



**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (Inc).**

**"Access to Education"**

**Submission**

to the

**Department of Education's**

**Review of the Australian Curriculum**

from the

**Federal Council**

of the

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

**ICPA (Aust)**

**March 2014**

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## **Submission to the Review of the Australian Curriculum March 2014**

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, (ICPA Aust), welcomes the opportunity to provide information and recommendations around issues relevant to families living in rural and remote Australia, to the Review of the Australian Curriculum.

ICPA (Aust) is a voluntary parent body dedicated to ensuring all geographically isolated students have equity of access to a continuing and appropriate education. This encompasses the education of children from early childhood through to tertiary. The member families of the association reside in rural and remote Australia and all share a common goal of achieving access to education for their children and the provision of services required to achieve this. Many of our families live on isolated stations, great distances from their nearest community with their only access to education, including to early childhood education, being via distance education programs.

Members have raised concerns around the implementation of the Australian Curriculum for a number of years, which leads us to focus this submission on issues regarding the implementation processes in some jurisdictions. Additional problems associated with internet connectivity are being experienced in remote areas and the insufficient funding being provided to develop distance education materials that align with the new curriculum.

The issue of adequately funding and planning for the roll out of the Australian Curriculum for students studying via distance education has been brought to the attention of the previous Education Minister, Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA), Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) as well as a number of state and territory education authorities. Despite the effort being made by a number of states, this issue still holds serious concerns for many of our families educating their children in isolated locations via distance education programs. The huge difference between planning and preparing lessons for use in a conventional face to face classroom, compared to designing materials that are going to be sent out to students studying via distance education, for use in lessons to be delivered largely by untrained, distance education tutors, must be acknowledged and dealt with.

With the expectation being that distance education teachers are required to develop their own resources, ICPA (Aust) is concerned that the funding necessary for this enormous exercise, coupled with the number of writers available, has not been sufficient to ensure that time frames are able to be met. If this is not possible, distance education students will not benefit from the introduction of the Australian Curriculum; rather - they will suffer from it.

The current reality is that lessons are being delayed, in some cases for a number of weeks, which results in students not doing any schoolwork at all. Common grievances expressed by distance education tutors include lessons being received that are inappropriate for year levels and/or riddled with errors. These problems are causing enormous unnecessary distress for

those filling the vital tutor role (often the mother) of supervising lessons. Our members are very concerned that these issues will exacerbate problems with their children's progression through the years with national tests such as the NAPLAN, and with a distance education student's successful transition to mainstream schooling at secondary level.

Many families living in rural and remote Australia will not have access to the NBN Co fibre optic cable or NBN Co fixed wireless and will be reliant on the Next G wireless broadband service or the NBN Co Interim Satellite Service (ISS) until the new generation satellite networks become active. Poor internet connectivity and relying on self-generated power often means students are not able to view online resources.

ICPA (Aust) recommends that greater consideration be given to students studying by distance education when implementing the Australian Curriculum, particularly if this review leads to changes being made to the curriculum. Implementation must be adequately resourced and the curriculum must be readily accessible.