

DISTANCE EDUCATION REPORT

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There were 11 Distance Education motions presented at the 2016 Federal Conference pertaining to establishment of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA), seeking an increase to the Distance Education component of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance and the inclusion of geographically isolated distance education students who attend a non-government school in references and lobbies for distance education students.

Distance Education Teaching Allowance

The Distance Education Portfolio has continued to raise awareness of the need for a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA).

The Distance Education Teaching Allowance, is an allowance aimed at giving financial recognition to the vital role of the distance education tutor, for those families in receipt of the Assistance for Isolated Children Distance Education allowance. This role requires families to ensure either the mother or a governess, is available to commit between 6-8 hours per day, five days a week to the classroom to deliver the content of the program. ICPA Federal Council continued to lobby the government at every given opportunity for the establishment of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance. The topic was raised in delegations, letters and discussions with government representatives including the Ministers of Education and Training, Social Services and Women.

As teaching distance education has become more onerous, complicated and time consuming, the pressure placed on this role has grown phenomenally and the contribution distance education tutors make to the families of the bush is immeasurable. In 2016, it was decided to increase the amount requested for the allowance to \$6 000 per distance education family per annum indexed to the CPI to better reflect the essential work that distance education tutors perform.

Some fresh ideas were incorporated in the DETA lobby during the 2016 Federal Conference. Hundreds of DETA postcards were printed showing on the cover main statistics and facts that had been gathered from the ICPA Aust DETA Survey. The postcards were addressed to the Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Social Services and Minister of Women and given to delegates and guests at the Federal Conference who were asked to sign them and note where they were from. The cards were then posted to Canberra from the conference. More postcards were included with Pedals magazine asking members to sign and post these cards to add to the number arriving at Parliament House. Federal Council wishes to express our appreciation to Hughenden Branch for contributing a donation to cover the cost of printing the DETA postcards. The tsunami of DETA postcards was certainly noticed and mention was made of them when Federal Council had their November delegations in Canberra.

A Distance Education Resource video was also released at the 2016 Federal Conference. This video, filmed at the homes and schoolrooms of two ICPA members, received a phenomenal number of views on Facebook and our ICPA website within the first few days of its launch. The video aims to show the daily role of a home tutor and how a distance education home schoolroom operates, one schoolroom with the mother as the distance education tutor and one schoolroom with a governess. This resource video was intended to be used to help increase an understanding of how distance education classrooms function and the role the tutors play. The link to the video has been shared with all of those in government that

ICPA (Aust) met with at delegations and the video has been shown wherever possible. Boarding schools have also found the video useful to help show the educational background some rural students come from as they begin their boarding journey. The DE resource video will continue to be shown at other upcoming speaking opportunities and can be found at <https://youtu.be/dFgc0StaORE>

Increase to AIC Distance Education Allowance

Federal Council has expressed the need for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance to be increased to better reflect the out of pocket costs incurred by geographically isolated families undertaking distance education. This issue was raised at the delegations in Canberra in November 2016. With the government's election promise of \$44.7 million to be directed to geographically isolated families, ICPA (Aust) has put forward a suggestion to the Federal Government that a portion of this funding should be allocated to increase the AIC Distance Education component. Another election promise was the implementation of an independent, comprehensive review into regional, rural and remote education and equity of access to which ICPA will be placing a submission, part of which will reiterate the need for an increase in the AIC Distance Education Allowance.

Inclusion of non-government Distance Education Students

ICPA (Aust) was directed by members at the 2016 Federal Conference to include geographically isolated non-government distance education students when dealing with all levels of and advocating for equity to education for rural and remote students. ICPA (Aust) has been ensuring that when references are made to distance education students, that it is understood that there are both government school as well as non-government school distance education students which are recognised in the eligibility criteria of the AIC Distance Education allowance as geographically isolated distance education students.

Volunteers for Isolated Students' Education (VISE)

At the end of May 2017, it was announced that the Volunteers for Isolated Students' Education (VISE) program would cease operation on December 20, 2017. VISE is a voluntary service that was formed in 1989 by a group of retired teachers, the Tennant Creek Lions Club and in consultation with ICPA. VISE's aim was to support the education of rural students and in particular isolated families involved in distance education. VISE connects retired teachers as well as "Angels" with distance education families and coordinates visits by the tutors/angels to these families for periods of approximately 6 weeks during the school year. VISE tutors assist distance education families by taking over the role of home tutor during their stay and provide students with learning guided by a retired teacher as well as respite from the classroom for home tutor mothers/family members. The VISE service is invaluable for the isolated families who access the program and the announcement of the cessation of the program caused quite a bit of concern amongst ICPA members. ICPA federal and state councils joined together in offering support and assistance to VISE and other organisations in the hopes that either VISE itself would be able to continue or another similar program created. In early June, ICPA was informed that a comparable program to VISE looked to be in the making and in July, it was announced that a new service called "Aussie Helpers Volunteers for Isolated Students' Education" will open and be ready to offer tutors to families at the start of the 2018 school year. ICPA continues to keep abreast of any updates and ways in which ICPA can assist and support this new program.