We were, however, encouraged by a budget allocation this year for administration staff, which will see staff provided with extra support and resourcing to continue to do the multi-faceted job they do in small schools, when quite often they are the only support mechanism to the principal.

### **General**

In February this year Queensland State Secretary Kate Twist and I were grateful for the opportunity to travel to Canberra for face to face meetings with other States and Federal ICPA. It was very valuable to discuss the issues which affect each council and come up with ways to work together to enhance our effectiveness as an organisation. As a result of feedback from these meetings, ICPA Qld decided to add a day onto our delegations in May this year to meet with Members of Parliament (both government and opposition) at Parliament House in Brisbane. We found this to be a very successful exercise which enabled us to establish relationships and strengthen existing connections. We were extremely encouraged by the general interest and willingness to assist the organisation conveyed by members of parliament. We will be looking at incorporating a day at Parliament House into at least one delegation per year in the future.

One of the main events on Queensland State Council's map is our annual Mid-Year Meeting, which is a fantastic opportunity to have two days of face to face hashing out of conference arrangements, planning the calendar, succession planning and much more. This year the Mt Isa Branch of the Air hosted Mid-Year in the beautiful coastal town of Burketown in the state's Gulf. It was a wonderful weekend and extremely productive. These branch members (which include our Federal President Wendy Hick) are speckled across a huge geographical distance and it was an excellent reminder of what the 'I' in Isolated truly represents, and the unique challenges tremendous distance brings about.

The 45<sup>th</sup> State Queensland State Conference preparations are well underway. This year's venue is Alpha in Central Queensland on 6 & 7 September. The theme is 'Mustering the Opportunities' and the Alpha Branch convenors, guided by fearless leader Kristy Sparrow, have been busy organising conference and from all accounts the experience will be quite different to anything we have seen for quite some time. 'Glamping' with a fully stocked beauty salon area and onsite bar, and much more, promises to provide the ultimate outback experience!

At this year's conference we will be losing our Treasurer Sue Pegler, our Secretary Kate Twist and our Publicity Officer Gillian Semple, as well as at least one Councillor, Schools portfolio leader Rebecca Greenway. A collective thank-you would not do any of these women justice for the dedication they have shown to the organisation over a number of years. Council runs as effectively as the people in it, and we continue to benefit from volunteers who bring their own flair, talent and unique personalities to the jobs at hand. We will obviously be giving these ladies an appropriate farewell at our conference next month and we are also hopeful that we will be welcoming some new faces to the team.

Over the next twelve months Queensland Council has a focus on raising the organisation's profile, attracting the next generation of members and increasing the connection between council and its branches and members. As we embrace the abundance of social media resources available to get our message out there, there is a world of opportunity to expand our coverage and influence base, and broadcast our issues far and wide. This is exciting!

However, as we get bogged down with the administration, teleconferences, department meetings and the general daily activity involved in keeping the show on the road, our Council is very mindful of the importance of keeping our branches and members at the very forefront of what we do all of the time. It is challenging to keep that contact in a time poor environment when life sometimes gets in the way with our ICPA intentions and responsibilities, however, taking our members with us is the most

important factor of the organisation, and something that must always be the main priority. I would like to congratulate Queensland Council, our branches and our members for their dedication to flying the flag for our bush babies consistently, passionately and vehemently. I wish Federal Council all the best for a successful and productive conference.

## **ICPA WEB MANAGER'S REPORT**

**Sue Shotton**

Madam President, honoured guests, fellow ICPA members, ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I present to you the ICPA Web Manager Report for 2016.

What an exciting year this has been for ICPA as an organisation with the redevelopment of the ICPA website completed and the birth of 6 ICPA State websites as standalone websites. States now have the ability to interact with their members by utilising their own website and when coupled with social media can ensure proactive interaction with their grass root members.

This major development has been achieved with the assistance of a grant from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and ICPA thanks them for this funding. Even though each state website worked off a base developmental template they have become individualised representing their members. Some states have tweaked the development even further by adding their own funds to the project so they could have some unique aspect that they required for what they wanted to achieve for the development and their members.

With the new websites the role of the Web Manager and Webmasters have changed. Webmasters from some states have taken on more editing responsibility which enables the states to have more ownership of their website and at the same time has lessened the workload of the Web Manager. The old website meant the Web Manager had a handful of content pages to edit that were not editable by any of the modules but with the redevelopment and creation of additional websites meant that this workload then ballooned out to over 78 extra pages for the Web Manager to deal with. Nearly a full-time job.

The Web Manager's workload has now decreased with the extra work the webmasters are doing which leaves more time to give assistance to those states whose webmasters are not taking on the extra editing and also leaves more time for training. New manuals are being created and with the use of Dropbox these are available to all webmasters whenever they are required. Face to face training is also offered during conference for those webmasters attending and phone training is always available.

ICPA manages the email hosting of the executives of State and Federal ICPA and until late last year this was being hosted where our websites are hosted. We were required to move our email hosting when our previous hosts no longer offered this service. The transfer of the email accounts to a new host happened with minimal problems and we currently now have 29 physical emails and about 30 alias emails which redirect to the person's email address they are currently using.

With the creation of the new websites some functionality and errors were found in the usage of the new sites. Just like the teething problems with Sky Muster. One problem was that the main "Choose State" drop down menu was not working on Safari on mobile devices. The websites were not developed as mobile friendly websites as the majority of our members were still using desktops at the time of the initial development. But the work the developers have done has been outstanding in that, except for the Safari problem, every website displays well on all forms of mobile technology. The Safari problem has now been resolved but ICPA will need to continue evaluating how the websites appear on mobile technologies and reassess each problem as they surface. It is crucial that these websites remain user friendly to ensure continued participation with members and to entice new members so if anyone notices anything not working as you think it should, then please email me and let me know.

Another situation occurred with the accidental deletion of the WA Lone Members Branch through the branch module. The ICPA database is housed on the Federal website and with this accidental deletion all the historical information was also deleted. Federal Council financed the reinstatement of this branch and the recovery of the information. The delete button has now been permanently removed from the module so any further accidental deletion cannot happen again. In the future if a branch becomes inactive then the branch is simply made “not live” and therefore the historical information regarding the branch and members is not lost.

Western Australia State Council kindly funded a new role to be added to the drop down menu on the branch module so Branch Mentors can be added to the branch pages. This addition will enable other States to add a Branch Mentor to their branch pages if they so wish.

The web committee are currently looking into the different options for an online membership process to assist Federal Council and the State Councils in their talks on such an addition to the websites and to try and streamline the membership process. It is hoped that something will be in place by the next membership renewal date at the end of the year.

I would like to thank the web committee, Judy Sinclair-Newton, Joanna Gibson, Nikki Macqueen and Wendy Hick for their assistance over the past 12 months which has been quite hectic with the development and associated problems arising. I would also like to thank Judy Sinclair-Newton and Roxanne Morrissey for continuing on with the redevelopment when I was away in South America last year. Thanks also to all the webmasters, Lynelle, Raelene, Bianca, Jennie, Mija and Leanne for trying new things and giving it a go. It's not an easy job to work on something that is new and strange but hopefully you get something out of it and remember no question is silly and if I don't know then I'll google it. And finally I would like to thank my husband, Peter, who never questions the hours that I put into this work as he knows I do get a lot of mental stimulation from it and enjoy the challenge.

## **PEDALS' REPORT**

**Raelene Hall**

Madam President, Federal Councillors, fellow ICPA members and guests, it is with pleasure I present to you the 2015/16 Pedals' magazine report.

I just looked back at the Pedals' report from last year and cringed! Somehow I managed to increase the number of Pedals that would be published by July 2016 by an extra 20 issues! Recently you would have received your 140<sup>th</sup> edition of Pedals, not the 160<sup>th</sup> I happily wrote last year. Now that's what I call an epic failure on the part of the Editor. Despite that oversight, 140 issues is still a major milestone for our publication and I say 'our' deliberately because, as Editor, I am but a small cog in the wheel of this magazine. It is your contributions of words and pictures that make the magazine what it is. For that I thank all of you who have contributed in the past year and I look forward to your ongoing contributions in the next 12 months. With over 2 000 members in ICPA there are a lot of stories just waiting to be told so please share them with ICPA and those who subscribe to Pedals.

Whilst some branches have a publicity officer, whose role may include contributions to Pedals and the state newsletter, don't leave it all up to them. We are all busy people and many hands really do make light work.

Social media is becoming a very big part of ICPA and that includes Pedals with its Facebook page, where posts on the FB page are also published on Twitter. For those who have the Internet access to use social media it can be a quick and effective means of communication. So where does that leave Pedals magazine? Is it still relevant and wanted in this age of technology?

My thoughts are that it is still very relevant. For many reasons there are still people who prefer to read magazines in hard copy format. I've been asked would Pedals ever be an online publication? That is a topic to be discussed with Federal Council but if we were to go down that path, my preference would be to combine an online issue with a print edition, thereby giving people a choice.

All magazines, large and small, are only the sum of the contents within and it is the same with Pedals. Without your contributions my role as Editor would be irrelevant. For many, writing is like public speaking –akin to death. I'm one of those very strange beings who just happen to enjoy both! If you have a story to tell but feel writing is not your strong point, please ring or email me and I can help you out. You can 'tell' me the words, I can write them, together we can rearrange them until you are happy and, hey presto, you have 'written' an article for Pedals.

If I could only find the funding or win Lotto I'd travel across Australia visiting members and branches to record your stories and articles for Pedals, whilst attempting to take photos, or conning the very talented photographers within our organisation, to take them for me. That would generate enough material for several editions or even a book. Given that either scenario is about as likely as me being the next PM I am going to have to rely on you all to produce the goods for me.

I am here at conference as 'your' Editor so please take the time to introduce yourself, discuss any ideas you have for Pedals, what you like/dislike about it and any suggestions for improvements because there is always room for improvement.

Thank you to Federal Council for entrusting me with the role of Editor of the ICPA flagship magazine. It has given me incredible opportunities for which I am very grateful.