



## Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia

*Working together for equity of access to education for all students who live in rural & remote Australia*

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### Education: Time for action in rural education

There is no mistaking the passion that country families have when it comes to educating their children. Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) members and guests put forward their concerns and suggested solutions at the annual federal conference held in Brisbane, last week.

Representing more than 3,000 families across Australia, ICPA lobbies for equity of access to education for rural and remote students.

Newly elected ICPA Federal President, Wendy Hick, said issues receiving the most debate this year were the need for a substantial increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children's (AIC) Boarding Allowance for students who need to board away from home in order to access education, recognition and financial assistance for distance education home tutors and adequate telecommunication systems in rural and remote areas.

Challenging as it is for governments, addressing educational needs in rural and remote areas is essential. We must give young people in rural areas every opportunity to learn and develop in the best possible way. The need to bridge the gap between students in the bush and those in metropolitan areas is vital.

"Parents in rural areas are feeling abandoned as they struggle to provide education to their children," Mrs Hick said.

Increasing costs mean pursuing an appropriate education can be prohibitive for students outside metropolitan areas. Members spoke openly of children being removed from schooling altogether and mothers leaving the family home and moving to larger centres in order to educate their children. They were heartened when other organisations present, declared they too would join the fight to see the AIC Boarding Allowance increased.

Mrs Hick welcomed the substantial media coverage during the federal conference which will assist in raising the awareness of the challenges distance creates when educating children in isolated areas of Australia.

One of the many highlights during conference was listening to the presentation given by Hon Paul Fletcher MP, Parliamentary Secretary to Minister Turnbull, on the latest news to address the horrendous communication issues being experienced by families with children being educated via distance education programs and in small rural schools. ICPA's Federal Council had previously requested representation on the newly formed Distance Education and Broadband Working Committee set up by the Minister for Communications to overcome the internet problems currently being experienced by distance education families. Mr Fletcher announced at the conference that the government would be pleased to have ICPA join the working group, and federal council looks forward to participating with this committee, representing their members' on imperative communication matters.

Many of these concerns have been bought up year after year; now is the time for some action to better support families in the bush.

#### **For further information and comments please contact:**

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