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## Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia

Advocating for equitable access to education for students in rural and remote Australia

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

**6 August, 2018**

### **COUNTRY KIDS' CONCERNS CONVERGE ON THE CAPITAL**

One hundred and fifty delegates and guests were represented from every state in Australia at this year's 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Federal Conference held in our nation's capital, Canberra. With Federal and State Ministers in attendance, as well as representatives from the Department of Education and Training, Department of Human Services, Department of Social Services and Department of Communications and the Arts, the audience was witness to two full days where eighty-nine motions crossed the floor to be debated and discussed.

With the current dry situation across much of Australia, how the drought is affecting education for rural and remote students was raised as a major concern. With education being left out of all of the government's released drought announcements, motions were brought forward insisting ICPA (Aust) keep reiterating to the Federal Government the extreme importance of providing assistance to keep children in school while families are struggling through these desperate times.

Telecommunications is always cause for many motions and much discussion for ICPA members, and this Conference was no exception. Big topics included: the Universal Service Obligation remaining on the standard telephone landline services for all rural and remote families, all rural and remote students having consistent access to continuous and reliable telephone communications through regular maintenance of existing telephone infrastructure and being prioritised for repairs as well as a temporary satellite phone being provided to any rural or remote family where a phone fault is not rectified within three working days, and for nbn to extend the current Sky Muster Education Service to ensure all rural and remote students (distance education, tertiary, boarding school students and small rural school students) using Sky Muster have access to this service.

A number of tertiary motions were heard regarding criteria to receive Independent and Dependent Youth Allowance as well as the inhibiting wait times when contacting the call centre for Youth Allowance applications.

Difficulty in employing a skilled education workforce in rural and remote Australia was evident with a popular motion being presented asking the Federal Government to relax the legislation for the need to have a qualified Early Childhood Teacher or Certificate III ECEC qualified person, run a kindergarten program in rural and remote child care centres, when these positions cannot be filled. Following the introduced changes to the In Home Care Program on 2 July 2018, members are concerned that places in regional and remote areas will remain vacant.

Two longstanding topics of concern were once again brought forward, the establishment of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) in recognition of the role the Home Tutor undertakes when educating students via distance education and the immediate 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.

This was a wonderfully themed conference of "COUNTRY KIDS in CAPITALS" where we could bring the issues facing rural and remote families and their children to the forefront in the city where the decisions are made.

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

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