

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



2018 Federal Conference

Agenda Motions

1 & 2 August 2018
Canberra, ACT

BOARDING SCHOOLS/HOSTELS

A1. Pilbara Branch (WA)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby both the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education and Training for a 50% increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance to take into account the ever-increasing gap between the allowance and the true cost of boarding.”

Explanation:

We thank the Australian Government for the increase in 2016 to the AIC Additional Boarding Allowance, which is “means-tested”, however there is only a small minority of people that have approval for that additional allowance.

When the AIC was initially introduced, it was to help alleviate the high costs associated with sending geographically isolated children to boarding school. Since then the gap between the allowance received by families and the true cost of boarding has drastically widened especially since the Western Australian Government is now decreasing the State Boarding Away from Home Allowance by 30% over the next four years. On average boarding facilities increase their fees by 4 - 8% per annum, which is supported by the recent research undertaken by ICPA (Aust) into the costs of boarding. Our members feel very strongly about this issue and feel the Government have lost touch with the educational needs of rural and remote families.

A2. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby both the Minister of Social Services and Minister for Education and Training for an increase to the Federal allowance - Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance, to help alleviate financial pressures from increased fees by boarding schools and hostels.”

Explanation:

The Western Australian State Government announced last September that they would decrease the much relied upon state funded Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) over the next 5 years. This will now see the allowance fall from \$2105 in 2017, to \$1320 in 2022. This WA allowance has not increased since 2010, when the allowance was increased from \$1320 to \$2105. Many families will feel the impact of the reduction to the BAHA with increased financial pressure placed on families. While some states have seen an increase in their state allowances, WA has had a severe reduction and still other states offer no state assistance at all. Rural and remote families should have consistency and be assisted equally. An increase in the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance would relieve some of the burden placed on families to pay for their children’s education.

WA State Council would like to thank Federal Council for their continued work lobbying the Federal Government for an increase to the Basic Boarding Allowance.

A3. Bollon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education and Training to address the ever-growing shortfall of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance by increasing it and aligning it with the Education Sub-Index of the Consumer Price Index.”

Explanation:

Members are appreciative of Government's acknowledgement of the significant cost burden faced by rural families trying to educate their children and want to ensure that this acknowledgement continues by ensuring allowances are increased alongside tuition cost increases. The only option for many geographically isolated families to access an education on par with that of their urban cousins is boarding school and the average cost of this is well beyond the reach of many families. For example, tuition and boarding fees at typical Brisbane schools in 2018 are about \$35 - 40,000 per child and the median annual household income for 2016 was \$74,776 (ABS, 2016 Census). Faced with these expenses, ordinary Australian families cannot afford to live in rural areas. We call for ongoing increases in the AIC and to align those increases with the Education Sub-Index of the Consumer Price Index, so the average family can afford to educate their children and remain living and working in rural Australia.

A4. Northern Territory State Council (NT)

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers for an increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) - Boarding Allowance to more closely reflect the increased cost to families with children who must board away from home to attend school."

Explanation:

Boarding fees are rising every year and the AIC is not keeping up with these rising fees. The AIC Allowance needs to be updated constantly to reflect the increasing financial burden being placed on isolated families to educate their children. We are aware the AIC Allowance is indexed to the CPI, which allows for a small increase each year. However, this increase is nowhere near the actual increase of boarding school fees. Resulting in the gap between the allowance and the real cost of educating isolated students widening substantially.

A5. Nyngan Branch (NSW)

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education and Training for an increase to the AIC 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. A Nyngan branch member at the end of 12 years of secondary education for 4 daughters has watched her tuition and boarding fees increase from \$28,000 to \$58,000 per annum per child. The AIC Boarding Allowance, an equity allowance, needs to be updated constantly to reflect the increasing financial burden being placed on isolated families by the government 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 Mr Turnbull 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' choice in education for their child equivalent to their city counter parts.

A6. Bollon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education and Training to review the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance and give special consideration to families with more than one child by increasing those families' allowances so access to an affordable equitable education is within reach."

Explanation:

Members are appreciative of Government's acknowledgement of the significant cost burden faced by rural families trying to educate their children. We ask Government to further acknowledge the increased cost burden to those families with more than one child by supplementing their allowances with added payments. The only option for many geographically isolated families to access an education on par with that of their urban cousins is boarding school and the average cost of this is well beyond the reach of many families. For example, tuition and boarding fees at typical Brisbane schools in 2018 are about \$35 - 40,000 per child while the median annual household income for 2016 was \$74,776 (ABS, 2016 Census). For families with several children these costs quickly become insurmountable and alternatives such as relocating become attractive, leaving rural Australia with a further diminished population. We propose another element be introduced to the AIC to help families meet these costs and remain living and working in rural Australia.

A7. Mount Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister of Human Services and the Department of Human Services streamline the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) payment system to ensure a common payment date for families with multiple students. "

Explanation:

It is problematic for families whose students receive Assistance for Isolated Children to keep track of payments if payments for multiple students in the family are received at different times. Families who receive the AIC Second Home Allowance, which is paid fortnightly, can have a child paid on one fortnightly cycle and then other children paid on the following week. This makes it more difficult for families to keep track of payments. At the start of the 2018 school year, numerous families who receive the AIC Boarding Allowance also received their payments on different days, sometimes weeks apart, even though all of the students in the family had their AIC renewal forms or applications sent in at the same time. This is problematic for families in making plans for school payments as well as continuously needing to check their bank accounts to see if the remaining students' payments have gone in.

A8. North West Branch (SA)

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Minister for Human Services to introduce an online form for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance annual renewal."

Explanation

The AIC allowance can currently only be claimed using a paper-based form and returning by Australia Post. This is a yearly renewal process. This year members of our branch were affected by the sudden and unexplained cancellation of their allowance. In some instances, this has a flow on effect as our State Education Allowance is dependent on the student receiving the AIC Boarding Allowance. Despite many calls to the AIC telephone number the problem was only rectified when our member contacted an ICPA federal councillor. This scheme needs to have a better system in place to manage and resolve any issues regarding this allowance.

A9. Westmar/Inglestone (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Minister to support employers wishing to assist with education expenses of employees’ children who reside in geographically isolated areas, by removing the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) on this assistance.”

Explanation:

Many employers/employees in rural and regional areas find secondary schooling of employees’ children a hard time for all. Many families leave their place of employment to school their children, causing upheaval for both the employer and the employee. Many employers would like to assist with some of the costs associated with secondary schooling but are hit with the double whammy of the cost of the assistance as well as the burden of the FBT. If this was removed it would provide a greater incentive for employers to assist with some of the schooling costs.

Rural and remote living is not for everyone. It is for the minority. The families that do so should be supported not penalised. Rural families help make up the communities in the bush and you will find no better evidence of community than in rural and remote Queensland. The removal of FBT would help sustain our small rural communities.

A10. Tambo Branch (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the relevant Ministers to ensure that any drought relief measures that are introduced by the federal government include an education subsidy component.”

Explanation:

We thank ICPA (Aust) for their effort thus far in lobbying for a drought education subsidy. It is important, however, to continue to highlight how critical this issue is in attempting to retain families in rural and remote locations as currently, the population in rural and remote Australia continues to decline. This decline needs to be stopped. One of the key reasons families are leaving rural and remote locations, or families are splitting, in particular in town families, is due to the lack of affordable education.

A11. Tambo Branch (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) raises awareness among banks about the changing ages for children now entering high school and the need for children to have an independent bank account when they are living away from home.”

Explanation:

With children now entering their high school years at ages from 11 and up, many are heading off to boarding school at this age. It should not be unreasonable to suggest that children who are in high school are old enough to manage an access card bank account. Banks, currently, are either not offering products to cater for this market as they have a 12 year and over policy only for some accounts or they are providing incorrect information to parents when they are asked about accounts for children. Some parents have been told there are no options for children to have access to money via a card until they are 12. Having children with no access to a bank account, leaves families with options such as opening accounts in parents’ names or sending kids to school with cash, both of which are undesirable options. When children are already faced with boarding great distances away from their homes and families when they are 11 years old the removal of how to have safe access to money by having an access card to use would be one thing off the long list for parents to worry about. With awareness being raised with banks we feel that the incorrect

information about available bank accounts being provided to families would lessen and families would be able to sign up for the accounts that are available – for example signing children up to an access account not a debit/credit card account.

COMMUNICATIONS

Internet Access

A12. Katherine Branch (NT)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate that the Minister for Communications ensures that all Australian students have adequate internet access with regard to speed, quality, capabilities and cost of the service.”

Explanation:

We acknowledge and thank ICPA (Aust) and the Better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia and the Rural, Remote and Regional Communications Coalition for their continuous and effective lobbying of the Federal Government, Telstra, nbn and other providers on internet and telecommunication issues in the bush.

While expected data speeds, plan sizes and service reliability are continuously improving, Sky Muster users still have concerns about the data allocations in plans being heavily loaded towards unreasonable off-peak times. The Mb/\$ continues to fall extremely short of those available to our urban counterparts, thus ensuring maintenance of the internet divide between regional and urban areas.

The education port in some states or provision of internet by government in others is great for distance education students. Students of small schools, tertiary students and boarding students can all be required to access the internet for their schooling/studies whilst at home and broadening of the education port eligibility criteria to encompass these cohorts would help make their education more equitable too.

A13. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications, Minister for Regional Communications, National Broadband Network Company and Internet Service Providers to ensure that geographically isolated students have equity of internet access which is adequate with regard to speed, quality, capabilities, and cost to meet their educational needs.”

Explanation:

Distance Education Students enrolled at Alice Springs School of the Air (ASSOA) have had internet supplied to them via in-house satellite, modem and internet connections. This internet service has been provided by the NT Department of Education and managed, monitored and fixed by the Internet Technicians at ASSOA. ASSOA are now in the process of having tests carried out on families own internet connections gathering data to ensure when the school internet network is changed over to each family’s own internet connection, the children will still have enough reliable internet access to ensure speed, quality, capabilities and cost meet their daily schooling needs.

A14. North West Branch (SA)**CARRIED/LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to strongly lobby the nbn for the nbn Sky Muster Education Service to include rural and remote children attending preschool over the internet through a recognised distance education preschool program."

Explanation:

The Education Port has been fantastic for those students studying via distance education. In South Australia, for example, children studying Kindergarten (Preschool) externally through the Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise (RICE) are not eligible for the nbn Education Port. These students, and those transitioning into Kindy, also require a reliable internet connection and substantial amounts of downloads to successfully engage in their learning. We are asking for these children to be able to be included in this scheme.

A15. South Australian State Council (SA)**CARRIED/LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies NBN Co to ensure all rural and remote children studying via a recognised Distance Education program have access to the nbn Sky Muster Education Service where the family home is reliant on the nbn Sky Muster Satellite for internet connectivity."

Explanation:

Currently children studying preschool externally through e-kindy/preschool/early years programs (such as that delivered by SA's Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise (RICE) and Alice Springs School of the Air's "Play ASSOA") are not eligible for the nbn Education Port. We are asking for all e-kindy preschool (early years) students across Australia to be included in this scheme. Students studying at any level of Distance Education require a reliable internet connection and substantial downloads to successfully engage in their learning. Tertiary students studying online also have a great need for access to the Education Service.

While the Sky Muster Satellite has improved reliability, connectivity and speed of internet access to families in rural and remote South Australia, the cost of plans and access to data still lags a long way behind what is available to those in urban centres. Access to the education port for all families with students learning via distance education will help ensure there is sufficient data to meet the educational needs of the family.

A16. Westmar/Inglestone (QLD)**CARRIED/LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications, Minister for Regional Communications and National Broadband Network Company to extend the current Sky Muster Education Port to include Tertiary students studying online from rural and remote locations."

Explanation:

Many rural and remote tertiary students are choosing to study by distance education or online as this allows them to remain at home or continue to work and live in rural and remote communities. Currently the Education Port only includes primary and secondary students studying via distance education. Online learning requires tertiary students to log in to streamed, live tutorials up to 4 times a week. Current download data is being used up within 2 weeks of the month and the students are then unable to attend the online tutorials for the next 2 weeks. The Education Port needs to be made available to tertiary students studying from rural and remote locations.

A17. Northern Territory State Council (NT)**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications and the Minister for Regional Communications and nbn to ensure all rural and remote students (distance education, tertiary, boarding school students and small rural school students) with Sky Muster as their home internet service have access to the nbn Education Port.”

Explanation:

In this modern age, students need to have access to reliable internet to enable them to successfully engage in their studies. For example, a student who attends a small rural school may have access to the internet and adequate data whilst at school. After school or on days when access to school is problematic students will require good internet and sufficient data for completing homework, working in online environments or on research assignments. Students will be negatively impacted if internet quality and reliability and data availability are inadequate. Likewise, some isolated students undertake online tertiary and training courses from home, boarding students require internet for school work during holidays and of course, distance education students have very high internet requirements. The alternative to having access to the nbn Education Port for isolated families in the NT with students is to pay for large plans and to be out-of-pocket for this education-related expense. This is unaffordable for some families.

Telephone**A18. Alice Springs Branch (NT)****CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to work with the Minister for Communications and the relevant Telecommunications Providers to ensure that all rural and remote students have consistent access to continuous and reliable telephone communications through regular maintenance of existing telephone infrastructure and they are:

- 1) prioritised for repairs and
- 2) a temporary satellite phone be provided to any rural or remote family where a phone fault is not rectified within three working days.”

Explanation:

It is highly important for our children learning via distance education, to have access to their teachers via phone as well as internet. Often Private Lesson Times (PLTs) are carried out on the phone while other children in the school room are using the computer to access their lessons. When phone networks are not working due to any range of issues, we would like to ensure that the access our children have to their class teachers via the telephone network is placed at a high priority. We would like to ask that telecommunication providers are able to place a temporary mobile satellite phone at any site where phone faults are not rectified within 3 Working Days.

A19. Balranald Branch (NSW)**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Federal Ministers to ensure that the Universal Service Obligation remains on the standard telephone landline services for all rural and remote families.”

Explanation:

The recent Productivity Commission’s report has recommended that the Universal Service Obligation be removed from Landlines. This is due to the increase in households relying on mobile phones as the only form of telecommunications and more reliable access to nbn internet.

For members in rural and remote areas of Balranald this is not an option. VoIP (voice over the internet) is unreliable especially for those on Sky Muster. Unlike the current landlines, VoIP on

Sky Muster requires electricity. For those living in mobile black spots larger than Sydney and the Blue Mountains combined, sole reliance on Sky Muster for voice calls is a huge step backwards. The latency issues with delayed lags on satellite, combined with weather issues and electricity means that Sky Muster cannot be relied on 24 hrs per day as per the requirements of the universal service obligation. The latency is extremely problematic for distance education students who rely on a landline voice service for their lessons.

Our area has a lot of black outs during storms, if there was not the current landline there would be no way of reporting loss of power as there is limited or no mobile service and often this goes out too during a blackout. If VoIP, were the only service available, students would also be “off the air” whenever the power failed. It is therefore important to keep the landlines so there is a reliable form of communication in emergency situations and for basic day to day services such as education.

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A20. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Regional Communications to reintroduce a program to provide a subsidy for satellite telephones for use in rural and remote regions.”

Explanation:

The gaps in Mobile coverage in Rural and Remote regions place people who operate in these areas at a large disadvantage for Education, Business and Safety. Access to Satellite mobiles will go towards minimising this disadvantage and offer a backup service should outages occur with primary sources of communications. This will allow schooling to continue uninterrupted.

A21. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Telstra and the Minister for Regional Communication to ensure the time taken to restore faults in the Rural and Remote areas is within the Customer Service Guarantee guidelines.”

Explanation:

Delays at times far outweigh those under the Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) guidelines. Some Faults have taken weeks to restore and Interim service were not offered.

A22. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Telstra to ensure interim service technology is offered to customers with potential and actual extended outages.”

Explanation:

Users have been left for extended times without service, without the offer of a temporary service. This is extremely disruptive for distance education classrooms not to mention general safety and needs of a business.

A23. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Telstra to ensure Call and Faults centre staff abide by the guidelines for priority repair times.”

Explanation:

Users who have a registered Priority Medical condition have reported service failures. These were extended isolations out of mobile coverage that were not repaired in the required timeframe nor was an interim service offered.

A24. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Telstra to improve the management of its rural and remote infrastructure.”

Explanation:

User experience does not always match Telstra’s perceived service levels gained by looking at a screen from afar. This has resulted with extended service issues.

A25. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Telstra to provide a permanent rural and remote call centre.”

Explanation:

ICPA Qld thanks and commends Telstra on the introduction of the Rural and Remote Call Centre trial. ICPA Qld is seeking its permanent establishment for all rural and remote customers. Rural and remote customers have such a unique set of circumstances that is not understood by the majority of sales and service personnel. This lack of understanding can result in lengthy delays for installation and repairs and can have a major impact on distance education classrooms.

A26. Yaraka/Isisford Branch (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies Telstra put in a process to allow “Third Party” fault reports to be received when the Owner of the faulty service is unable to contact Telstra directly.”

Explanation:

There has been an ongoing issue in areas outside towns where telephone services have failed and due to location or age, the owners are unable to contact Telstra directly to report it. When someone has tried to report it on their behalf, the report has been refused. This issue is mainly an issue when an overseas call centre is involved. As being without a phone service hinders the education of distance education students in particular, we urge for a process to be put in place so that a third party can report faults when a family is unable to do it themselves resulting in a quicker reporting time which would see families phone service up and running more quickly and students back on lessons sooner.

Mobile Coverage/Service

A27. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Communications for the continuation of the Mobile Black Spot program.”

Explanation:

The continued expansion of the Mobile network will increase access to communications in rural and remote areas. This will result in increased connectivity for rural and remote schools and lessen the burden on the Sky Muster satellite, which so many distance education students rely on as their sole access to schooling. It will also provide improved safety when travelling for parents and school buses in these areas.

A28. Balranald Branch (NSW)

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the relevant Federal Ministers to ensure that rural and remote schools are prioritised for any expansion of the mobile coverage footprint into regional Australia."

Explanation:

Balranald Branch is of the view that the selection of priority regions for the implementation of Mobile Phone coverage should include a priority for rural and remote schools that are currently without reliable mobile phone service. Most rural and remote schools are evacuation points in the event of emergencies occurring within the area and surrounding communities. Clare Public School is 155km from Balranald and consists of a school only. It is not part of a town. In the event of bushfires and other natural disasters, Clare Public School is the emergency evacuation point and, as the centre of the community, holds the Royal Flying Doctor medical chest and a defibrillator in case of a medical emergency. Unfortunately, Clare Public School sits within a 15,000sq km mobile blackspot that is bigger than Sydney and the Blue Mountains combined. Clare Public School has limited unreliable mobile phone coverage by using an external Yagi aerial situated on the teacher's house pointing to the tower at Mossgiel on the Hay/Ivanhoe Road (50km away), with the next mobile coverage approximately 120kms away from the school if travelling by road from Balranald. Balranald Branch seeks the support of ICPA (Aust) to ensure that the Commonwealth Government prioritises Rural and Remote Schools for future expansions of the mobile footprint under the mobile blackspot programme. Time and time again under the programme we are seeing fringe areas being successful. We are yet to see a remote area in NSW that has a huge impact, such as a remote school being successful. The time for Telcos applying for areas that deliver the most profits must stop.

A29. Queensland State Council (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Regional Communications to implement a program to provide a subsidy for Fixed and Mobile phone (for use in cars and trucks) boosters including suitable antennae."

Explanation:

The gaps in Mobile coverage in the Rural and Remote regions place people who operate in these areas at a large disadvantage for Education, Business and Safety. Affordable access to mobile phone boosters will go towards minimising this disadvantage to ensure transient students can access their educational resources whilst away from home.

CURRICULUM

A30. Tambo Branch (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant bodies to ensure that Primary Production is included as a compulsory component in the national curriculum."

Explanation:

Currently, there are many children who do not know where their food or fibre comes from. As time goes on an understanding of primary production, generally speaking, reduces as more of our population resides away from areas that produce food and fibre. For example, we are witnessing great conflict between our farmers and non-farmers in regard to vegetation management of our land. If all school students can be given a broad understanding of primary production in the classroom it may help to alleviate some of these issues. This understanding could be delivered via a national curriculum unit that follows the spiral delivery model being built on through year levels to continue understanding growth, interest and enthusiasm for primary production. It is envisaged that the units would be developed in conjunction with industry experts (e.g. Dept. Agriculture and Fisheries) as opposed to curriculum writers alone.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

**A31. CONJOINED MOTION presented by: CARRIED/LOST
Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA), Katherine Branch (NT), Northern Territory State Council (NT),
Pilbara Branch (WA) and Western Australia State Council (WA)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) in recognition of the role the Home Tutor undertakes when educating students via distance education.”

Explanation (Goldfields Eyre):

The service provided by Home Tutors in the delivering of education to the students in rural and remote Australia who have no choice but to be educated via the distance education mode of delivery needs be acknowledged. Home Tutors provide what the government simply cannot cost effectively supply and as such should be recognised and remunerated fairly.

Explanation (Katherine Branch):

Katherine Branch thanks ICPA (Aust) for your continuing pursuit of this motion. For many young people living in remote regions, their only access to education is to study by distance education. It is clear that distance education provision is provided on the assumption that all children have ready access to a person able to deliver the program in the geographically isolated classroom. This person is the distance education tutor who must be available and able to provide the practical, day-to-day supervision and support required for the effective delivery of a distance education program. With the responsibility of the distance education tutor position often falling on the mother, fulfilling this position further compounds her workload. This can place increased pressure on other family members and may necessitate the employment of additional staff.

Explanation (Northern Territory State Council):

For many young people living in remote regions, their only access to education is to study by distance education. It is clear that distance education provision is provided on the assumption that all children have ready access to a person able to deliver the program in the geographically isolated classroom. This person is the distance education tutor who must be available and able to provide the practical, day-to-day supervision and support required for the effective delivery of a distance education program. With the responsibility of the distance education tutor position often falling on the mother, fulfilling this position further compounds her workload. This can place increased pressure on other family members and may necessitate the employment of additional staff. When a family member (often the mother) takes the on the responsibility of being the Home Tutor, they are effectively unable to gain employment within the family business, ranger station,

remote community etc. Therefore, the income for that family can be halved. This has a detrimental effect on the families living remotely and schooling with Distance Education. The costs involved with remote living and schooling is often a monetary pressure that is placed on one of the parents as the other is teaching the children. Remote families often have no access to after school care, or day care for under school age children, so there is no opportunity for the home tutor (mother) to seek employment to relieve the burden of a sole income family. Travel expenses are high, fuel costs are high and there are many other expenses that remote families encounter while educating their children, not to mention the looming expense of secondary schooling.

Explanation (Pilbara Branch):

The implementation of the education of rural and remote students resides with the families living in these areas, mainly the mother. During this time the mother's ability to multitask snowballs, still remaining an important business partner, farm help and importantly a mother but also undertaking a very important role of delivering the education to the children. The establishment of a home tutor allowance would enable some families to employ or subsidise a paid educator within the home for the purpose of assisting mothers educate their children within the demands of multi-age classrooms, employment outside the home and running their own business. While an incentive exists to claim mileage to attend the nearest school, or to live in the closest town and gain financial assistance for a second home, there remains no financial assistance to stay at the primary family home, as a family unit, for the purpose of children's education. Some families do take on the financial burden and employ someone to assist with the education but not all families are in the financial position to do this.

A home tutor allowance would enable women to continue or gain employment outside the home, continue with study or assist some of the cost associated with distance education and ensure family inseparability and enhance the education outcomes for their children engaged in a rigorous curriculum.

Explanation (Western Australia State Council):

WA State Council would like to thank Federal Council for their continued efforts in lobbying the Federal Government in establishing a tutor allowance and for highlighting the hard work that Home Tutors throughout Australia undertake daily to provide a suitable education for their students.

It is important that ICPA (Aust) continues to highlight the importance of the introduction of this allowance, especially with the increased budget pressures the five WA Schools of the Air continue to fall under, it is now even more important that home tutors receive this allowance due to increased responsibilities placed on the home tutor due to less support received from their schools.

A32. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates the importance, value and critical need of Schools of the Air and Schools of Distance Education being based in and part of their respective rural and remote communities."

Explanation:

In 2017, the Western Australian Government announced a decision to close regional schools of the air and to instead provide a single service from a central Perth (metropolitan) facility. This decision was later retracted, and WA Schools of the Air will remain in their regions, however it highlighted a lack of broader understanding and appreciation for why school of the air centres

and Schools of Distance Education are so important to rural and remote communities. This scenario that our neighbours in Western Australia faced last year caused isolated families with children utilising distance education across Australia to ask 'could this happen to us'.

We would like to thank Federal ICPA and ICPA branches at every level for providing a sound and structured voice for distance education when assisting Western Australian families in their plight to reverse the decision to centralise regional schools of distance education.

Members will take comfort knowing ICPA are advocating for the benefits of Schools of the Air and Schools of Distance Education in the course of our business.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Early Learning

**A33. CONJOINED MOTION presented by: CARRIED/LOST
Goldfields Eyre Branch (WA), Katherine Branch (NT), Northern Territory State Council (NT), and
Western Australia State Council (WA)**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to extend the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education component to cover all pre-compulsory students who are enrolled via a distance education program.”

Explanation (Goldfields Eyre Branch):

Under the current guidelines, part time distance education students are ineligible for the Distance Education (DE) component of the AIC allowance, which means families enrolled in the 4-year-old program must bear the costs of maintaining and setting up the classroom in that first year of schooling. Our research has shown that this is a costly impost on families.

The AIC DE allowance is designed to assist families to set up and maintain the schoolroom. The schoolroom must be set up and maintained the day the child begins their education. Full-time or part time, the child needs a schoolroom.

Explanation (Katherine Branch):

The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program; all states and territories have signed up to the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education for 2016 and 2017. Universal Access has a focus on participation by Indigenous children, vulnerable and disadvantaged children in a range of settings in order to meet the needs of working families, and will be accessible to all Australian children, regardless of their location. Extract from: www.education.gov.au/universal-access-early-childhood-education

Setting up the classroom for distance education delivery for Preschoolers costs the same, if not more, as for the first year of compulsory schooling. The number of children accessing this pre-compulsory year by distance education is not huge. For example: Katherine School of the Air (KSA) has had a structured Preschool Program in place for over 20 years and currently (Semester 1 2018) has 12 enrolments. On average KSA enrolments have been around 20-25 each year. The NT Government already recognises this cohort of students by making available half of the “NT Correspondence Site Allowance – Preschool” to assist all four-year-old children enrolled in pre-school with the Alice Springs and Katherine Schools of the Air.

Extending the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) distance education allowance to include these students will ensure greater and more equitable participation in Early Childhood Education by rural and remote students. Distance education students could benefit enormously from a small portion of the tens of billions of dollars allocated to early childhood education and care, some of which is supposed to ensure the system is more accessible, affordable and fairer for families.

Explanation (Northern Territory State Council):

The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program. For most rural and remote children this means enrolment in preschool from when they are 3 ½ years old. Setting up the classroom for distance education delivery for Pre-schoolers costs the same as for the first year of compulsory schooling. Extending the AIC distance education allowance to include these students will ensure greater and more equitable participation in Early Childhood Education by rural and remote students. Rural and remote families have no other day care options for pre-school age children, and it becomes the family's responsibility to set up these learning environments for their young children to cover all aspects of early child development.

Explanation (Western Australia State Council):

Currently, students studying via distance education enrolled in a pre-compulsory program are ineligible to receive the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education component. Most early learning programs require significantly more learning materials than that of older students studying at primary levels, with families having to provide learning resources for these students. If families received this allowance, it would alleviate the cost of suitable learning resources. The majority of children who are enrolled in a pre-compulsory program are found to have better educational outcomes in later years, by forming these important foundations early on.

A34. Katherine Branch (NT)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to monitor the transition of rural and remote Early Childhood Mobile Services from the Federal Budget-Based Funding (BBF) model to replacement funding models.”

Explanation:

Some rural and remote Early Childhood Services were funded through the Federal Department of Education and Training with Budget Based Funding (BBF) which has changed to the ‘Jobs for Families: Childcare Package’ from July 2018. Some of those services, such as the Katherine Isolated Children’s Services (KICS), were unable to transition to that package because their primary role does not include child care. KICS funding will now come from the Dept of Prime Minister and Cabinet under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) as 70% of its clientele are indigenous families. KICS have been funded at the same level as the past 8 years for a period of 18 months, which still does not give staff long term certainty. KICS has been operating since 1988 and is a highly regarded provider of playgroups for children who are socially or geographically isolated, employing a mix of Early Childhood Teachers and experienced staff and covering 760,000 sq km of the Katherine Region, NT.

KICS is not the only organisation, nationally, facing uncertainty. ICPA (Aust) is well placed to keep government accountable to ensure organisations such as KICS continue to operate are funded at levels commensurate with their needs.

Child Care

A35. Louth Branch (NSW)

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education and Training review the employee requirements for In Home Care Educators for remote families to allow for more flexibility especially in the Certificate III in Early Childhood requirement."

Explanation:

The difficulty of finding suitable Educators to employ for remote families is becoming almost impossible.

The unique environment in which both employee and employer live and work, is not always an easy one to adjust to for someone relocating to the outback. Often there are issues with Educators only realising the unsuitability to this environment after they have arrived. These "false starts" are stressful for the children involved and the entire family however also have ramifications for the educator.

From 2 July, rural and remote families have been given two transitional concessions to help them access IHC educators until Jan 2020; however, after that educators need to be working towards or have a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). This would mean that there is no relevance for gap students to be employed as educators therefore limiting the eligible potential employees even further.

Those of us in the Parkes electorate would like to thank Mark Coulton for his recognition and understanding of the dire situation remote families would be in without subsidised In Home Care.

This funding has meant that families have been able to remain together on the land in isolation.

A36. Belyando/Mt Coolon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister of Education and Training for the In Home Care Scheme to allow educators who are actively studying Early Childhood Education qualifications to complete a weighted percentage of their compulsory practical placement hours in their current position as an Early Child Care Educator at their place of employment."

Explanation:

The "In Home Care National Guidelines" revised 1st March 2018 edition, Section 3.6.1, states, "*IHC educators will be required to have a minimum Certificate III level qualification in a relevant course or be working towards a Certificate III qualification and provide documentary evidence.*"

This will require those educators who are actively studying an Early Childhood Education qualification to complete a number of practical placement hours in an Early Childhood Service as part of their qualification process. Given that, Rural and Remote families have no alternative Child Care services available, what does the family do for child care while their current educator is away attending practical placement hours?

For this reason, if a weighted percentage of the educator's required practical placement hours can be obtained in their current position as an Early Child Care educator at their place of employment it will minimise the disturbance and stress to the family's childcare requirements and/or the need for substitute/relief Child Care educators during that time.

A37. Bollon Branch (QLD)**CARRIED/LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Education and Training to revisit the Family Assistance Law so In Home Care Educators and Nannies are explicitly able to supervise students in the Distance Education classroom where, for medical reasons or geographical isolation, mainstream schooling is not an option."

Explanation:

Due to Family Assistance Law, families are not entitled to Child Care Benefit while the In-Home Carer is supervising children during their on-air lessons. This legislation should be revisited so that families' who have no other option, due to geographical isolation or medical reasons, but to educate their children via distance can receive essential financial support. This support enables parents to participate in the workforce, look for work, study or volunteer. This is the intent of the Child Care Benefit policy.

A38. Belyando/Mt Coolon Branch (QLD)**CARRIED/LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education and Training for the In Home Care Scheme to allow rural and remote families access to "Outside School Hours Care" of school aged children by not reallocating places on the basis of 0-5 year old age criteria, rather on a needs and child care service accessibility basis."

Explanation:

The "In Home Care National Guidelines" revised 1st March 2018 edition, Section 2.3, states, *"Initial allocation of places will reflect utilisation as at 1 July 2018, however, places will be re-allocated on the basis of 0-5-year-old jurisdictional population to enable an equitable allocation across states and territories within a two-year timeframe, and as families leave this care type."*

The Child Care Subsidy includes "Outside School Hours Care" (OSHC) and therefore by restricting allocated places on the basis of 0-5-year olds, In Home Care are discriminating against Rural and Remote families who have school aged children (greater than 5 years old) and no other alternative to OSHC by placing this age restriction on place allocation. Rural and Remote families in this situation will no longer be able to access OSHC through the Child Care Subsidy like their urban counterparts.

A39. Belyando / Mt Coolon Branch (QLD)**CARRIED/LOST**

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister of Education and Training for the In Home Care Scheme to give families the opportunity to source and introduce an appropriate educator suited to the family to the agency for further screening."

Explanation:

The "In Home Care National Guidelines" revised 1st March 2018 edition, Section 2.3, states, *"IHC Support Agencies will match families to educators/services able to meet their needs and refer families to other support services as required."*

Child care services through In Home Care in rural and remote families is a unique situation where beyond the hours of child care the educator is very much a part of the family's life. Majority of the time educators will be accommodated either in the family home or a dwelling in close proximity to the family home and due to isolation, the family may also be the only other social

company available. Hence, the educator and family are required to have a work and personal relationship.

The concern with the IHC agencies matching educators to families is that although the educator is qualified for the family's requirements they may not be suited to that family's personalities, values, or lifestyle. For a healthy work and living environment for all parties involved it is important that the educator compliments the family's values and lifestyle. Therefore, families should have the right to choose an educator based not only on qualifications but also personal/life morals/values to fit their family's dynamics and job description and then introduce them to the agency for further screening into the service.

A40. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies relevant Ministers to enable In Home Care facilitators to administer shared care contracts.”

Explanation:

Sometimes more than one family lives on one site. It makes sense to share care if legitimate ratios are met.

A41. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Education and Training to ensure there is a valid increase to In Home Care places in regional and remote areas following the introduced changes to the In Home Care Program on 2nd July 2018.”

Explanation:

There has historically been a shortage of places in Central Australia for In Home Care. Applicants are ranked according to set criteria however families can wait for up to two years to gain a place and there are normally families on the waiting list. Some people find the process so daunting they don't reapply or indeed apply in the first place. There are currently families without educators. There is a real concern amongst families, on social media and in forums that families use to find suitable educators, that with the changes requiring educators to have a Certificate 3 or above qualifications (or be willing to enrol in and complete an appropriate qualification) will mean that they won't be able to recruit an educator. Most In Home Care educators are gap year people who generally come straight from school. There is a shortage of qualified educators. The new process means the agency is supposed to recruit on behalf of the family, but most families will tell you they have a tough time finding educators and worry will the agency be as diligent. If families find themselves unable to find an educator, they have to forfeit their place. This will affect the data because suddenly it will appear as if there is no demand for In Home Care.

For families in our district, In Home Care fills the stop gap that would normally be filled by families and friends if they lived in the city. More and more both parents need to be working full time. Because of their isolation it is impossible to rely on ad hoc care arrangements. Children would therefore be required to be in the workplace posing a danger to themselves and others. In Home Care is vital to isolated families.

A specific example: recently, one of our members' husbands was badly injured, they had to rush straight to town for medical care and it has been almost 12 weeks of in and out of town and interstate to receive medical attention. This was stressful enough without having to worry about organising child care. Without the In Home Care educator the children would have spent a

considerable amount of time in hospitals and in transit between facilities and home for appointments.

Early Childhood Education and Care - Other

A42. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government and support the State ICPA organisations in lobbying to implement changes needed to the Working with Children Check (WWCC) in their respective states.”

Explanation:

WA State Council fully support the implementation of a nationally administered police clearance, specifically for children and thank Federal Council for their continued lobbying on this issue. Currently a person who wishes to obtain a WWCC for work purposes, are checked nationally, then it is administered at a state level. Employees that move interstate and who already hold a WWCC from the previous state they were working in, are expected to reapply for a WWCC in the new state they are applying for employment in. This process causes lengthy delays in employing staff of up to eight weeks, causing disruptions to students and families.

A43. Tambo Branch (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Immigration and Border Protection to extend 2nd Year visa eligibility to include child care and governing/teaching in geographically isolated areas.”

Explanation:

Currently, domestic positions such as child care and governing/teaching are not eligible for the visa extension requirements. There is a huge shortfall of qualified Australian teachers and carers that want to come and teach in rural and remote areas. Many foreign teachers and carers are willing to come and work in these areas and if this could qualify them for their 2nd year visa under the ‘Specific Work’ list, it would open up the opportunities for more families to have their children taught or cared for by qualified staff. This, in turn, would only be for the betterment of our children’s education and care.

A44. Tambo Branch (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Immigration to recognise volunteering work, performed in rural and remote locations, that meet the 2nd year Visa application guidelines.”

Explanation:

The current situation is that for backpackers to gain their 2nd year visa, they must provide payment slips, compliant with the relevant award, to the immigration department as proof of work in eligible postcodes. In theory that is fine but in practice the rural industry offers experiences and often packages that do not fit the normal award rate conditions such as accommodation, meals, travel expenses and other incidentals. The government needs to look at more flexible arrangements in rural and remote locations in relation to the recognition of volunteer hours for 2nd year Visa extensions. Since the removal of volunteer recognized hours from the 2nd year Visa extension criteria the number of traveling backpackers assisting in rural and remote areas to declined dramatically. This has resulted in it being more and more difficult for families to source young people to assist on the farm.

One area where these rural and remote helpers have been valued and essential is in the home classroom setting. Whilst this type of work does not gain eligibility on the 2nd year visa it is a key part of running the properties smoothly in more than one way. Home tutors, who are often mothers, who often are struggling to keep pace in the classroom and in the paddock have the opportunity to gain some assistance for a few hours or have the opportunity to drop some or all of their outside farm work commitments to be able to completely focus on the schoolroom activities. Being able to have a willing station hand, who is not putting extra financial pressure on the business, for assisting in the paddock work really allows the mother/tutor to focus and complete all class work within the set times. Schooling and keeping families on properties is essential and these willing workers, under these labour exchange programs, really assist families to keep the school/station work balance in check. To maintain equal standards, having your home tutor available for the whole school day is essential and if willing workers can fill the gap to allow that to occur then this ability to sign 2nd year visa working days for volunteers is essential.

RURAL SCHOOLS/SCHOOL TRAVEL

A45. South Australian State Council (SA)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA Federal Council continues to seek concessional airfares for rural and remote students who rely on air services to access an education.”

Explanation:

For many students in rural and remote areas, the only option for secondary schooling is boarding away from home. Often flying is the most practical form of transport when returning home for an exeat weekend or school holidays. In some cases, it is the only option to ensure the student has adequate time at home, without spending an entire weekend travelling. However, the cost of regional flights is prohibitive for most families. Rex has a “bush to boarding” scheme in some states in Australia, offering reduced airfares for students travelling to and from school. We would like to see this type of scheme extended to SA regional airlines.

A46. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to support efforts for an affordable ‘Student Concessional Fare’ for students attending educational institutions within Australia who need to travel between their home residence and the educational establishment they attend.”

Explanation:

This includes, bus, train and aircraft providers.

A47. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that QANTAS Airways continue their Residents Fares Scheme and expand this scheme to more regional areas as well as review the eligibility criteria to better include students who travel by air to access schooling.”

Explanation:

Qantas introduced a Residents Fares scheme last year for a 12-month trial period. This enabled residents from select towns or areas in WA and QLD to book Resident Fares, seeing a reduction in fares by up to 30%. There have been instances where families have gone to book their student’s flights home for either boarders’ weekends or end of term holidays but not being eligible due to

the departing point not origination at their resident fare regional airport. WA State Council would like to see QANTAS review the criteria for students who may board away from home or be travelling from a regional area for school camps/trips and to extend the trial period after 12 months as well as open these trials to more areas where regional students travel by air to access schooling.

A48. Mount Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant bodies for a Fares Allowance component to be added to the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme (AIC) similar to what is available under Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY programs. “

Explanation:

Both Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY programs offer eligible students a Fares Allowance for travelling between home and their place of study if they need to live away from home in order to access this study. Geographically isolated students who receive the Assistance for Isolated Students Boarding Allowance and Second Home Allowance also live away from home to access schooling and should have a Fares Allowance comparable to the other Commonwealth Programs available to them. While some states do offer travel assistance to students from rural and remote areas, others offer no assistance at all and there is great variance between states. Having a Fares Allowance available under the AIC Scheme would ensure that all eligible geographically isolated students would have assistance available to them to help offset the cost of travelling to compulsory schooling.

A49. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to liaise with Minister for Social Services and the relevant Ministers for an equitable approach, so that, all Rural and Remote students receive a Student Travel Allowance that reflects the actual costs involved to get students from their home, to their place of education within Australia.”

Explanation:

The Northern Territory Student Travel Allowance and Mid-Term travel allowance presently only assists with travel from place of residence to a point of transport within the NT. The NT have very few options when choosing a secondary boarding school for our students. Some students must board interstate to best meet the needs of the child. Reasons for choice of secondary boarding schools vary from family to family based on subject choices, access to a range of Sports, children and learning needs and interests, family responsibilities, extended family and support networks and location. For example, there are more subject choices available in metropolitan areas. Further, despite a large base of children from agricultural families there are no secondary agricultural colleges in the Northern Territory and little agriculture is taught in schools. State level sport options are very limited in the Northern Territory. Currently the travel allowances available to our students are not available when children travel interstate for the school terms. Families in other states may also encounter similar issues when choosing to cross borders for their education.

A50. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby relevant Federal Ministers on the importance of continually improving our regional and remote roads network to a safe and all-weather access standard; for the benefit of our children and families’ safety while travelling these roads to attended education and related services.”

Explanation:

The extensive road network in the Northern Territory that links our rural and remote families with their major centres (where our distance education hubs are located), are often unsealed dirt and gravel beef roads. The Northern Territory Department of Roads and Infrastructure is funded jointly by Territory and Federal Government – not by local shires or councils. We would like to place pressure on Federal Government to ensure the road funding they are contributing to the Northern Territory Department of Roads and Infrastructure is allocated to our unsealed roads. Bringing them to an all-weather, safe trafficable surface. It is critical that these unsealed highways throughout the Northern Territory are on the top of the list in regard to road funding allocation. It is unacceptable that our major unsealed roads like the ‘Sandover’ and ‘Tanami’ Highways in some stretches, are not serviceable after less than 25mm of rain.

One family from our branch has to travel 730km to Alice Springs every time to attend In-school Weeks. This is their shortest possible route which includes over 400km of an unsealed section of the Tanami road. The mother drives this distance in one day, by herself with 5 young children. In 2016, due to a rain event on the road 300km from town, the family had to make a 700km detour, so the children could attend their NAPLAN/Sporting In-school Week. In total, they travelled over 1400km in one day to attend an educational function. This dangerous situation could be avoided by providing families with safe and all-weather access roads.

Alice Springs School of the Air currently schedules a yearly visit for each child enrolled with their teacher. These qualified teachers need to drive themselves out to the remote locations, often on unsealed roads. On one journey along the ‘Sandover’ Highway, a decision was made by the teacher that the road was no longer safe to drive along, and they turned around and headed back to Alice Springs. This is the reality our rural and remote families live with all year round. We must drive along these roads to our major centres to access In-school events and specialist appointments for our children. We should not have to be weighing up the safety factors of our major arterial road network each time our children need to go to town to see their teacher.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank the Federal and Territory Government for their continued effort in sealing the ‘Outback Way’ - a longstanding project supported by many governments over more than a decade. It stretches from Winton QLD, to Laverton WA and across the Plenty Highway NT covering 4,615km with large sections of this unsealed. It has been flagged to be completed by 2025 and would ensure that rural and remote families access to education facilities and road safety would improve dramatically.

We would like to ensure the initiative to seal the ‘Outback Way’ when completed, is carried over to our other unsealed road networks throughout the NT. The ‘Outback Way’: More than \$205 million in Territory and Federal Government funding has been committed since 1997 when the Outback Highway Development Council was formed, an estimate of the total cost will be in excess of \$600 million. The ultimate goal is to link sealed roads stretching 4,615km from the west coast capital of Perth, passing Uluru and the inland hub of Alice Springs, before finishing in tropical north Queensland at Cairns.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS

A51. Mount Isa Branch of the Air (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the relevant bodies for the establishment of mental health resources which specifically assist geographically isolated students and families, particularly around the issue of bullying.”

Explanation:

A tragic event earlier this year highlighted the need for a specifically dedicated helpline or section of mental health services which can address and assist rural and remote families/students with the unique mental health challenges they face due to distance. These unique challenges can include leaving home for boarding school with family support being a great distance away, parents needing to rely on school staff to identify problems and “know their children” well enough to raise concern, attending a small rural school where students feel they cannot escape situations because ‘everyone knows’, and children watching parents struggle with mental health as they deal with hardships such as drought, industry downturns, concerns around meeting school fees, etc...

Assistance could be in the form of "helpline" or online site/chatroom which specifically understands rural and remote student mental health challenges and these resources could perhaps be incorporated under an already existing organisation or mental health program but have a rural and remote/geographically isolated focus.

In addition to students needing somewhere to turn when they need assistance, resources should be available for rural and remote parents to help them offer their children strategies to deal with situations they may face in their schooling such as bullying and cyber- bullying. Rural students often have very little face to face social experience and from a young age are usually happy to see other children. “Teasing” and bullying can be new concepts that geographically isolated children have not experienced prior to going away to school and rural and remote students can be thrust into an environment with other students who may have quite different social experience and awareness.

Currently specific information around strategies in dealing with bullying while living away from home or in a small close-knit community are not readily accessible for rural and remote families. Information and resources are needed so that geographically isolated families can better prepare their students for going away to boarding school or rural school situations.

A52. South Australian State Council (SA)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) appeals to the appropriate ministers to introduce travel and accommodation allowances for rural and isolated families travelling to access face-to-face allied health services.”

Explanation:

As part of early identification and intervention for special needs and learning difficulties, rural and isolated children require allied health services such as speech pathology, occupational therapy and mental health services. Despite the availability of technology such as Skype or Telehealth, it is still necessary that the child and the therapist come face to face on a regular basis. Face to face sessions provide an opportunity for the therapist to perform assessments and gain a better understanding of the child's needs and abilities, which then give accurate direction for therapy to meet the child's learning and developmental goals. To attend a session in person is extremely costly for families having to travel great distances, pay for accommodation and living expenses while away. For children with special needs and/or learning difficulties, early intervention with allied health professionals is vital for the child to have a successful education. Even those who qualify for NDIS are left significantly out of pocket as travel and accommodation is not provided under this scheme.

A53. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education and Training to collaborate for equitable subsidies nationally for accommodation and travel for children with specific or special learning needs to attend appointments with qualified specialists.”

Explanation:

Members that need to access special need appointments for their children such as speech pathology, specialised tutoring, hearing appointments, etc. would like to ensure that there is consideration within the Patient Assistant Travel Scheme (PATS) for these out of pocket expenses incurred by the family when traveling hundreds; and in some cases, thousands of kilometres per visit to a learning specialist are offset within the Patient Assistant Travel Scheme.

TERTIARY

Access Allowance

A54. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government for the introduction of a Tertiary Access Allowance (TAA) to help provide rural and remote students with the financial ability to attend a tertiary institution of their choosing.”

Explanation:

WA State Council acknowledges and thanks Federal Council for their continued lobbying for the establishment of a Tertiary Access Allowance for rural and remote students. Tertiary Education should be available and accessed by all students throughout Australia. As well as living away from the family home, the added costs such as relocation, travel, accommodation and living costs incurred on rural and remote students to access their chosen course, severely reduces the equality of opportunity compared to metropolitan students. Having access to this allowance would give a student financial assistance independently of their parents’ income and would help increase rural student numbers that are currently grossly under-represented.

A55. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Education and Minister for Social Services to introduce a tertiary equity allowance for those students who need to live away from the family home to access tertiary education and who are not eligible for the Relocation Scholarship.”

Explanation:

Currently only recipients of dependent Youth Allowance are eligible for the Relocation Scholarship although some independent Youth Allowance recipients with special circumstances are also eligible. This is inequitable as all students who need to move away from home to access tertiary education incur the same costs. The government cannot simply say that just because a student has worked hard to qualify for independent Youth Allowance they are deemed to have already moved out of the family home and cannot therefore relocate. It is very simple to find the family home address of an independent Youth Allowance recipient. It has to be recorded on the Youth Allowance application to prove that the student lives more than 90 minutes away by public transport from the tertiary institution of their choice.

A56. Bourke Branch (NSW)**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) urges relevant Federal Ministers to change the criteria of the Relocation Scholarship so that 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:

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.

Youth Allowance**A57. Western Australia State Council (WA)****CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the Federal Government to raise the parental income limit criteria for rural and remote dependent students to access Youth Allowance.”

Explanation:

For a student to be eligible to receive *dependent* Youth Allowance, the base Parental income limit for dependant Youth Allowance is \$52,706, this amount can alter depending on other children in the family (Family Pool). Families in this income bracket would financially find it very difficult to fully support a student, particularly if they need to move away from home. Many rural and remote students are forced to work many hours in part-time employment to help alleviate the reliance on their families, causing many hours away from valuable study time.

A58. Kindon Branch (QLD)**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Minister of Social Services to adjust the qualifying amount for rural and remote students wishing to apply for independent Youth Allowance under the part-time work or earnings criteria.”

Explanation:

We thank the Federal Government for changing the time frame that rural and remote students need to qualify for independent Youth Allowance through part-time work or earnings. As of January 1 2018, the time regional and remote students need to be employed under the self-supporting criteria is 14 months however the qualifying amount has not changed from when the time frame was 18 months. That takes four months away from the time frame to earn the same amount of money. In effect, a student who began their employment from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 has to earn \$24,042 over a 14-month period, or average \$430 each week for those 14 months whereas when it was over 18 months the average was \$330. We ask the Minister to please adjust this amount to reflect the appropriate amount, 75% of the National Training Wage Level A over 14 months.

A59. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)**CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (Aust) urges the Minister for Social Services to change the criteria for receiving independent Youth Allowance so that all rural and remote students who have to live away from

their family address to access tertiary studies are eligible for the Living Away from Home rate as soon as they commence the tertiary course of their choice.”

Explanation:

Students from rural and remote areas have no choice except to move away from home to access Tertiary studies. Once these students move away, they, of necessity become independent of their parents as home can often be hundreds of kilometres away. Families struggle and find it very difficult to cope with the financial costs of supporting their children while they study and work to gain independence. The eligibility requirements to gain independent Youth Allowance place significant obstacles in the way of students and their families, particularly the required parental income limit of \$150,000. Rural and remote students who live more than 90 minutes by public transport, if such a thing even exists, from the tertiary institution of their choice should be able to access the Away from Home rate of independent Youth Allowance from the time they leave secondary school.

A60. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) urges 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 and **the current level of combined parental income limit is too low**. 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**. These students have to move hundreds of kilometres to major regional centres or cities, paying 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 children are the very ones that have to be considered for eligibility for independent Youth Allowance. These students should be putting their efforts into studying their chosen degree, not worrying about finding a job in a new environment and supporting themselves. It leads to high dropout rates and increased stress and anxiety on individuals.

A61. Balranald Branch (NSW)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Social Services to recognise students from rural and remote areas who have to live away from home to access a tertiary education as eligible for the Independent Youth Allowance at the Living Away from Home rate immediately after completing their secondary education.”

Explanation:

Currently students are eligible for independent Youth Allowance under the part-time work earnings rule for rural and remote students if, since leaving secondary school they have: • earned at least \$24,836 in a 14-month period or • worked part-time (at least 15 hours each week) for at least 2 years and • their parents earn less than \$150,000 in the base tax year.

Students who live out of a town and go to a boarding institution, whether it be a boarding house or a boarding school, very rarely get the chance to have a paying job before they leave school. Most in years 11 and 12 spend a good amount of time studying in their holidays, so as to gain the score for them to get into the course they desire. An example from our area is a young person from the Balranald area, immediately after completing year 12 is offered a University placement in Melbourne, four hours away. The young person has to leave home, live separately from their parents, set up another home with necessary furniture and whitegoods, pay bills and by all accounts live completely independent of their parents. Despite this, the young person is still classified as dependent under the Youth Allowance criteria. Using the rural and remote student rule previously stated, in order for this student to be classified independent, they must first take 14 months to earn minimum earnings of \$24,836, which often means leaving Balranald to gain employment for 14 months, exhausting their earnings on daily living expenses, when during all this time they could have been living away studying and half way through their tertiary course. On top of this, the combined parental income for the base year needs to be less than \$150,000, in order for the young person to receive independent Youth Allowance, under the rural and remote student rule. It is certainly very hard to understand why a young person from a rural or remote area who moves away, earns the minimum earning required, is by all accounts living independently from the parents and then has to satisfy an additional criteria of a parental income limit of less than \$150,000.

Compare this to a metropolitan young person, living with their parents, in the family home, in the city with a university nearby. Under the Independence through full time work rule, the young person may be considered Independent if they have worked at least 30 hours per week over 18-months within a two-year period. Under this rule, parental income is not tested. That student, by all accounts, can become eligible for independent Youth Allowance and can still live at home with their parents whilst accessing their course on a daily basis. That student can continue to have all the family support they need around them, their childhood bed and meals at the family table. In no way does Balranald branch wish to take anything away from a Metropolitan student in this situation, but it is important to make this comparison in order to have equitable access to Independent Youth Allowance for rural and remote students. Put simply, a rural and remote student who, after immediately finishing school must move away from home to commence their tertiary studies, should automatically satisfy the independence criteria and qualify for the Independent Youth Allowance at the Living Away from Home rate. This situation is now only exacerbated by the fair work rules as we are hearing from members who rely on penalty rates on weekends in order to study during the week is having a huge impact.

A62. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) urges the Federal Government to find a solution to inhibiting waiting times to make contact with Department of Human Services staff when making or needing information regarding Youth 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. One parent from our branch waited 50 minutes, 40 minutes and then 71 minutes before she was finally able to speak to a staff member. The parent advised that although she had tried to submit information online, the site did not accept the exception for rural and remote students, **the local Human Services office does not have expertise/not permitted to answer Youth allowance questions**, hence the need for confirmation by telephone.

Tertiary – Other

A63. Rankins Springs Branch (NSW)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to reintroduce incentives for the up-front payment of university fees and for the early repayment of debt in the Higher Education Contribution Scheme- Higher Education Loan Program (HECS-HELP).”

Explanation:

Up until 1 January 2017, the Federal Government offered incentives for students to pay their university fees up front and for graduates to repay their HECS-HELP debt early. Currently, there are no incentives for either of the above, so students and graduates will not make payments or repayments any faster than they are required to. If the government is serious about recovering HELP debt from graduates, then providing incentives to encourage early repayment must be considered.

MISCELLANEOUS

A64. Tambo Branch (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (Aust) continues to lobby the federal government to form and manage a National Rural and Remote Education Alliance similar to that of the National Rural Health Alliance.”

Explanation:

Educational outcomes for rural and remote students have been proven to be well below that of metropolitan counterparts. Therefore, it is more important that the bringing together of motivated rural and remote education advocates such as SPERA, Science, ICT and mathematics education in rural and regional Australia (SiMERR), gifted and talented interest groups, state government education departments for example and of course ICPA occurs sooner rather than later. By forming an Alliance these groups will have a common platform to share the results of studies, research and coal face knowledge. This collaborative approach can only mean an improvement in the learning outcomes for rural and remote students.

A65. Bollon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED/LOST

“Bollon ICPA would like to move a vote of thanks to ICPA of Federal Council for the outstanding work they do in advocating for rural Australian families progressing our issues and bringing them to the attention Federal politicians and departments to improve the educational outcomes for our children.”

AGM

A66. ICPA (Aust) Federal Council

CARRIED/LOST

“That the Federal membership fee remains at \$22.00 per member family.”

A67. ICPA (Aust) Federal Council

CARRIED/LOST

“That Corporate Membership remains at \$220.00 per organisation.”

A68. ICPA (Aust) Federal Council **CARRIED/LOST**
“That RJC Evans and Co. Adelaide, be appointed as auditor for the 2018 – 2019 financial year.”

A69. ICPA (Aust) Federal Council **CARRIED/LOST**
“That the 2017-2018 Audited Report and the 2017-2018 Regional Student Engagement Strategy 2016 – 2019 Grant Acquittal Audited Report be received and accepted.”

A70. ICPA (Aust) Federal Council **CARRIED/LOST**
“That the amended sections of the Isolated Children’s Parents Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution updated June 2018, as circulated, be adopted.”

Explanation:

Amendments to the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia (Inc) Constitution are in accordance with the WA model rules which require a number of matters be included in an association’s constitution.

A71. ICPA (Aust) Federal Council **CARRIED/LOST**
“That the amendments to the Isolated Children’s Parents Association of Australia (Inc) By-Laws updated June 2018, as circulated, be ratified.”

Explanation:

Federal Council has adopted a number of changes and added several new By-Laws in order to assist with administrative and purposeful procedures essential to the effective running of the organisation, throughout the year.

Federal Council now presents the following changes for ratification.

The following By-Laws have been updated:

- By-Law 1 (Administration Roles and Responsibilities)
- By-Law 6 (Payment of Subscriptions for Branch and State Life Members) and
- By-Law 12 (Federal Award of Merit)

New By-Laws include:

- By-Law 3 (Workplace Health and Safety)
- By-Law 4 (Use of ICPA Logo)
- By-Law 5 (Branch Dissolutions, Recess and Closures)
- By-Law 9 (Social Media)
- By-Law 11 (Federal Certificate of Appreciation)