

**THE ISOLATED CHILDREN'S
PARENTS' ASSOCIATION
(Western Australia) Inc.**

WA STATE POLICIES



Ratified - 17th March 2023

ALLOWANCES

Policy:

ICPA WA pursues equality of access to education for rural and remote geographically isolated students by the provision of government allowances to enable access to an appropriate education facility.

Objectives:

1. The provision of a Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) for students in rural and remote areas who need to live away from home to attend a school that provides:
 - a) a curriculum or specialised program appropriate to the student's needs
 - b) Special education centres (including those offering State Government recognised gifted programmes)
 - c) Agricultural Colleges
2. The allowance is subject to confirmation that you have received the Commonwealth Government Services Australia (Centrelink) Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Boarding Allowance or Second Home Allowance, (with the exception of government Agricultural Colleges).
3. BAHA to be:
 - a) reviewed annually.
 - b) increased annually by at least the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
4. The payment is available on a pro-rata basis for those who have only received the AIC allowance for part of the year but will not be paid for boarding periods covering less than a month.
5. To support Federal Council in its pursuit of a means-tested AIC Distance Education Additional Allowance.
6. To support Federal Council in the implementation of the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP).
7. To support Federal Council in the pursuit of a Distance Education Teaching allowance.

COMMUNICATIONS

Policy:

To ensure that families and students in rural and remote areas of WA have equivalent facilities to the majority of Australians in the area of communications, particularly in regards to the provision of education.

Objectives:

1. Consultation exists between ICPA and the providers of information technology for education, to ensure that the needs of isolated students are considered.
2. Good quality teacher and home tutor/supervisor training be available on the use of new technology when it is introduced.
3. The importance of human interaction in education is kept to the fore when making advancements in the area of information technology services.
4. Quality communication services, comparable to those available in urban areas and demonstrating similar reliability, economy, features, voice quality and data rates, are available at no greater cost to people residing in rural and remote Australia.
5. That the Universal Service Obligation includes internet services.
6. Fast, reliable and affordable two-way voice and data communication be available for all students.
7. Appropriate communication services and resources be available for rural and remote students to access, participate in and complete remote learning across all levels of education.
8. Appropriate, suitable, independent information and advice be easily accessible for rural, regional and remote residents to assist with the set up and maintenance of any communication service, software and hardware required and/or utilised.
9. Mobile phone service coverage be increased throughout rural and remote Australia.
10. Communication services installation, fault reporting and repairs be prioritised for rural and remote students.
11. The uniform price objective of the Universal Service Obligation (Postal) be retained to protect the economy of services in rural and remote areas.
12. That Australia Post upholds their Community Service Obligations of 'the performance standards' of the service meeting the social and commercial needs of the community.
13. That the WA sector of the Remote Air Service Subsidy (RASS) Scheme continues to provide a free regular air transport of mail, parcel post, supplies (including educational materials, medicines etc) and passenger components of service to isolated remote families and communities where there is no reliable alternative. (The Federal Government retains the Remote Air Service Subsidy (RASS) Scheme and ensures it

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provides a free regular mail service, where required, and a regular and affordable passenger and freight service to isolated remote families and communities where there is no reliable alternative.)

14. Residents in rural and remote Australia have access to at least one free-to-air commercial television channel.

CURRICULUM

Policy:

ICPA WA seeks to ensure that geographically isolated students from rural and remote areas have access to a current, high quality, diverse curriculum education at schools and in tertiary institutions that in terms of both quality and diversity of curriculum materials, provides an equal educational opportunity with their non-isolated counterparts.

Objectives:

1. The attainment of basic literacy, numeracy and computer literacy be regarded as essential to all students on the completion of primary school, regardless of location.
2. That optimal educational programming and support be provided for students with specific needs.
3. That information on Curriculum Framework is made available to parents by the school.
4. Governments recognise the need for, and make available, adequate funds for the development, production and distribution of relevant curriculum materials, including training for those utilising new technologies.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Policy:

ICPA WA seeks the best possible integrated distance education service, centred on personal interaction from K-12, offering a complete network of programs, facilities and support services. These are to be provided through a system of coordinated educational services delivered to geographically isolated homes and schools in rural and remote areas.

Objectives:

1. That all students and Home Tutor Supervisors are provided with the necessary equipment, technology, hardware and training needed to fulfil all the requirements of their year level.
2. That priority be given to establishing clear, reliable two-way voice, data and video communications between School of the Air or Distance Education Centres and their students and home supervisors and that an 'on air' service, two-way data and computer systems with modems be available to all students from K-12 utilising the maximum download that the Department of Education provides. This should extend to isolated families who are registered with a homeschooling program.
3. Where appropriate, lesson marking is to be completed by the class teacher who also conducts the 'air lesson' within a two-week timeframe.
4. The provision for forward planning to ensure the use of new technology is to enhance, not replace the personal contact between teachers, students and Home Tutors.
5. Pre-service and 'in service' training be available to Distance Education and School of Air Teachers.
6. Home Tutor seminars be conducted by appropriate education authorities for 'in servicing' of Home Tutors.
7. Regular camps and mini camps be conducted by appropriate educational authorities to enable interaction of children who are geographically isolated.
8. That all School of the Air students have a minimum of 2 visits per year by their class teacher, regardless of location. Visits should not be considered covered by camps/activity days or combined with other families.
9. That a monitored telephone number be readily available for Distance Education/School of the Air students and Home Tutors to make contact with their school/teacher.
10. That the cost of upgrades to materials be borne by the service provider (e.g. video to digital).
11. That a collaborative approach between schools and parents be encouraged.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Policy:

ICPA WA seeks to ensure that an appropriate range of early childhood programs and services is available to support children and their families in rural and remote areas.

Objectives:

1. That there be a wide range of mobile Remote Family Services available to families in rural and remote areas.
2. Childcare services in rural and remote homes be affordable and accessible.
3. That in-home care is available for a period of at least 4 weeks per year for families in rural and remote areas.
4. That childcare services be available to families in rural and remote areas.
5. Rural and remote families to have access to respite childcare.
6. That there be mobile playgroup services for children in rural and remote areas.
7. That mobile playgroup services conduct playgroup sessions and act in an advisory capacity to provide parents with purposeful activities for children that suit the specific needs of the age groups.
8. Appropriate learning resources be available for children participating in early childhood programs.
9. Appropriate technology and equipment be available for access to distance education early childhood programs.
10. Provision of recognised early childhood distance education programs and learning resources where there is no reasonable daily access to an education centre.
11. A commitment to establishing and maintaining support networks and ongoing professional development for early childhood professionals and parents in rural and remote areas.

TERTIARY, TRADE AND TRAINING

(Including universities, TAFE, Agriculture Colleges, apprenticeships, traineeships and private providers.)

Policy:

ICPA WA seeks to ensure that students from rural and remote areas have access to further education and training options, which will enable them to pursue the career pathway of their choice.

Objectives:

1. That adequate accommodation be provided by tertiary institutions to cater for geographically isolated students.
2. The provision of an adequate range of external courses delivered to students at home via satellite or other means through approved WA Educational Institutions.
3. Further education and training authorities continue to be made aware of the problems caused by inadequate communication services and distances from educational institutions for isolated students from rural and remote areas.
4. That tertiary institutions allow deferment of all courses to two years to enable students to meet Youth Allowance Independent criteria.
5. Sufficient places continue to be made available in institutions to cater to all qualified applicants.
6. That courses be provided at a regional level to develop skills appropriate to industries in rural and remote areas.

RURAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS

Policy:

ICPA WA seeks to ensure that all students in Rural and Remote Schools are provided with quality educational services and facilities.

Objectives:

1. That a 'Rural and Remote Education' component be included in pre-service teacher training courses.
2. That graduate teachers with appropriate training and practical experience be considered for positions in rural and remote schools.
3. Positive incentives e.g. minimal rent, quality accommodation and realistic travel assistance be offered to encourage teachers to apply for positions in rural and remote schools.
4. That specialist teacher and student support services be available to students attending rural and remote schools.
5. That extra resources be made available to provide access to a wide range of educational opportunities and new technology for all rural and remote schools.
6. To ensure the use of technology enhances the delivery of educational programs.
7. That all school staff at rural and remote schools receive ongoing training in the use of advancing technology.
8. That the following inequities imposed by geographic isolation be considered when the allocation of resources are determined for rural and remote schools:
 - a) The personal and professional isolation of staff.
 - b) The difficulty in recruiting and retaining suitable staff.
 - c) The reduced secondary curriculum options which can be offered.
 - d) Levels of staff experience.
 - e) Increased postage, phone and Internet costs.
 - f) Difficulties and costs associated with technology.
 - g) Time away from school for both staff & students in order to participate in regional and state activities as well as the associated costs involved.
 - h) That staffing formulas for rural and remote schools be looked at on an individual school basis.
 - i) Consideration be given to the demands of multi-age grouping, cultural diversity, transient families and shortage of curriculum staff specialists.
 - j) impact of administration workloads on time for teaching and leading learning.
9. That the correct procedures be strictly adhered to by education authorities when considering the closure of a small rural school. (For example, 12 months' prior notice in the Government Gazette, extensive public consultation, and consideration of the social and economic impact on the local and wider community.

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10. That when a specialist program is not able to be delivered face-to-face that rural and remote schools have affordable and equitable access to School of Isolated Distance Education (SIDE) services.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION

Policy:

ICPA WA seeks provisions for rural and remote children with specific educational requirements to have access to opportunities and services appropriate to their learning requirements.

Objectives:

1. That access to appropriate testing is readily available to identify whether a student has a specific learning need.
2. That a student identified as having a specific learning need has, as required, accommodation and financial assistance to access support.
3. That support by specially trained staff for a student studying at home, occurs at the point of learning and in association with the school.
4. That specially trained personnel be available to guide and support the teacher and home tutor of the student.
5. That the Support Teacher Learning (STL) continues to service each of the five Schools of the Air, (one STL per School of the Air) for students identified with specific educational needs.
6. That the position of the STL, attached to a School of the Air, continues to be allocated additional funding independent from the SOTA staffing formula.
7. That learning support teachers at rural and remote schools have induction, professional development and access to expertise, materials and resources from identified district and city centres of support.
8. That rural and remote families with children requiring specific specialist therapies and services have access to financial assistance for travel and accommodation to access these services.
9. That rural and remote children with specific educational needs have regular access to specialist therapies and services.
10. That joint delivery of allied health services be available through cooperation from all relevant agencies (government, private and voluntary) to better serve the requirements of rural and remote children.
11. That rural and remote schools and the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education address in their planning, the requirements of gifted and talented students i.e. what their educational requirements will be in terms of providing an appropriate educational program.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Policy:

ICPA WA seeks to ensure rural and remote geographically isolated students, who must live away from home to access appropriate primary, secondary and/or tertiary education, have access to educational boarding facilities that offer a standard of care appropriate to the needs of the student.

Objectives:

1. To ensure boarding facilities are of a high standard and provide, at a reasonable cost, all physical requirements as well as suitable supervision and pastoral care.
2. To have government and non-government schools, which serve geographically isolated students, provide appropriate staffing, curricula, and facilities for all the needs of these students.
3. That Federal and State Governments fund 'education access' facilities for geographically isolated students on a regular and equitable basis.
4. That short-term emergency financial assistance be provided, when needed, to all facilities, which provide boarding accommodation, and cater primarily for geographically isolated students.
5. That career advisers be accessible to all boarding students.
6. That psychological support be made accessible to all boarding students outside of school hours.
7. That 'education access' facilities be exempt from fringe benefits tax on notional benefits provided for residential supervisory and tutorial staff on duty or call, on the premises.
8. To ensure that all boarding facilities maintain high standards in the areas of administration, boarding and recreational facilities.
9. That the provision of capital funding by the State Government for the establishment, extension or upgrading of state owned boarding facilities, be on a regular basis.
10. That ICPA work collaboratively with relevant organisations to ensure boarding facilities are providing for geographically isolated students, facilities at best practice levels.

TEACHER TRAINING

Policy:

ICPA WA seeks to ensure that the pre-service training of teachers adequately prepares them for the teaching profession in rural and remote schools including distance education; and that all teachers have access to ongoing professional development.

Objectives:

1. That pre-service teachers be encouraged to complete some of their practicums in rural and remote schools including Schools of the Air (SOTA) and School of Isolated Distance Education (SIDE).
2. A rural education unit is available in teacher training courses.
3. That teachers entering the profession have at least one trained mentor for their first year of employment.
4. That a range of incentives be available for teachers willing to work in rural and remote schools.
5. That ongoing support and professional development be available to qualified teachers working in rural and remote schools.
6. That rural and remote school positions be made more attractive to graduates through community support, government scholarships and country practicum programs.
7. Teacher training courses contain an appropriate mix of theoretical and practical work.
8. That all teacher training courses contain a component on the special requirements and teaching methods of distance education, and provision of postgraduate qualifications in distance education.
9. The home schoolroom for distance education is considered an 'educational venue' by the Teachers Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA).
10. Educational delivery in a distance education school room by a qualified teacher be counted as eligible hours towards teacher registration with TRBWA.

TRAVEL

Policy:

ICPA WA seeks to ensure the provision of affordable travel services and associated allowances, ensuring access to schools, boarding and educational facilities by the most appropriate means.

Objectives:

1. The provision of travel allowances to enable Distance Education students to attend:
 - a) School camps, sports days etc.
 - b) Special education assessments.
2. The provision of travel allowances to enable SIDE students doing
 - a) Less than 3 ATAR subjects, and
 - b) VET subjectsto attend workshops and gain face to face contact with teachers.
3. That the Conveyance Allowance and Road Travel Subsidy rates include depreciation, interest, registration and insurance costs when set each year.
4. That the Student Travel Subsidised Scheme (STSS), be available to all geographically isolated students living in WA.
5. That students living in the Defined Remote Area (DRA) receive travel assistance to cover the realistic costs of accessing an appropriate education, where no public transport is available.
6. That the boundaries of the DRA be made more flexible to cover all students living in remote areas.
7. That the number of trips provided under the STSS for primary and secondary students not doing Distance Education, be able to be used at any time during the school year ie. beginning and end of terms and exeat weekends.
8. That the Department of Transport – On Demand Transport, policy criteria for the Student Travel Subsidy Scheme (STSS) - Road Travel Subsidy should state that the nearest transport hub provides travel to the nearest appropriate government school with boarding facilities.”
9. That the school bus service to rural and remote students continues to be a free service.
10. Buses transporting school students be fitted with seatbelts and appropriate safety restraints.
11. Regional and remote road networks be maintained in a safe and all weather access standard for children and families’ safety whilst travelling via road to attend education and related services.
12. Expanded airfare discount incentives and programs for regional, rural and remote students.