



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

**Tasmania**

Tasmanian State Council

of the

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia

(ICPA Aust)

September 2016

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Isolated Children's Parents' Association 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. Rural and remote children may be educated in small rural schools, by distance education, attend boarding schools or school term hostels or accessing early childhood services. Tertiary students whose family home is in rural and remote Australia frequently must live away from home to access further education.

ICPA Tasmania consists of Midlands, East Coast and Tasmania Lone Members Branches.

ICPA Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to respond to the ***Review of Years 9-12 in Tasmania***. The issue of low rates of retention and attainment of Tasmanian students particularly the rural and remote cohort, to the end of year 12, is of concern to ICPA Tasmania and our rural and remote members and communities. All Tasmanian students, irrespective of their geographic location and socio-economic status, have the right to a high-quality appropriate education, that is equivalent to all Australia, that enables them to fulfil their aspirations, develops their potential, prepares them to be job-ready, maximises their achievement, attain the best possible educational outcome and assists them to make informed decisions about their future.

ICPA Tasmania respond with the following:

- **Subject-Specific Teachers:** Rural schools must have the same access to experienced and qualified teachers to teach the Australian Curriculum, Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses and Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC) subjects as urban schools and colleges and not be disadvantaged by their remoteness. The practice of teachers teaching 'out of field' particularly in rural areas, needs urgent attention. A scholarship program or incentive program similar to rural health, for teachers in a specific subject where there is a shortage, for example maths and science, would assist in recruitment and retention of staff, particularly in rural areas. There needs to be accountability in the appointment of the teaching staff in all schools at all levels. The roles, duties and responsibilities of teachers need to be clearly defined in their Statements of Duties and aligned closely with the Australian Curriculum.
- **Vocational Education and Training (VET):** The provision of quality and cost-effective VET programs in rural schools is vital for many students who aspire to pursue careers which are grounded in these VET programs. There also needs to be choice and the ability to attend a school or college that offers a VET stream that caters for individual

student's pathway choice if not offered locally. It is imperative vocational education remains a choice for all Tasmanian students.

- **Attainment:** For rural and remote students to achieve attainment in all elements of education (academic, participation in extra-curricular activities including sport, cultural experiences and social contact), it often means relocating to an urban school or college to be given the same opportunities as their urban counterparts. Rural and remote students must retain the choice to be able to access these opportunities if not available in their local area. Rural schools and communities are often not able to offer the breadth of opportunities to students that is afforded in the urban setting. The extension of rural and regional schools to years 11 & 12 has given the students commencing vocational education in year 9 & 10, the ability to continue without having to relocate to urban facilities.
- **Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme and Student Accommodation Allowance (SAA):** Rural and remote students of Tasmania must retain access to AIC and SAA (for years 11 and 12) if they choose to attend an urban school or college to access the education required to fulfil their career pathway and aspirations. If rural schools are unable to offer the full range of educational options in year 11 and 12, the option must be available to assist families with the cost of boarding away from home.
- **Year 11 & 12 in rural and regional schools:** The commencement of years 11 & 12 in rural and regional schools has in part, alleviated some of the transport, relocation and accommodation issues for students able to stay in their local area and attend the local school. However, the subject offerings does not cater for all rural and remote students and many students still need to attend the urban colleges or schools to access necessary subjects and opportunities with the associated lengthy daily travel or high boarding away from home costs.
- **Continuity of Education and Transitioning from years 10 to years 11:** Education providers, both high schools and colleges, must prepare and support students in the transition from the Australian Curriculum to the years 11 & 12 vocational and academic curriculum. An extension of the partnerships already developed between high schools and colleges will assist in the transition process and prepare students for this change. The transition of year 10 to year 11 for rural and remote students not only means changing curriculum delivery but for many, relocating to an urban setting with the associated uncertainty of new school, peers and lifestyle, living away from family and change in social support. Families also often have to deal with increased costs with this transition and transport reliability can also be an issue. Year 9 & 10 teachers have to have sound knowledge to be able to prepare the students following on to the year 11 & 12 program and vice versa, year 11 & 12 teachers have to understand the curriculum base the students are coming from.
- **Choice:** ICPA Tasmania believes all Tasmanian students must have equality in choice of vocational and academic subjects, extra-curricular activities and opportunities to

reach their full potential and aspirations. This means rural and remote students must be eligible to choose their college of choice that meets their needs in terms of academic, vocational, social and emotional aspects.

- **E-learning:** E-learning is one method of delivery of education which is an option for rural and remote students but relies on the assurance of a quality, affordable and reliable internet services and infrastructure. It is not a suitable method of education for some learners and may impede their education. Rural and remote students must be afforded this learning environment only as a choice and must not be expected to change to this virtual environment at an important stage of their education, if not suitable. The virtual classroom does improve access for students but the benefit of physically being in a classroom with a teacher and peers cannot be underestimated for some students.

Education should be about choices that suit individual students. Rural and remote Tasmanian students must be afforded the same educational opportunities as their urban counterparts. All Tasmanian students deserve a quality education equivalent to mainland Australia delivered by highly trained year-level and subject-specific teachers, to enable them to attain the best possible educational outcome.

ICPA Tasmania is happy to provide further information should it be required.