



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

FEDERAL COUNCIL

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

Federal Secretary
ICPA (Aust)
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Mr Jonathan Coppel
Presiding Commissioner
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

October 7, 2016

Dear Mr Coppel

Submission to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into the National Education Evidence Base Draft Report October 2016

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, ICPA (Aust), welcomes the opportunity to contribute information that may assist in working towards a system that would provide a comprehensive evidence base for policy development in early learning and school education now and in the future. This includes the consideration of current data holdings at a national, state and sectoral level, their effectiveness in supporting educational outcomes, and the long term vision for such educational data holdings.

ICPA (Aust) is a voluntary, non-profit, apolitical parent body, dedicated to ensuring all rural and remote students have equity of access to a continuing and appropriate education. It encompasses the education of children from early childhood through to tertiary. The majority of member families of the Association reside in geographically isolated areas of Australia and all share a common goal of access to an appropriate education for their children and the provision of services required to achieve this. Children may be educated in small rural schools, by distance education, attend boarding schools or school term hostels and sometimes have access to early childhood services. Tertiary students whose family home is in rural and remote Australia frequently must live away from home to access further education.

Whilst ICPA does not have direct access to data relating to this group, our organisation does have a good understanding of the issues concerning information sharing between states and territories. Many of

these issues relating to rural and remote early childhood education and schooling were raised in our submission (See Appendix A) to the **Reform of Federation White Paper, Roles and Responsibilities in Education, PART A:**

<http://www.icpa.com.au/documents/download/1018/federal-submissions-1/submission-discussion-of-education-issues-reform-of-federation-white-paper-2015.pdf>

“While all Australian governments recognise the social and economic benefits of a high quality and equitable school education system, ICPA continues to devote an enormous amount of volunteer hours holding relevant governments to account to address inequities. Despite many national programs having been rolled out over recent years, the disparity in educational outcomes for rural and remote students continues to lag behind urban students. Much of this can be attributed to many programs not reaching locations where the programs are costly to administer and jurisdictions not providing additional funding to ensure program objectives are met. Poor communication issues also impact greatly on what is available to students, however ICPA anticipates that this will be less of an issue in the future.

Improving the educational outcomes for rural and remote students requires a national approach that ensures educational delivery of a consistent, high standard no matter where the education is provided. The financial cost to families educating children in rural and remote locations continues to rise and can be attributed to many leaving these areas. There is a strong need for rural and remote education to be placed on a separate register when delivering and funding education for these students.”

There has also been some work done by the Grattan Institute that emphasises the issues with early childhood education in rural and remote areas:

<http://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/937-Widening-gaps.pdf>

In the future ICPA (Aust) will also be consulting with the Federal Government while the Rural Education Review is taking place, which may also be an avenue to pursue if gaps in available data are identified.

Please know that ICPA is happy to assist wherever possible in order to help bring to light the unique challenges that geographically isolated students face.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Jane Morton

Federal Secretary

ICPA (Aust)