



CONFERENCE MOTIONS

Agenda Motions: Allowances

A1 Lakes District Branch

Allowances

“That ICPA (WA) advocates the Minister for Education and the State Government to substantially increase the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) to reflect the cost of education more accurately for students in rural and remote areas and for this allowance to be reviewed annually.”

Explanation:

The Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) serves as a crucial subsidy for families residing in remote areas of our State who send their children away for schooling. Many of these students’ face having to leave home and attend boarding school as they do not have access to a local high school.

The boarding cost incurred by regional families less any eligible allowances is listed in the table below.

WA Residential Colleges boarding facility cost for 2024 which covers bed, meals, facilities, and pastoral care.	\$15,157
Federal government assistance (if eligible) with the Assistance for Isolated Children Basic Boarding Allowance (AIC)	\$ 9,960
Additional Boarding Allowance (if eligible and income-tested)	\$ 2,856
Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA)	\$ 1,389
Total potential reimbursement:	\$11,349

This indicates a deficit of \$3,808 for each eligible student in receipt of AIC and BAHA. Families with multiple students away experience a compounded version of this shortfall. Furthermore, families bear the additional expense of transporting students from their place of residence to school.

An increased financial commitment from the State Government to the BAHA would play a key role in encouraging families to stay in regional areas, attracting and retaining employees and fostering community sustainability. This increased support would make boarding school a more economically feasible choice for families.

Regional areas suffer the most with increased pricing across all sectors and cost of living pressure. While we are grateful for the modest Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase, families continue to feel disadvantaged. We must keep regional families in regional boarding facilities.

Moved: Rachel Springbett (Lakes District Branch) **Seconded:** Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch) **CARRIED**

A2 Goldfields Eyre Branch

Allowances

“That ICPA (WA) continues to lobby the State Government and the Minister for Education for a substantial increase to the State Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) to take into account the significant annual rise in boarding fees.”



Explanation:

We were grateful to see an increase in the BAHA and are hopeful the State Government will further alleviate the pressure on rural and remote families by significantly raising their financial support. Despite the welcomed increase, it remains a fact that boarding school fees continue to rise throughout Western Australia. This is still causing a significant gap between what is charged and what is received by parents as support from both Federal and State Governments.

Families who have no choice but to send their children away to boarding school are increasingly under financial pressure to provide their children with suitable education. Currently, there is a gap of almost \$4000, at Residential Colleges in WA, that isolated families must pay after receiving the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) and BAHA payments (without additional AIC) from both the Federal and State Governments.

We therefore request that ICPA (WA) lobby the State Government to increase the Boarding Away from Home Allowance to minimise this financial pressure put on parents in the effort to provide their children with a suitable education.

Moved: Ross Wood (Goldfields Eyre Branch)

Seconded: Jasmine Carmody (State Council)

CARRIED

A3 Meekatharra Air Branch

Allowances

“That ICPA (WA) continues to advocate the Minister for Education and the State Government for a substantial increase in the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA).”

Explanation:

While we appreciate that the BAHA will be increased each year under the Consumer Price Index (CPI), it is an important subsidy that rural and remote families rely heavily upon each year when sending their children away to provide them with an equitable education. A substantial increase in this allowance would help relieve some of the financial pressure rural families face with the rising cost of boarding.

Moved: Tracie Blair (Meekatharra Air Branch)

Deemed covered by A2

CARRIED

S1 Midwest Branch

Allowances

“That ICPA (WA) advocates the Minister for Education and the State Government adjust the eligibility criteria for the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) to include geographically isolated students who are ineligible for the Assistance for Isolated Children allowance due to their proximity to a District High School.”

Explanation:

Moved: Jasmyn Allen (Midwest Branch)

Seconded: Jen Critch (Midwest Branch)

LOST



Agenda Motions: Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum

A4 Meekatharra Air Branch *Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum*

“That ICPA (WA) advocate for the Minister for Education, Dr Tony Buti, when meeting with Federal and State Education Ministers to come up with a uniform solution that adequately remunerates or recognises home tutors.”

Explanation:

A home tutor is essential in a distance education, home school or School of the Air setting to adequately supervise students. The cost of a home tutor is solely borne by the isolated family and is an added expense to what is usually an already tight budget.

Moved: *Tracie Blair (Meekatharra Air Branch)* **Seconded:** *Raelene Hall (Meekatharra Air Branch)* **CARRIED**

A5 Meekatharra Air Branch *Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum*

“That ICPA (WA) lobby the State Government to provide a subsidy to assist with the cost of supplying a supervisor in the geographically isolated or distance education schoolroom.”

Explanation:

It is a requirement in State distance education (DE) and Schools of the Air that a supervisor is required to support the DE delivery. The State Government is responsible for the cost of education delivery including supervision; however, the cost of a supervisor is borne entirely by the family in a DE environment.

Moved: *Tracie Blair (Meekatharra Air Branch)* **Seconded:** *Raelene Hall (Meekatharra Air Branch)* **CARRIED**

A6 Goldfields Eyre Branch *Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum*

“That ICPA (WA) lobby the State Government to provide financial assistance to cover the cost of supplying a supervisor in the geographically isolated (GI) and distance education (DE) schoolroom.”

Explanation:

It is a requirement in State DE and Schools of the Air (SOTA's) that a supervisor be present to support the delivery of the DE curriculum. The State Government is responsible for the cost of education delivery, including supervision, in traditional education settings (i.e. schools), however, the cost of a supervisor is borne entirely by the family in a DE environment. We are seeking a government funded payment to recompense the home tutor for their time and expertise, be that a parent or an individual employed by the family.

Moved: *Ross Wood (Goldfields Eyre Branch)* **Seconded:** *Jasmine Carmody (State Council)* **CARRIED**



A7 Goldfields Eyre Branch *Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum*

“That ICPA (WA) lobby the State Government and ICPA (Aust) to provide a clause to the In-Home Care Program in order to employ an individual/s to assist with supervising school-aged students in geographically isolated classrooms.”

Explanation:

As the current parameters of the In-Home Care Program revolve around early childhood and preschool aged care, families of geographically isolated students are unable to access the program to fund a home tutor/classroom supervisor despite the program being a natural fit for this type of childcare.

As it is a requirement of State distance education (DE) and Schools of the Air (SOTA’s) that a supervisor be present to support the delivery of the DE curriculum, it is our belief that better support should be offered to students in the form of a paid home tutor.

If families of geographically isolated students had access to the financial assistance offered by the In-Home Care Program home tutors could be properly remunerated and as such we believe we would see an improvement in students’ educational outcomes.

Moved: Ross Wood (Goldfields Eyre Branch) **Seconded:** Jasmine Carmody (State Council) **CARRIED**

A8 Goldfields Eyre Branch *Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum*

“That ICPA (WA) requests ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate the Federal Government for all pre-compulsory students, who are enrolled in a distance education program, be granted the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education allowance.”

Explanation:

Under the current guidelines, part-time distance education students are ineligible for the distance education (DE) component of the AIC allowance, which means families enrolled in the 4-year-old programme must bear the costs of maintaining and setting up the classroom in that first year of schooling.

Early childhood education is a materials/resource heavy time which translates to expensive. This coupled with the costs associated with setting up a classroom for the first time means that many families are under undue financial pressure at an already stressful time in the isolated education journey.

Moved: Ross Wood (Goldfields Eyre Branch) **Seconded:** Jasmine Carmody (State Council) **CARRIED**

Agenda Motions: Rural & Remote Schools

A9 Lakes District Branch *Rural and Remote Schools*

“That ICPA (WA) requests the Department of Education to explore strategies to assist teachers in addressing the challenges and demands associated with developing and delivering curriculum in classes with multi-age groupings.”



Explanation:

A rural school in the Lakes District currently operates a 2/3/4/5/6 class. Despite having five-year levels within this classroom, the range of learning abilities is significantly more diverse. Staff members would feel more supported and inclined to undertake such a challenging role if additional services or resources could be made available.

How can we relieve the pressure on teachers to encourage them to stay and work in small schools?

Examples could be but are not limited to:

- Access to the School of Isolated Distance Education (SIDE) for delivery of subjects for some year levels.
- Improved teacher networks.
- Additional teacher Full Time Equivalent (FTE) when additional year levels are added to multi-year classes.
- Access to free WA-based high-quality shared curriculum resources and well-supported professional development (Reference SSTUWA Facing the Facts Report).
- Provide adequate levels of local support to address workload implications of the growing student complexity. (Reference SSTUWA Facing the Facts Report).

Attracting and retaining teachers in rural areas of WA poses a significant challenge. Given the limited number of teachers in the system and a reluctance to relocate to rural schools, it is difficult at the best of times and any additional support that can be provided to support teachers will have improved outcomes.

Moved: *Rachel Springbett (Lakes District Branch)* **Seconded:** *Chelsea Mott (Lakes District Branch)* **CARRIED**

A10 Lakes District Branch *Rural and Remote Schools*

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister of Education to investigate practises to attract and retain teacher appointments to all regional and remote schools.”

Explanation:

A Level 3 Wheatbelt School commenced this year with three classes, and only one has a teacher appointed. Two classes had flying squad teachers appointed for the first five weeks. (The Flying Squad teachers fill vacancies in rural, regional and remote schools at short notice for short periods of time.)

Given the size of the community and the distance to everyday services, it has become increasingly challenging to attract staff. Many schools have reported difficulties in attracting and retaining staff, which is detrimental to student educational outcomes.

A Great Southern School in 2023 had a Year 5 and 6 class that had six different teachers in a single semester due to a consistent teacher not being able to be found for the class. These teachers were a mix of local relief teachers and Flying Squad staff.

Examples of support that could be offered include, but are not limited to:

- A review of the schools in the Country Teaching Program incentives and eligibility.
- Rental subsidies for both private and GROH accommodation.
- Flexible working arrangements e.g. an additional two days leave per term.
- Incentives in exchange for two or three years of continuous service in one position.
- Reduced Higher Education Contribution (HECS-HELP) loan.



Small rural and regional schools are missing out on quality teachers and more must be done to attract teachers back to the regions!

Moved: *Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch)* **Seconded:** *Rachel Springbett (Lakes District Branch)* **CARRIED**

A11 **Goldfields Eyre Branch** **Rural and Remote Schools**

“That ICPA (WA) lobby the State Government for funding to further incentivise experienced teachers to take up a contract and long term rural, regional and remote positions.”

Explanation:

Students from rural, regional and remote areas are at times facing constant disruptions to their education in the form of teacher shortages. Teacher retention in rural areas can be problematic and, even in those schools where teachers are committed long term, their ability to access vital professional development days, long service leave and even sick days is limited due to the lack of relief teachers and/ or support staff.

It is not uncommon for small schools to have only two classroom teachers across all year levels and minimal funding for additional support staff such as Education Assistants (EAs) or Library Technicians. When one teacher is away from the classroom the other teacher must take the whole school and/or EAs are being asked to step in and take classes. Alternatively, teachers are being called in without completing their training and as such the mental health of teachers is becoming increasingly worrisome due to their burdensome workload.

Whilst the State has varying incentives to encourage teachers to rural schools it has been our experience that these incentives are not always well advertised and experienced teachers often think these are graduate positions only, when they are actually open to all teachers. As well as better incentives, we suggest the State Government run an advertising campaign to get teachers into the bush pitched at experienced teachers and their families.

Additional Incentives could include:

- Financial incentives for short term or contract work in the regions.
- Increased childcare rebates for teachers with young families wanting to take up rural positions.
- Clear potential for permanency.
- Mortgage support for teachers who choose to buy in the rural or remote location in which they teach.
- Increased potential for permanency in the city after completing 3-5 years in a rural, regional or remote position.

Moved: *Ross Wood (Goldfields Eyre Branch)* **Seconded:** *Jasmine Carmody (State Council)* **CARRIED**

A12 **Lakes District Branch** **Rural and Remote Schools**

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Education review the Country Teaching Program (CTP) and update the terms of delivery to regional and rural schools to ensure the parameters that drive the incentives are based on current data and it is applied across a geographical region with a range of CTP offerings.”

Explanation:

The CTP is an incentive package that offers financial reward to teach at certain country schools which are deemed difficult to staff and have limited services. According to the Department of Education website teachers and school



leaders in 146 regional and rural schools are paid annual allowances ranging from \$5,000 to \$13,730 as a part of our Country Teaching Program.

The Country Teaching Program is adding a further disadvantage to small regional and rural schools in the Great Southern that have no monetary allowances on offer. In the Great Southern, Katanning Primary School has subsidised housing, free relocation and an \$8,020 monetary incentive. Katanning Shire with 4,200 people has a large regional centre with commercial businesses, hospital, retail and shopping precincts. Nyabing a small town with 235 people, 70km from Katanning only has subsidised housing and free relocation under the CTP.

Within a 60 to 150km radius of Katanning, the Gnowangerup District High School and the Lake Grace District High School have no monetary benefit, only subsidised housing and free relocation. Under the CTP scheme Jerramungup District High School and Katanning District High School (113km and 61km from Gnowangerup) has a \$8,020 monetary payment, subsidised housing, free relocation, \$383 locality allowance and as of 2024 a \$7,000 attraction and retention allowance in a bid to attract staff.

The effort for Lake Grace and Gnowangerup to employ teachers compared to Katanning and Jerramungup is a challenge without having a CTP monetary incentive. At the end of last year, two secondary teaching positions were advertised for Gnowangerup District High School, one with possible permanency and there were zero job applicants.

The CTP in some schools also provides additional leave that can accrue, however, if you then go to a school that is not under the CTP you are no longer entitled to the leave unless you return to a CTP school. So, simply by shifting jobs from Katanning to Gnowangerup, you can lose your leave allowance.

The CTP website states subsidised housing, however, the housing is dependent on there being somewhere available to live and it is in a suitable state of repair. In some cases, while this is on offer teachers have had to live in neighbouring towns and travel as no housing was available.

Graduate teachers who see regional and rural jobs advertised will quickly ascertain if the role has CTP benefits. If you are out of University with a HECS-HELP loan would you not want the additional financial incentive to work in the regions and repay your debt down faster?

Updating the CTP will be vital to attracting and retaining teaching staff in our Great Southern Region and provide continuity of staff that are at risk of being lured back to the city. The program has great merit, but without updating and applying it as a regional zone incentive these small schools with no monetary incentive are at risk of being further disadvantaged.

Moved: Rachel Springbett (Lakes District Branch) **Seconded:** Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch) **CARRIED**

A13 Lakes District Branch **Rural and Remote Schools**

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Education to decentralise support services for schools to regional areas.”

Explanation:

The centralisation of services and support predominantly to metropolitan areas has led to a great disconnect between schools and available Department of Education support. This includes teacher and staff professional development, administration support and disability and behaviour support services.



The State School Teachers' Union of WA (SSTUWA) Facing the Facts Report recommended *“the WA Department of Education should redesign support services to ensure they are accessible, more responsive to local needs and better resourced to support schools’ administrative and educational needs”*.

Although over time technology has enabled many more professional development opportunities and has made them accessible to those more isolated; providing predominantly online sessions does not foster collegiate relationships, networking and sharing of practical and tested best practice.

Rural, regional and remote schools need these measures to be implemented to ensure best outcomes; and assist in the attraction and retention of quality teachers.

Moved: Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch) **Seconded:** Hayley Altham (Lakes District Branch) **CARRIED**

S2 Lakes District Branch *Rural and Remote Schools*

“That ICPA (WA) advocate for the Department of Education to take into account the proximity of a school to the district boundary they fall under when determining school closures due to the fire behaviour index.”

Explanation:

If a school is listed on the bushfire zone register with a risk rating of extreme or very high and a fire behaviour index (FBI) of 75 or greater is forecast, the school may be then subject to pre-emptive (planned) closure. However, the pre-emptive closure will then be based on the fire weather district in which the school is located.

On Friday 23rd February 2024, schools within the Fitzgerald Inland zone were closed due to an FBI rating of extreme. Gairdner Primary School is located **200 metres** from the boundary of the Fitzgerald Coast and Fitzgerald Inland zones and is surrounded by bushland. At 1:49pm the local Chief Fire Control Officer reported wind gusts of 36km/hour (with winds forecast to increase), a temperature of 44.2 degrees and a calculated FBI of 101. Furthermore, the Fitzgerald National Park located within the Fitzgerald Coast zone and 47km from the school was closed.

This scenario outlines a situation where Gairdner Primary School, despite its proximity to high-risk bushfire zones and concerning local weather conditions, was not subject to pre-emptive closure due to its classification. This school was assessed by its location in Fitzgerald Coast with a projected FBI of 50, well below the threshold of 75 to trigger a pre-emptive closure. On the other hand, Fitzgerald Inland was assessed to expect an FBI of 75, hence, any school located in this fire weather district with a bushfire risk level of extreme or very high was subject to pre-emptive closure.

Authorities need to weigh the risk factors carefully and consider the safety of students and staff when making decisions regarding school closures in the face of bushfire threats. If the nearby zone's conditions pose a significant risk, it may be necessary to extend the closure measures to schools like Gairdner Primary School, despite their classification in a lower-risk zone.

Moved: Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch) **Seconded:** Megan Dorrell (Lakes District Branch) **CARRIED**



F1 Goldfields Eyre Branch

Rural and Remote Schools

“That ICPA (WA) lobbies the State Government and relevant bodies for increased funding to improve rural and remote schools’ access to specialists who can diagnose students with learning disabilities and offer ongoing education and support to students and their teachers.”

Explanation:

Despite the funding that is currently available many small rural schools find it difficult to access professional support for students with intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties. We are asking that the Minister for Education, the Minister for Health and Aged Care and for Regional Development, Local Government and the State work together to actively support professionals such as Speech Therapists and education and mental health specialists to work in regional, rural and remote schools by providing them with appropriate placements that include accommodation and transport.

Funding should be used to incentivize specialists wanting to take on permanent positions in rural centres ensuring continuity for teachers, students and their parents. Recently it has become a requirement for families to travel to Perth or utilize telehealth to access these specialists when previously the specialists have travelled to the regions.

We believe this ‘*footprint reduction*’ strategy deployed by the Department of Health is affecting remote children whose families do not have the capacity to travel to seek diagnosis and treatment, and children are slipping through the cracks without appropriate diagnosis and intervention to assist them with their learning.

Even when students are referred to these services the wait time to see a specialist can be months, which can have negative long-term effects academically; especially when dealing with children under 5. This is also affecting rural and remote teachers and other students who are often dealing with these issues in the classroom without assistance.

If the specialists were readily available in regional centres, it would be easier for families to travel to them and more likely that the same specialist would remain in the position, giving children continuity of treatment.

Moved: Ross Wood (Goldfields Eyre Branch)

Seconded: Jasmine Carmody (State Council)

CARRIED

Agenda Motions: Student Accommodation

S3 Lakes District Branch

Student Accommodation

“That ICPA (WA) advocates the Minister for Education to prioritise increased support for staff and students in Residential Colleges. This support should particularly focus on students with heightened needs, including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), anxiety disorders and other mental health challenges.”

Explanation:

Collaborative assistance is especially crucial in situations where extenuating circumstances place significant stress on the child. Moreover, the establishment of a comprehensive network involving youth engagement and professional resources is essential for effective support delivery.



“Allowing a student with a hidden disability (ADHD, anxiety) to struggle academically or socially when all that is needed for success are appropriate accommodations and explicit instruction, is no different than failing to provide a ramp for a person in a wheelchair.”

Case Study:

A boarding student facing significant mental health challenges experienced severe repercussions when they were denied placement at two Residential Colleges. Consequently, they faced the imminent risk of homelessness until they found accommodation at a Home for Youth catering to individuals aged between 16 and 25 years old.

This student suffers from ADHA, anxiety and ODD. To add to the student's emotional state, over the past few years, they were impacted when two residential students committed suicide at different boarding facilities where they were residing. Following this, school psychologists were in touch 2 -3 times over the following two months or so, but that was all the support provided by the Department of Education.

The student's mother has tried desperately to support her child and has reached out to various government agencies where they were either let down or her child refused to engage. She felt helpless and exhausted in trying to get support for her child. At times she was unable to afford a bus fare for him to return home and reunite them under difficult circumstances, which resulted in a heavy reliance on boarding staff to support her child.

As described by the parent; *‘Children with ADHD have impulsive behaviours, lack emotional control and have executive functioning disorders. Their needs are not deemed high enough that they are unable to be in the standard school setting, but they are definitely high enough that they need considerations with accommodation and allowances within a boarding school setting.’*

Residential staff need support and additional resources for:

- Training in mental health and establishing connections within the Department of Health and other agencies.
- Ability for students to be able to return during the day to the residential facility for time out including flexible arrangements between school health staff and facility supervisors.
- Acknowledge that some students need a mental health respite day.
- Feedback from parents as to how they think their child is coping under high stress situations.
- Improved communications between schools and boarding facilities if a child has issues during a school day that might impact their presence back in boarding.

Moved: Rachel Springbett (Lakes District Branch) **Seconded:** Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch) **CARRIED**

F2 Midwest Branch **Student Accommodation**

“That ICPA (WA) advocates the Minister for Disability Services and the Minister for Education for additional support in boarding facilities for students from rural and remote areas who have no choice but to go to boarding school.”

Explanation:

Currently, students in WA who attend boarding schools who have no other educational option and who require additional support in the boarding house do not have access to funding for support. These vulnerable rural and remote students are supported in the school but in many schools are left to navigate the complexities of a boarding house alone and without appropriate support.



We thank Hon. Dr Tony Buti for his enthusiasm for inclusivity in all our WA schools and look forward to working with him in the future.

Moved: *Jen Critch (Midwest Branch)*

Seconded: *Moved: Jasmyn Allen (Midwest Branch)*

CARRIED

Agenda Motions: Teacher Training

A14 **Goldfields Eyre Branch**

Teacher Training

"That ICPA (WA) continues to investigate the possibility that universities who offer a Bachelor of Education allow or encourage preservice teachers to spend time as home tutors on stations as part of their practical placements."

Explanation:

By working with the universities, isolated families who educate their children through School of the Air (SOTA) could offer student teachers an immersive experience that would benefit themselves, their families and SOTAs. This scheme could encourage preservice and student teachers to apply for positions with SOTAs once they graduate. It would benefit isolated families by providing them with a home tutor dedicated to education who understands the system and can more confidently deliver the curriculum.

SOTAs could also be encouraged to support this program and offer student teachers the opportunity to work closely with classroom teachers to take online classes as part of their practical requirements.

Moved: *Ross Wood (Goldfields Eyre Branch)*

Seconded: *Jasmine Carmody (State Council)*

CARRIED

Agenda Motions: Travel

A15 **Lakes District Branch**

Travel

"That ICPA (WA) advocate School Bus Services to ensure that families and bus contractors receive a minimum of two (2) weeks' advance notice in the event of any alterations or cancellations to a school bus route."

Explanation:

Timely and considerate provision of information is essential for all involved parties. Modifications to services can be disruptive, significantly affecting both business operations and family commitments. Moreover, altering or discontinuing a service can hinder a parent's capacity to work outside the family home.

Example:

Late Friday afternoon before school recommenced the following Monday for Term 4, 2023 families were advised via their bus contractor that their bus route would no longer be operating a spur or gate pickup point and that families would have to drive to a new bus stop. For one family this was a 20km round trip twice a day for a service that would continue to drive past their front gate. Given the short notice families had to make alternative arrangements to accommodate these changes to ensure children were able to access a service which caused significant amounts of stress and frustration.

Moved: *Rachel Springbett (Lakes District Branch)*

Seconded: *Hayley Altham (Lakes District Branch)*

CARRIED



A16 Meekatharra Air Branch

Travel

“That ICPA (WA) lobby the State Government for a conveyancing allowance for parents driving their children to distance education and School of the Air camps.”

Explanation:

Camps are an essential part of distance education as they provide face-to-face contact with teachers and peers for geographically isolated students. Travel to these camps is often hundreds of kilometres and the cost is borne entirely by the family.

Moved: *Tracie Blair (Meekatharra Air Branch)* **Seconded:** *Raelene Hall (Meekatharra Air Branch)* **CARRIED**

A17 Lakes District Branch

Travel

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Transport raise the payment per kilometre for the Public Transport Authority (PTA) Conveyance Allowance to align with the business expense rate of 85 cents/km set by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).”

Explanation:

Geographically isolated students who must travel significant distances to access education should receive a conveyance allowance at a rate that realistically reflects the cost of vehicle running expenses (including registration, fuel, servicing, insurance and depreciation).

Given the announcement that provides students with complimentary transport to school where there is an available public transport service operating under the SmartRider system, it is only just and equitable that students in geographically isolated areas receive similar support.

Moved: *Fiona Hobley (Lakes District Branch)* **Seconded:** *Rachel Springbett (Lakes District Branch)* **CARRIED**

A18 Lakes District Branch

Travel

“That ICPA (WA) lobbies the Department of Transport to review their policy and criteria regarding the Student Travel Subsidy Scheme (STSS) – Road Travel Subsidy (RTS) and increase eligibility for rural families.”

Explanation:

The Student Travel Subsidy Scheme provides travel assistance to school and tertiary students who are geographically isolated. The two main types of travel support are:

- Subsidised fares for **air, bus and train travel** for eligible students who live within the defined remote area of Western Australia.
- A **road travel subsidy** for eligible students who live anywhere within Western Australia but who must be driven in a private vehicle more than 56 km from home to the nearest:
 - Appropriate government school with boarding facilities (if boarding facilities are necessary) offering classes in the grade or level in which the student is enrolled, or
 - Regular passenger transport (bus stop, airport or train station – refer to the TransWA website for regular passenger transport hubs and routes), or



- A school bus service operating between the student's home and the school they are attending.

Subject to scheme conditions, students deemed eligible for student travel subsidies may be entitled to a number of travel supports each academic year:

- 8 round road trips per family under the road travel subsidy.
- 4 return air/bus/train trips for school students under a subsidised fare.
- 4 return air/bus/train trips for first year tertiary students (less than 20 years old) under a subsidised fare who have not claimed previously.
- 3 return air/bus/train trips for first year tertiary students aged less than 20 years of age who have claimed previously.
- 2 return air/bus/train trips for all other tertiary students.

The Western Australian Government announced The Ride to School Free Program on 28th January 2024 to ease the cost of living and to be specifically for travel to and from school Monday to Friday and available to those who hold a valid Student SmartRider card. The regions are faced with a higher cost of living pressure, combined with fuel prices that have doubled over 4 years. The only assistance in getting a child to boarding school is the Student Travel Subsidy Scheme.

The Road Travel Subsidy (RTS) allows 8 round trips per family that meet the conditions. However, very few Lakes District members have been able to successfully obtain the RTS to assist in transporting their children to boarding school.

The reason is that if a TransWA bus route goes via a nearby town or within a 56km radius you are ineligible for RTS, however, the bus timetables do not meet all boarding students' needs for the start or end of school dates. A mid-week bus service is not suitable for transporting rural students to their nearest appropriate educational boarding facility. It is not feasible to send a child on a mid-week bus service on a Wednesday to stay in accommodation at the parent's expense 4 days prior to the boarding house opening on a Sunday.

There is a need to review the TransWA bus route and transport hub eligibility conditions and assist families in transporting their children directly from their place of residence to the nearest government school with boarding facilities.

Moved: Rachel Springbett (Lakes District Branch) **Seconded:** Hayley Altham (Lakes District Branch) **CARRIED**

S4 Lakes District Branch

Travel

"That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Transport and the Department of Transport to provide additional staffing, training or restructuring of the School Bus Services (SBS) division to support regional and rural families to ensure open, collaborative and timely communications in determining school bus routes."

Explanation:

The Transport Operation Policy item 10.5 states that under the 'Consultation and Communication': *"The process of reviewing either a single service route or an area review of multiple service routes will be conducted in an open and transparent way. SBS will engage; School Bus Advisory Committees (parent representative groups), Contractors and schools to ensure all affected parties are provided with the opportunity to discuss any concerns."*

School Bus Services provide an amazing service transporting regional and rural children to and from school often covering vast distances and facing many local challenges.



Boosting staffing levels and/or establishing a dedicated 'resolution team' could expedite the approval process for bus-related matters, addressing changes or issues promptly without necessitating assistance from a Local Member of Government.

A structured communication process detailing the involved parties, direct access to a resolution team member and a transparent planning process will improve outcomes for regional families utilising the school bus service in remote and rural areas.

An improved planning process for school bus routes would ensure families who know the best routes are involved in changes. Effective communication regarding potential impending issues well in advance is essential for affected families. A documented timeline outlining the process for school bus route alterations, including input and review by impacted families before final approval, is necessary.

Given that the policy has documented the intent of the 'Consultation Process' it is evident that more support and change is needed for the School Bus Services division to deliver this outcome.

Case Study 1:

In January 2024, a regional family living 15km from town and new to the school was declined access to the school bus service for their eldest child due to no seats available one week before the commencement of Term 1.

Being declined for a school bus service creates logistical issues for parental work commitments, is deflating for a child who was excited to step on a school bus for the first time, plus the issue of driving the child to and from school. In this case, the parent also had a toddler at home who now needs to be travelling 60km a day to school for drop off and pickups.

Again in January 2024, it was discovered that School Bus A had exceeded its capacity, carrying 15 children on a bus with only 13 passenger seats. Consequently, School Bus Services sought to change the route of School Bus B serving the same school. However, there was no communication or consultation with the bus contractor or families using School Bus B regarding the proposed new route. Families, including one with complimentary passengers, were notified in Week 5 of Term 1 that the new bus route would begin in Week 6 of Term 1.

School Bus Services had informed the bus contractor that they were only eligible to transport 12 students (not 13) as the 13th seat (being the front passenger seat next to the bus driver) was deemed ineligible for primary school students to utilise. Clarification was sought from the local member of parliament and the Department

of Education by the Parents and Citizens Association - school bus representative. In Week 5, Term 1 2024 School Bus Services confirmed the 13th seat could be used as per Department of Transport passenger vehicle policy.

Case Study 2:

A family with 3 children moved to a small regional area in 2017, enrolled at their closest school 35km away and were told that they would get a school bus to their driveway or within 5km. They were immediately told by the bus driver that the pickup would be 15km from the house, meaning 60km every day to put the children on the bus.

Despite many requests, they were told the change would affect other children on the bus route. The children were the last off the bus in the afternoon which is 1 hour and 20 minutes and nearly the last on in the morning.

An email response from SBS was one line stating that they could not change the terminus and it would add extra time to the bus run. However, as soon as a new child started at the school they received the bus service to their



door and the run was extended adding 20 minutes to the child's time on the bus. Other children along the same road travel even further to catch the same bus.

In June 2021, her child was diagnosed with Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG – a highly aggressive tumour on her brain stem). When they returned home from Perth after treatment in September 2021 all she wished to do was return to school to be with her friends.

The school bus contractor wanted to help but advised they would need to go through SBS. There was a lot of back and forth but in the end, the bus was not approved to their door and instead offered conveyance allowance. She could no longer continue the fight with SBS as she had limited time left with her daughter.

Every year until 2023 they have reapplied to have the bus come closer with no success and no compassion to their situation. *"We are just one of the many families affected by those who sit in an office in Perth and their children have easy access to education"*.

Moved: Rachel Springbett (Lakes District Branch) **Seconded:** Chelsea Mott (Lakes District Branch) **CARRIED**