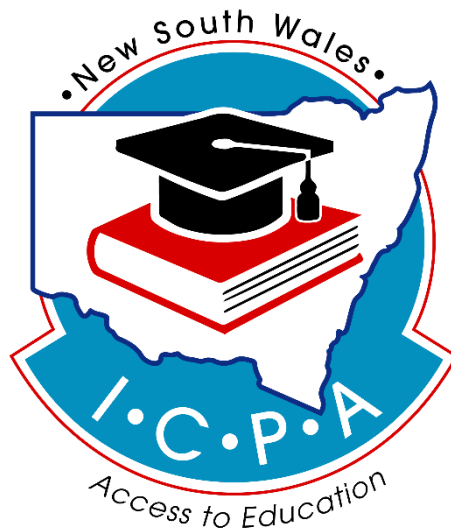


INQUIRY INTO PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales Inc
Date Received: 11 February 2022

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales Inc.



Inquiry into the Planning and Delivery of School Infrastructure in New South Wales

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ICPA-NSW is a voluntary non-profit advocacy group that has its roots firmly embedded in rural, remote and regional areas across the state. ICPA-NSW believes that all students - irrespective of where they live - are entitled to equitable access to education that enables them to participate to their full potential in the social, economic, political and cultural life of a community.

The NSW State Council of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association advocates for members who have children who:

- Attend a rural pre-school or access early childhood education through a mobile service
- Attend a small rural or remote school
- Study by Distance Education and School of the Air lessons
- Travel to school by bus or private vehicle (daily, weekly or at the end of term)
- Board away from home to access primary or secondary school at a boarding school, agricultural high school, hostel, private board or maintain a second home
- Attend a Tertiary institution- University/TAFE/ College

SUBMISSION

“The adequacy of plans by the NSW Government to deliver educational facilities for every NSW public school student”

Distance Education facilities such as School of the Air Broken Hill do not have the physical capacity to host the full enrolment of students onsite in a classroom setting. Therefore, the stages are either in staggered days over a week or they are scheduled excursions. Many of the buildings at the site are old transportable building with one new classroom at the back of the site. The layout could be improved with the installation of new buildings.

At this site there is very limited space for the children to play, thus, having to utilise the sporting oval from North Broken Hill Public School when they are not using this. With a new layout of buildings this would free up area for the children to play within the school grounds.

ICPA-NSW appreciates that the number of children that are enrolled in school via Distance Education fluctuates regularly, but we feel that the infrastructure including buildings, satellite studios, and playgrounds needs to be appropriate for the educational needs of the children that attend for important face to face learning.

ICPA-NSW believes that infrastructure at Finigan School of Distance Education is an excellent example of updating Distance Education Schools. ICPA-NSW was an advocate for these improvements and would like to see all Distance Education Centres receive similar improvements.

School of the Air Broken Hill is one of the most unique Distance Education schools with almost 100% of its students being Home Isolated. Whilst the classrooms are not utilised on a fulltime basis, these students should have the same quality of infrastructure. Families are traveling large distances and covering the cost of accommodation and travel, whilst being away from their employment/businesses for days at a time, so that their children have can have face to face access to their teachers, peers, and a classroom experience that a typical student takes for granted daily. It must be noted that parents complain little about the additional costs that they incur and the time away from their farm (livelihood

and workplace) and loved ones, because they are committed to ensuring their children's educational opportunities are realised.

“Delays in converting new school announcements into site identification and school construction”

ICPA-NSW and other stakeholders have long been advocating for new female dormitories at Yanco Agricultural High School.

The announcement in 2020 that new dormitories would be built was welcomed by ICPA-NSW and stakeholders.

The building works are yet to commence and are expected to be finished by 2024. This delay is too long.

“Any other related matter”:

Distance Education

Delayed installation of the NBN Skymuster to Distance Education students:

Whilst we understand that it is not onsite school infrastructure, but infrastructure installed by NSW Department of Education on home site classrooms. Families are feeling that it has been a drawn-out process and the current internet service is outdated and extremely slow and this has a knock-on effect to students' education. The delayed installation has affected the roll out of new computer technology and hardware and there are ongoing connection issues with video conferencing.

Video Conferencing facilitates the main interaction between teachers, students, and their peers, and ongoing issues are negatively affecting the delivery of education. During COVID-19 lockdowns many families in NSW had to utilise video conferencing services to deliver education. This was rolled out quickly and effectively, but for distance education students who learn via video conferencing on a daily basis, year in year out, it has not been the case and is not acceptable to disadvantage these children further.

We recommend that installations of infrastructure to home classrooms happen with a matter of urgency to ensure that these children have quality access to their teachers and peers.

Rural Schools

Principals must have more autonomy on how Routine Planned Maintenance funding is spent. Currently, the Assets Management Unit identify what projects will be funded with Routine Planned Maintenance funds whilst the Principals of TP1 and TP2 schools don't have any say in where the money will be spent in their school. Often the money could be better spent in other areas that would be of immediate benefit to the students and staff. Planned maintenance are for carpets, painting, adjusting doors and windows, cupboards, and boundary fencing. Improvements need to be included in the Routine Planned maintenance.

Any TP1 school that does not have any accommodation other than the Principal's housing should have single person accommodation provided at the school. In these remote locations there is literally no affordable accommodation or no accommodation at all when a casual teacher or visiting consultant needs to stay overnight and it is not feasible for them to do so. There is no additional funding for this extra expense and in some rural locations no other accommodation available. This is another disincentive for Principals as they cannot leave their position for any amount of time as the school would not be attended by a teacher.

Early Childhood

The NSW Department of Education has assured ICPA-NSW of its intention to establish Distance Education preschools in remote small schools. It must be arranged by the NSW Department of Education to have an appropriate space for when it is required by up to four – 3 & 4-year-olds two days a week.

Several remote schools have the use of a 'Building Education Revolution Facility', and these can be utilised in some instances. However, if this is not the case or these structures are already in use, another room will be required.

Secondary Education

ICPA-NSW hopes that their advocacy for secondary Distance Education space to be available within the village school will be successful. The local secondary school students who do Distance Education, but require an appropriate space and supervision to do their lessons, will be physically in the school. They therefore will require infrastructure in terms of a classroom.