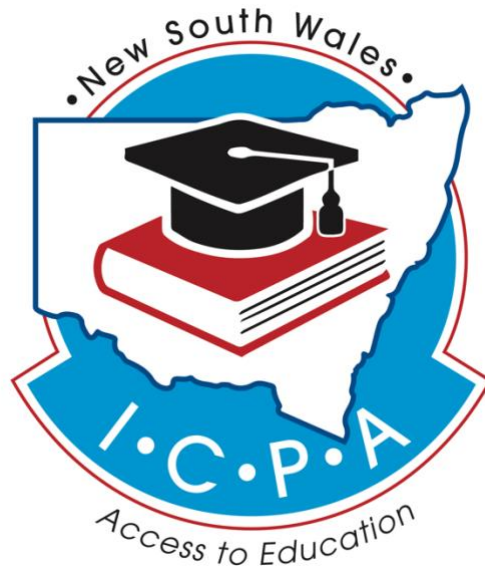


# **The Isolated Children's Parents' Association New South Wales Inc.**



## **Travel Issues Paper OCTOBER 2020**

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## INTRODUCTION

ICPA-NSW is a voluntary non-profit organisation 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 equity of access to education that they require to participate, to their full potential in the social, economic, political and cultural life of a community.

WHATEVER the Educational/Learning Institute is, ICPA-NSW will advocate for:

- Mobile and rural preschools
- Regional primary and secondary schools
- Small rural and remote schools
- Schools of Distance Education
- Non-government schools
- Government schools
- Agricultural Colleges
- University
- TAFE

ICPA-NSW State Council will provide information, advice and support through a variety of portfolios:

- Early Childhood
- Rural Schools
- Distance Education and VISE
- Boarding Schools
- Agricultural High Schools and Hostels
- Tertiary Education
- Special Education
- Communications
- Allowances
- Travel

The following pages highlight current issues with some recommendations that ICPA-NSW State Council are advocating for on behalf of its members across the state.

COVID-19 has caused considerable challenges to State Council and our members, the border closures have had a significant impact of the movement of students who travel interstate to access an education and the 2020 year of advocacy has definitely looked different to 'normal' years!

### *School Drive Subsidy*

**RECOMMENDATION: That approved journeys be reviewed to ensure they are the most practical and safest route.**

The approved journey provided by the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) is not necessarily the safest and most practical route. In instances, the approved journey is down unsealed and not all-weather roads, when there is a suitable all-weather road alternative which is the family's common route. Driving on these unsealed roads also incurs extra costs for families with general wear and tear, tyres and the personal safety of parents and children.

**RECOMMENDATION: That the SDS online platform be reviewed to ensure more journeys can be added in one session instead of waiting for approval.**

Once the user makes changes to personal information or added a journey they are then unable to view any settings, personal information or add any additional journeys. It would be more workable if the user could add several journey claims/changes to personal details at one time then request approval.

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### *School Drive Subsidy for preschoolers*

**RECOMMENDATION: That preschool children who live in an area that is classified as outer regional, remote or very remote be eligible for the School Drive Subsidy.**

The recommendation by the Federal Government to access 600 hours of preschool in the year before compulsory schooling is making it very costly to families as there is limited access to preschools in outer regional, rural and remote areas. Some parents are driving considerable distances to access this early learning requirement. The ongoing drought is having a huge impact on affordability to transport children to preschool.

It is well documented that access to preschool plays an important role in a child's education. ICPA-NSW views access to preschool as a vital step towards an equitable education and

recently surveyed 106 Service providers in rural and remote NSW. The response was overwhelmingly positive towards a school drive subsidy for preschool children and ICPA-NSW has published a separate paper on this issue.

### *Student numbers required to start a bus run*

**RECOMMENDATION: That the number of students required to start a bus run be lowered from 15 to 12.**

This number would be in line with the seating capacity of an MD1 Bus. ICPA-NSW requests that consideration should be taken on a case by case scenario in rural and remote areas.

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### *Local Road Conditions*

**RECOMMENDATION: That adequate funding be supplied to encourage local Councils to prioritise and maintain unsealed roads that are required by families and buses for travel to school.**

ICPA-NSW thanks all Shire Councils in Western NSW for maintaining unsealed roads required for bus runs. However, without giving priority to roads that families travel on to access the school bus run, accessing education becomes difficult, expensive and inequitable.

ICPA-NSW is concerned about the safety of the children, the bus driver and anyone travelling on the road.

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### *University Student Travel Subsidy*

**RECOMMENDATION: That consideration be given into affordable travel subsidies for university students who live outside a metropolitan area, to attend university.**

University students from outer regional, remote and very remote areas who are attending a campus far from home need to pack a considerable amount of personal belongings, household effects as well as books, folders, computers and printers and it is unreasonable to consider this amount of luggage as manageable on public transport.

**Or: That a fuel payment be made at the start and end of each Semester.**

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### *Lord Howe Island Student Travel*

**RECOMMENDATION: That Fully Flexi fares are purchased to enable unforeseeable necessary changes to bookings; OR The ability to book straight through FCM Travel; OR For parents to purchase tickets themselves and forward invoice to Student Travel for reimbursement.**

Currently, Lord Howe Island parents have one point of contact to book flights for children to travel between Lord Howe Island and their mainland Boarding School.

Often parents have to wait weeks for a response, or longer if the contact person is on leave. Parents have had to send unnecessary reminder emails to urge a response to book flights.

**RECOMMENDATION: To include Sydney Domestic Terminal Train Station into the allowance of student travel / opal card.**

Currently the Sydney Domestic and International Terminals include an increase / airport surcharge for embarking or disembarking the train at these Stations.

The student travel cards that are provided through schools do not include these stations.

Travel by air is our only option for Lord Howe Island Students.

Alternatively, can the parent produce Opal Card receipts to Student Travel for Reimbursement?

**RECOMMENDATION: To allow Student Travel to include Taxi/Uber/Shebah for students of Lord Howe Island travelling between Sydney Domestic Airport and Boarding School. (Should this be a more suitable option than a combination of Train/Light rail/Bus).**

Currently students going to St Scholasticas College catch a Taxi from the Domestic Airport to the school in Glebe. The students travel from school to the domestic airport by Shebah (an all-female Uber). This is more financially viable for parents of students at this school.

ICPA-NSW would appreciate Transport for NSW investigating if parent paying for Uber/Taxi/Shebar could be reimbursed upon presentation of receipt / proof of payment.