



## **Four Year Olds Denied Federal Assistance** **Extension to the AIC Allowance**

**Accessing affordable early childhood learning:**

Extend the Assistance for Isolated Children's (AIC) Distance Education allowance to those taking part in early childhood programs in their transition to school.

The only means of accessing early childhood education for approximately 280 children across remote Australia is through distance education programs. While states and territories have provided such programs, families living in remote areas wishing to access these are bearing the entire costs associated with taking part in them. The costs associated with setting up, maintaining and resourcing a schoolroom for delivering an early childhood program are the same as those encountered in delivering a distance education program for the formal schooling years. The AIC Distance Education allowance must be extended to this cohort in order to make early childhood programs more affordable.

**Distance Education for four year old students need to be recognised when undertaking a transition to school program and the AIC scheme extended to them as no other service is available to this group.**

**Funding required ≈ \$1 million dollars per annum.**

**Funding this allowance would assist considerably in alleviating and overcoming the challenges families face when educating their children in isolated regions of Australia. Further details about our main lobby areas [here](#).**

## **SUMMING UP RURAL EDUCATION**

### **DO THE MATHS**

### **Election Campaign**

**June 2016**

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**Disconnected Country Kids**  
**Access to adequate, affordable internet services**

**Communications issues:**

Rural and Remote Communications – ICPA has strong and clear views on communication requirements for the non-urban population, which have come about due to the inequalities experienced over the last decade or so in comparison to available metropolitan services. We are aware that delivering services similar to metropolitan areas, to the rural and remote population, is far more expensive and time consuming to deploy. Therefore, it is essential that the **nbn** Long Term Satellite Service (now Sky Muster Service) capacity is sufficient for both current and future demand. Existing usage is limited by the inadequacy of the current systems and policies.

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## **Out of Pocket Costs Skyrocketing** **Increase to the AIC Boarding Allowance**

**Urgent financial assistance is required to overcome the unsustainable costs associated with accessing boarding school education:**

### **Increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children's, (AIC), Boarding Allowance**

Attending boarding school is a necessity for many children in rural and remote areas due to the distance they are from available schooling. Rural and remote families are expressing a growing concern about the affordability of accessing and utilising boarding schools to educate their children during the compulsory years of schooling. Boarding school costs have increased significantly and the financial impact for these families is enormous. An increasing number of rural and remote families are separating, with the mother and children relocating. This is evidenced by the substantial increases in AIC second home allowance claims. This is a drastic measure by families to reduce educational expenses and negatively impacts the family unit, small communities and rural schools (due to the younger siblings being removed from primary schooling). A significant increase in the AIC Boarding allowance is required as a matter of urgency.

**4572 students received the AIC Boarding Allowance in 2015.**

**Funding this allowance would assist considerably in alleviating and overcoming the challenges families face when educating their children in isolated regions of Australia. Further details about our main lobby areas [here](#).**

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**Rural Families Ignored**  
**Financial Recognition Needed for Hours Devoted to Schoolroom**  
**Distance Education Teaching Allowance**

**Recognition of the financial impact on families who must provide a distance education tutor:**

**Distance Education Teaching Allowance**

For around 1500 families living in isolated regions of Australia, the only means of accessing an education for their children is via distance education programs. While the AIC allowance assists with the setup of the classroom and ongoing costs associated with this method of education, it is not possible without a tutor present in the home schoolroom. Families are required to provide and fund the entire costs associated with providing a tutor. This necessitates the employment of additional staff or a family member (often the mother) who must forgo an income earning job, often, for many years in order to fill the role. ICPA is seeking the introduction of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (\$6000 per family, per annum), as financial recognition of the essential work a tutor performs.

**Funding required ≈ \$9 million per annum.**

**Funding this allowance would assist considerably in alleviating and overcoming the challenges families face when educating their children in isolated regions of Australia. Further details about our main lobby areas [here](#).**

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## Child Care

ICPA Australia has concerns with the changes from the Budget Based Funding model to the Jobs for Families Early Childhood Package, specifically in relation to Mobile Playgroups in rural and remote areas. As many of these mobile playgroups do not provide child care, nor can they be licensed, it appears they would not be funded under the new Community Child Care Fund.

**Facilitation is specifically required to ensure that Mobile Playgroups in rural and remote areas, are included in the Jobs for Families Early Childhood Package, so that funding for these services is secure beyond 2018.**

At the inception of the Nanny Pilot Programme it was touted as the solution to the problems that rural and remote families were having in accessing child care. To date ICPA Australia has no knowledge of any of its members that have actually continued with the program citing it as unaffordable in its current design.

**The guidelines for the Nanny Pilot Programme, need to be reviewed immediately in relation to rural and remote families, so they can be assessed, charged lower rates and placed in a category consistent with their location and level of disadvantage.**

For families living in rural and remote Australia, who are able to provide accommodation for staff, the In Home Care scheme is an affordable option when it comes to accessing child care, however there are 3 main concerns:

- a) **The criteria in the guidelines needs to be broadened to meet the needs of these families, particularly for those undertaking distance education schooling.**
- b) **In rural and remote Australia it is very difficult to find suitable people to employ in their homes to provide child care or to teach the children who must be educated by distance education, backpackers are a solution to this problem but they are currently constrained by their visa stipulations. A broadening of the criteria for working visas would solve this problem.**
- c) **We are hearing of incidents where families are not able to access In Home Care, even though they meet all of the guidelines. The Department of Education and Training maintains that this program is undersubscribed, further limiting rural and remote families in accessing affordable child care.**

Further details about our main lobby areas [here](#).

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## Rural Hardship Assistance

**Financial assistance required to help with education costs during periods of long-term drought or hardship in rural areas:**

### Rural Hardship Education Fund

ICPA requests the immediate establishment of a Rural Hardship Education Fund, to assist families with the enormous out-of-pocket costs associated with educating children at boarding school in times of long-term drought and the drought recovery period. The fund could be established as part of the Federal Government's current Drought Relief Package, possibly being administered and accessed through bodies such as the Rural Adjustment Authorities or as a special circumstances criteria within the AIC Scheme. The benefits would be far reaching for rural families when under financial duress due to their inability to generate an income. Geographically isolated students should not be disadvantaged or unable to complete their schooling due to the exceptional circumstances of long-term drought or other hardship.

**While 4572 students received the AIC Boarding Allowance in 2015, the number impacted by drought at any one time would be considerably less.**

**Funding this type of Fund would assist considerably in alleviating and overcoming the challenges families face when educating their children in isolated regions of Australia. Further details about our main lobby areas [here](#).**

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## Education Support Specific Learning Needs

Children with specific education needs necessitate access to educational opportunities that are appropriate and specific to their learning requirements. Access to such opportunities should not be disadvantaged by living in a rural or remote location. Distance limits the choice of schools to students in rural and remote areas, but for students with specific learning needs, this choice can be further limited.

**Families in rural and remote locations who need to use telehealth clinicians for children with development difficulties under the 'Chronic Diseases Management Scheme' and related item numbers, require an equivalent Medicare rebate to those who have in-person consultations.**

**Additional resources need to be provided to facilities, including boarding schools, where student requirements have been clearly identified on the NCCD database.**

**Teachers in rural and remote schools, including distance education teachers and distance education supervisors, need to be provided with training to recognise and cater for specific learning needs, including dyslexia.**

**Addressing this issue would assist considerably in alleviating and overcoming the challenges families face when educating their children in isolated regions of Australia. Further details about our main lobby areas [here](#).**

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## **Tertiary Education** **Tertiary Access Allowance**

**Affordable pathways to accessing tertiary studies:**

### Tertiary Access Allowance

Despite the welcomed changes including the removal of multiple asset and means testing from Youth Allowance, ICPA continues to lobby for a Tertiary Access Allowance (TAA) equal to the relocation scholarship (1<sup>st</sup> year-\$4 333, 2<sup>nd</sup> year-\$2 167, 3<sup>rd</sup> and subsequent years - \$1 083) for students who are unable to access the relocation scholarship or YA or any financial support. Ideally ICPA would like to see all students who need to relocate to undertake tertiary study, receiving financial support to assist them in accessing their place of study. However, in view of the current financial situation, support must be given to those most in need. Immediate assistance should be available for students from rural and remote areas who constitute a group currently under-represented at university. In 2014, independent Youth Allowance recipients living in regional areas totaled approximately 4200 students. Students living in these areas, who are not receiving any form of income support, must have equity to tertiary education by way of financial assistance to allow them to access their chosen institution. We are unable to access these figures but suggest they would be few.

**Funding this allowance would assist considerably in alleviating and overcoming the challenges families face when educating their children in isolated regions of Australia. Further details about our main lobby areas [here](#).**

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