

## PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

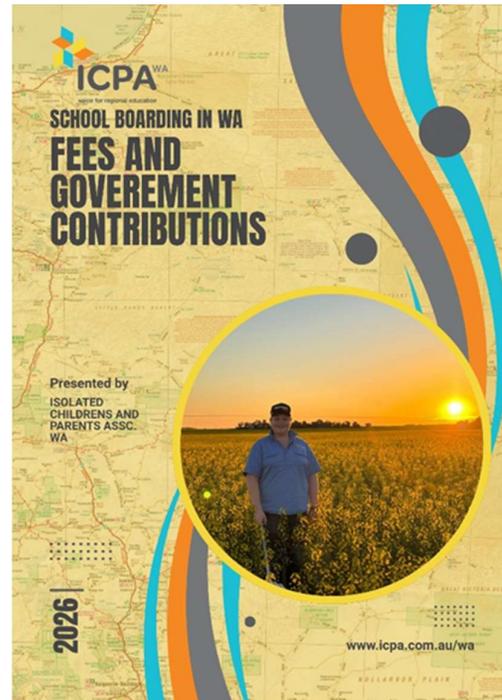
### ALLOWANCES REPORT

**Jasmyn Allen – Portfolio Leader, March 2026**

The Allowances Portfolio of the **Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Western Australia (ICPA WA)** advocates for fair and equitable financial support for geographically isolated families whose children must travel, board, or study via distance education to access schooling.

Students in rural and remote Western Australia often face significantly higher costs to access education compared with metropolitan students. These costs include boarding fees, travel to and from school, establishment of second homes and relocation for tertiary study. Government allowances therefore play a critical role in enabling rural and remote students to access education opportunities comparable to those available in metropolitan areas.

The Allowances Portfolio works to advocate to the Western Australian Government to ensure allowances remain relevant and reflect the **true cost of accessing education from isolated locations**. ICPA WA State council met with The Minister for Education in February 2026 and addressed the shortfall of our states offerings for access to education. The following information has been supplied to the Ministers office to further understand how far behind WA is in our state based boarding contribution. Strong advocating of all motions that were raised in the 2025 conference from our members has been actioned and communicated to both the Department of Education and Ministers Office.



State/Territory	State Scheme / Contribution	Funding level 2026
WA	<i>Boarding Away From Home Allowance (BAHA)</i>	\$1461
QLD	<i>Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA)</i> Remote Area Tutition Allowance (RATuA)	\$10,891
NSW	<i>Living Away From Home Allowance (7 -10)</i> <i>Extra \$593 in yr 11 and 12</i>	\$2,580
SA	<i>State Education Allowance; SEA</i>	\$5,105.98
NT	<i>Interstate Boarding Allowance (ISEA)</i>	\$4700
TAS	<i>Student Accommodation Allowance (SAA)</i>	\$1472
VIC	<b>No known specific statewide boarding allowance</b>	
ACT	<b>No known specific statewide boarding allowance</b>	

## Current Key Allowances (2026) Federal Government Allowances

The **Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme** (AIC) remains the primary Federal support payment for geographically isolated students.

Allowance	2026 Amount
Basic Boarding Allowance	<b>\$10,555 per year</b>
Additional Boarding Allowance (income tested)	<b>Up to \$3,027 per year</b>
<b>Maximum Boarding Allowance Total</b>	<b>\$13,582 per year</b>
Distance Education Allowance	<b>\$5,278 per year</b>
Second Home Allowance	<b>\$307.46 per fortnight per child</b>

From **1 January 2026**, payment rates are:

Payments are indexed annually to the Consumer Price Index.

### Tertiary Support Payments

Students moving away from home to undertake tertiary education may access Youth Study, Austudy, ABSTUDY and the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) up to \$5,000 for regional students relocating for study) However, income testing and eligibility criteria continue to restrict access for many rural families.

## Western Australian Government Allowances

### Boarding Away From Home Allowance (BAHA)

The **Boarding Away From Home Allowance** assists Western Australian families whose children must board away from home to attend school. The **2026 payment is \$1,461** for students boarding for the full school year. Eligibility typically requires families to qualify for the AIC Boarding Allowance. In 2024, 1024 successful claims were made for the BAHA, totalling a cost to the State Government of \$1,422,336.00. The BAHA has risen over the last 8 years by \$86, it is now significantly out of date with the rise in cost of boarding.

### Student Travel Subsidy Scheme (STSS)

The **Student Travel Subsidy Scheme** assists geographically isolated students with the cost of travel to boarding facilities or school and can include Tertiary students. Support is subject to your home address being classified as being a “defined remote’ and further than 56kms from education institution. Scheme offers vouchers and reimbursement for air travel, bus or train transport and private road subsidy. Despite this support, travel costs remain a significant expense for many rural families. ICPA WA is keen for our members to make use of this scheme into the future to ensure viability of the funding and continuation.  
<https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/about-us/grants-subsidies/student-travel#anchor-link-4>

## Boarding Cost Comparison (2026)

Boarding costs in Western Australian schools continue to rise and represent the largest expense for many rural and remote families who must send their children away to access secondary education.

School	Estimated Boarding Fee (2026)
Hale School	\$31,710
Guildford Grammar School	\$28,580
Scotch College Perth	\$31,860
Aquinas College Perth	\$33,039

Indicative annual boarding fees at several Western Australian schools:

Support Payment	Amount
Assistance for Isolated Children – Maximum Boarding Allowance	\$13,582
WA Boarding Away From Home Allowance	\$1,461
<b>Total Government Support</b>	<b>\$15,043</b>

**Average Non-Government boarding fee (sample right):**  
**\$31,297 per year**

### Allowance Contribution

#### Comparison (2026)

Item	Amount
Average boarding fee	\$31,297
Government support	\$15,043
<b>Average out-of-pocket cost</b>	<b>\$16,254 per student per year</b>

### Actual Cost Gap for Families

**Government allowances therefore cover approximately 48% of non-government boarding costs, leaving families responsible for over half of the total cost of boarding education.**

This estimate does **not include additional costs**, such as travel to and from boarding school, Tuition, Uniforms and Equipment, Technology Requirements, Extracurricular activities, medical and incidental costs. For many rural families, these additional expenses can increase the total annual cost of educating a boarding student to **\$ 25,000 to 35,000 per year**. The most expensive secondary education in WA now sits at **\$69,425.00** for both boarding and tuition, on **average the cost of boarding has risen by 5% in the last 12 months**.

The cost of education/boarding at a Department of Education **Ag school is \$9,563** and **Residential College is \$15,536**. It is **important to note** that very few families are eligible for the full AIC allowance, leaving a **shortfall of around \$3000** for Department of Education Public boarding houses.

The distance Education Allowance has been set at \$5,278 for 2026. We would very much like to hear from our members on the true cost of teaching children through distance ed, both as a cost to yourself as a parent and the cost of employing a home tutor to supervise.

## COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

**Lauren Lewis – Portfolio Leader, March 2026**

### TELSTRA

#### *Retirement of ADSL & CAN Radio Services to enable new connectivity by 16<sup>th</sup> November 2027*

**ADSL** is an older broadband technology that delivers internet services over the copper telephone network, originally designed for voice calls rather than modern data use. As it is a data service, USO does not apply.

**CAN Radio** is a legacy fixed wireless voice service that uses radio technology to connect customers in remote and regional areas where traditional cabling isn't viable. It has played a critical role in keeping communities connected for decades, particularly in locations with limited infrastructure. In terms of replacement, CAN Radio voice services will transition to stronger and more reliable options such as NBN, 4G and 5G Fixed Wireless or satellite based services, depending on what's available and most suitable at each location.

- Positives: Stronger Reliability/Improved & Stable Connection      Speeds/Maintenance Advantages/Remote Access possible;
- Concerns: Power Access/Costs to Customer/Voice Service      Costs/Infrastructure Requirements/Timeline of reaching out to      Customers/Availability of Additional Power Supplies/Number of      Customers Affected/Device Upgrade Requirements;
- Customer consultation for those being affected to understand all      circumstances and assist with additional relevant support;
- Aim of smoother transitions, aware Next G Closure experience was      not well received, this feedback has been taken on board and will be      implemented into this new exit strategy through a proof of concept;
- Improved Communications to customers – simple, clear and relevant      messages to customers, less overload of unnecessary and confusing      information; dedicated case managers to aid in one point of contact.
- High stakeholder engagement
- Ensuring access to voices services remains vital;
- 400 Remote Payphone Upgrades to enable Wi-Fi hotspot access;
- Will not affect connections when contacting Triple Zero (000)

Pictured below is an example of the current CAN Radio infrastructure, including its dedicated solar array, which is the focus of the disconnection and retirement rollout. CAN Radio, or Customer Access Network (Radio), is a fixed wireless voice service used in locations where copper cabling is not feasible.

This is distinct from the traditional copper phone line—whether underground or above ground—that runs directly into a home to provide a fixed line phone service. That copper infrastructure is not the subject of this retirement program.



#### **Additional Definitions:**

**CAN Radio** stands for Customer Access Network Radio. There are a few technical 'point to point' and 'point to multipoint' technology types within CAN Radio, including:

**SCARS/DCARS/MCARS** — single, dual and multichannel radio systems, which connect one or more phone services directly to a nearby radio site.

**HCRC** — High Capacity Radio Concentrator systems, which connect many customers through a central radio hub.

**ADSL** stands for Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line.

#### **Telstra Regional Workshop Recap – Held 10 April 2025 – Jane Cunningham Attended**

#### **Customer Support Improvements:**

Provide the list of locations for the Tech2 Store and the case management flow diagram.

Reopen and investigate closed customer issues where issues were not resolved.

Improve communication about web forms and other support channels to customers.

Network enhancements:

Consider the re-issue of high-resolution 3G coverage maps.

Address ways to identify location issues on coverage map and improve accuracy, including adding Google GPS mapping.

Explore the use of alternative energy sources like wind power and improve power resilience.

Power resiliency

Improve communication and support during emergencies, including having a single map of site outages (similar to how power companies present outages)

Where required, work with relevant stakeholders to support advocacy to Governments on power resiliency measures / changes.

Consider a community engagement model that provides training for community members to support connecting power to sites in a power outage.

Transitioning to new technologies

Standardise the terminology (don't confuse the customer with multiple terms) and make sure we highlight the limitations that exist for Satellite to Mobile technology

Consider how we can collaborate on lessons learned and how to better support technology transitions in the future through engaging with stakeholder groups / customers.

### **Price Increases**

From 1 July 2025 Price Increases advised to most postpaid mobile, mobile broadband and home and small business internet plans.

# How to prepare and stay connected during a natural disaster

As wild weather looms, we're preparing for another season of potential bushfires, floods and cyclones. You should be too: here are our best tips for getting ready.

It's important to remember that during a natural disaster, our network and other infrastructure like electricity can be affected which may interrupt your service.

## Mobile phones and portable equipment

### Invest in an alternative charger.

If you don't already have one, purchase a phone charger that isn't dependent on a power outlet. A popular choice is a 'power bank' battery pack that can be charged from a power outlet prior to an event and used if grid electricity is unavailable, or a portable solar panel charger or in-car charger.

### Back up your data.

Store your important data, like contact information and personal photos, in the cloud using an online service. If you have an Apple or Google device, these smartphones have automatic backups that you can enable to make sure your photos are always saved. You may also consider saving your essential documents down as having electronic copies can save you time, worry and stress — **check out ePrepared** — a free online self-help tool we have launched with Justice Connect.

### Know your emergency numbers.

Store a list of essential contact numbers for your local Police, Fire, SES teams as well as friends and family on your phone and as a non-electronic, ideally waterproofed, backup. Make sure you include our dedicated disaster assistance number — **1800 888 888**.

When you have your list of essential numbers, make sure you make a printed copy to keep in your wallet, purse or bag, and keep a version in your car as well. Power can go out for a week or longer during a disaster. Keeping a printed copy means that if your phone is out of battery and you need an important phone number, you have it handy at all times.

### Consider satellite messaging for remote areas

**Telstra Satellite Messaging** is Australia's first satellite-to-mobile text service, allowing eligible Telstra customers to send and receive text messages when our mobile network is unavailable — ideal for regional and remote areas. Using Starlink's Direct to Cell capabilities, compatible devices automatically connect when outdoors with a direct line of sight to the sky.

To read more on how to be prepared, scan the QR code.



Telstra Satellite Messaging is not designed to be an emergency service, especially as you cannot text Triple Zero directly. It will mostly benefit people who live or travel outside mobile networks in regional or remote parts of the country, for example to let loved ones know you're okay, or for road trippers experiencing a flat tyre and needing to reach out for help.

### Explore a repeater device.

Like any mobile network, coverage on the Telstra mobile network depends on where you are, the mobile handset, tablet or mobile broadband device you're using, and whether an external antenna can be attached. It's important to understand that different devices have different capabilities.

Legal network coverage extension devices amplify the network signal your mobile device receives, which extends the area that your device can work in. These devices can help you connect to the Telstra mobile network from further away than normally possible, or in areas where signal may struggle to penetrate — such as indoors, or in hilly or dense terrain.

It's important to note that boosters are illegal to own or operate on any network in Australia, and they can disrupt or even prevent others from making calls to emergency 000.

Legal wireless network coverage extension devices, such as the Telstra Mobile Smart Antenna and Telstra Go, are also known as 'repeaters' as they repeat the signal from one location to another.

You can also take a look at [our range of repeaters and extenders](#) to see if one suits your needs.

## Fixed line phones and nbn®

### Home phones on the nbn® are different.

Since the nbn® carries your home phone line, it will be unavailable during a power outage, it's best to have a mobile phone handy for this instance, especially in remote areas.

### Enable Wi-Fi calling so you can call for help.

If the cellular network signal is down during a disaster, you can still use your mobile phone to make and receive calls and text messages, provided it supports **Wi-Fi Calling**. Wi-Fi Calling provides basic voice-calling capability on compatible devices when you're connected to a supported Wi-Fi network and can't connect to the Telstra Mobile Network.

**We've also switched on SMS over Wi-Fi** allowing you to receive texts via your fixed line connection when you're in Wi-Fi coverage. **Here's our FAQ on how to set it up** in case you haven't already.

### Keep a corded phone.

A cordless fixed line phone is convenient, but remember, most cordless phones rely on electric power to operate, so you may lose the use of your landline during a power outage. A corded phone draws its electricity directly from the phone line (excluding fixed line phones on nbn®) and can be used during a power outage.

## Keeping in touch in a disaster

**Set up a virtual meeting place.** If you have internet access, an instant messaging group chat with friends and family, or a social media site like Facebook or even Instagram, can give you and your loved ones extra information during a time of crisis.

### Find your local payphone.

If mobile services have been impacted, find your **local payphone**. We have recently upgraded over 1,000 of them with free Wi-Fi and extended battery back-up so they are more likely to withstand disaster impacts and can be a huge help if you need to make a call or get online.

### Know your evacuation locations.

Know where your local evacuation centre and emergency meeting spots are and what exits/routes you can use to get there as some roads may not be accessible during the disaster.

## Download emergency services apps.

Official apps will give you the most up-to-date information on what's happening in your area, including natural disaster warnings.

## Be alert to changing conditions.

Subscribe to services that will alert you to weather changes, road closures and updates from other service providers in your area.

## Use local information sources.

Online, social media accounts for your local authorities and emergency services will share crucial information. Your local broadcaster will also share information over the radio — make sure you have a battery-powered radio or car radio to listen in on.

**Helpful tip:** Make sure your personal details are up-to-date in the MyTelstra app. That way we can let you know about any disaster support you are eligible for as quickly as possible. Tap the person icon (top right) and select 'personal details' to check or edit your info.



## **NBN**

In August 2025, NBN and Amazon announced an agreement to deliver highspeed, wholesale fixed broadband using Amazon’s Project Kuiper—now rebranded as **Amazon Leo**—to introduce Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite broadband for eligible customers in parts of regional, rural and remote Australia. The service is planned to be available from mid2026 to both eligible existing and new customers within NBN’s current satellite footprint.

NBN is currently progressing a consultation process with Retail Service Providers and industry stakeholders through its Product Development Forum. This consultation period is open from 18 February to 1 April 2026 and will inform final decisions on speed tiers, wholesale pricing, and equipment terms and conditions. ICPA WA recently participated in this consultation, with its feedback and comments well received.

The agreement will enable NBN Co to progressively transition from its existing geostationary Sky Muster satellite service over the coming years, while complementing ongoing investments in fibre and fixed wireless upgrades across regional Australia. To ensure continuity of service, NBN Co will continue to maintain and operate its two Sky Muster satellites until customers are transitioned to the new wholesale LEO satellite offering powered by Amazon Leo.

The Sky Muster satellites are expected to remain viable and operational until approximately 2032. NBN Co is therefore exploring future options for these assets once all existing customers have been migrated to the new LEO satellite service.

Ellie Sweeney, Chief Executive Officer of NBN Co, said that “LEO satellite broadband, supplied by NBN Co and powered by Amazon’s Project Kuiper, will represent a major leap forward for customers in regional, rural and remote Australia. Australians deserve access to fast, effective broadband regardless of whether they live in a major city, on the outskirts of a country town, or far from their nearest neighbour. That’s what NBN was established to deliver. By upgrading to nextgeneration LEO satellite broadband powered by Project Kuiper, we are bringing the best available technology to Australians in the bush.”

NBN Co has invited existing Sky Muster and Sky Muster Plus customers, as well as potential new customers, to register their interest and receive updates via [nbnco.com.au/register](http://nbnco.com.au/register).

- **School Student Broadband Initiative**

The School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI) is now closed to new families and carers and will not be accepting further nominations. It was designed for 30,000 families and carers. That allocation has now been filled and all unused vouchers expired on 30 June 2025.

All existing School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI) connections will remain in service until 30 June 2028. Existing SSBI families and carers are advised to contact their chosen participating internet service provider for assistance and support.

- **NAPLAN**

NBN are supporting the online delivery of NAPLAN tests in collaboration with ACARA. A change embargo on planned upgrades and maintenance will apply during the testing period from 11 to 26 March 2026, with restrictions in place on weekdays between 6.00 am and 9.00 pm local time. Critical works will be scheduled

outside school hours where possible, and customers will be notified of any planned outages through their service providers.

## **ACCAN**

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network

### ▪ **TELSTRA**

ADSL & CAN Radio: As the transition unfolds, several practical issues require attention: continuity during outages, backup power at premises, affordability of alternative services, and hands-on assistance so households and small businesses can migrate to suitable devices and plans without losing essential connectivity.

Telstra has argued that newer options-such as LEOsatellite-based services-offer higher availability than legacy platforms; wherever such claims are made, performance should be transparently assessed against realworld conditions, including extreme weather.

ACCAN will track impacts closely to ensure regional, rural and remote users are not left worse off as networks evolve and that community safety-particularly access to 000-remains front and centre.

### ▪ **UOMO**

Australians will be better connected than ever with new laws establishing the framework for the Albanese Government's Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation (UOMO) after this legislation was passed in parliament on the 29 October 2025.

The legislation, will require national mobile carriers Telstra, Optus and TPG to provide access to SMS and voice coverage for Australians nationwide, almost everywhere you can see the sky.

It is expected the changes will help add up to 5 million square km of basic outdoor mobile SMS and voice coverage across Australia, making Australians more connected, keeping them safer, and ensuring they are able to call for help in times of emergency.

It will be made possible by a combination of existing terrestrial towers and new Low Earth Orbit Satellite technology, which allows for mobile signals to connect Direct to Device rather than relying on land-based infrastructure like mobile towers.

The Uomo will start by 1 December 2027 subject to market developments, with the Government working closely with industry to monitor the rollout of new Direct to Device technology.

### ▪ **NBN**

In 2025, ACCAN conducted a national community engagement program with consumers, small businesses and sector stakeholders. The program informed ACCAN's submission to the ACCC's consultation on NBN Co's Replacement Module Application (RMA).

Following this engagement program, a report - **Future of Australia's NBN** - was released on 10 March 2026. The report presents the feedback gathered through these discussions, outlines participants' experiences

with the NBN, their communication needs, and their views on NBN Co's proposed expenditure and work programs. The findings aim to help ensure broadband services better meet the needs of consumers, small businesses and households across Australia.

The report represents the culmination of years of advocacy and engagement in regulatory consultations on the future of the NBN and will help shape policy discussions for years to come.

### **REGIONAL TECH HUB**

The Regional Tech Hub is funded by the Australian Government's Better Connectivity Plan and is run by the National Farmers' Federation. If you live or work in rural, regional and remote Australia, they are there to help you with your phone or internet. There are some really fantastic resources available.

#### **What's new on the Hub**

*Fresh content and tools to help your networks stay connected:*

- *Emergency preparedness webpage: Internet and voice services aid in staying connected in emergencies or natural disasters - before, during and after.*

<https://regionaltechhub.org.au/staying-connected-in-emergencies/>

- *Breaking Down Farm Connectivity booklet: A newly launched booklet designed to help explain the different layers of connectivity across a farming operation. In addition, the booklet is packed with useful tips and tools to assist with your digital farming journey.*

<https://regionaltechhub.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Breaking-Down-Farm-Connectivity-A4-Portrait-Saddle-Stitched-Final-210-x-297-mm-9.09.25.pdf>

- *Satellite to Mobile Quick Facts guide: This one pager helps explain what Satellite to Mobile is, Telstra's Starlink announcement and things to be aware of.*

<https://regionaltechhub.org.au/wp-content/uploads/STM-Quick-Facts-Help-Guide-JB-Final-30.09.25.pdf>

- *When the Signal Drops: How Remote Satellite Connectivity is Saving Lives blog: Read our new blog which explores new satellite connectivity technologies useful in emergencies.*

<https://regionaltechhub.org.au/staying-connected-in-emergencies/>

## **DISTANCE EDUCATION, SOTA AND CURRICULUM REPORT**

**Lauren Lewis – Portfolio Leader, March 2026**

### **SOTA**

The School of the Air Advisory Group met on 23 February 2026, bringing together Department of Education representatives, SOTA principals, parent representatives, and advocacy groups including ICPA WA and REVISE WA. The group acknowledged ICPA WA's foundational work in establishing the advisory body and confirmed the continuation of Esther Kerr's Network Principal role until June 2026. Key discussions focused on improving consistency of practice across SOTAs, clarifying the scope and influence of the advisory group, and progressing a clear, workable Terms of Reference.

A major focus was the suggested development of a consistent SOTA Model of Service, aligned with the Department's Quality Teaching Strategy. This model would aim to ensure that qualified teachers deliver the core curriculum through on air lessons, while home tutors play a supportive role in reinforcing learning. Participants highlighted the need for explicit teaching in early literacy and numeracy, professional learning for teachers delivering online instruction, and clearer documentation outlining the roles and relationships between teachers, home tutors and principals. The importance of maintaining flexibility to meet the diverse needs of remote families was also emphasised.

### **RICS**

During the 2025 ICPA Federal Conference held in Adelaide, updated terminology was formally adopted to recognise RICS (Remuneration for the Isolated Classroom Supervisor). This change represents a significant step in improving the recognition and framing of financial support for geographically isolated education supervisors.

The term RICS will replace the previously used terminology of GIESS (Geographically Isolated Education Supervisors Subsidy) and DETA (Distance Education Teaching Allowance). While motions relating to GIESS and DETA have been presented at numerous ICPA conferences over the past 50 years, they have historically gained limited traction. Going forward, all branches are requested to ensure that the term RICS is used consistently in future motions and advocacy related to this area.

The adoption of the RICS terminology reflects a deliberate shift in emphasis. The previous term "DETA" referred specifically to an allowance, which constrained broader consideration of alternative or enhanced payment structures. In contrast, RICS allows for a wider interpretation of potential remuneration mechanisms.

Additionally, the inclusion of the term "Supervisor" has been intentional, as it aligns with existing education policy language. This alignment strengthens the case for formal recognition of the role within established policy frameworks.

On 27 October, a virtual roundtable was convened with The Hon Fiona Nash, Regional Education Commissioner, to discuss options for potential payments to geographically isolated supervisors. The roundtable was well attended, with 23 participants representing ICPA Federal and State Associations, the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, the National Farmers' Federation, and Distance Education Schools.

Contributions from ICPA representatives across jurisdictions strongly articulated the need for both recognition and remuneration in this space. Feedback from the session was constructive and positively received.

Following the roundtable, an options paper is currently being developed to explore viable approaches to recognising and remunerating RICS. There is clear consensus that formal recognition of RICS is essential. Ongoing work is focused on designing a model that is both effective and appropriately targeted to those affected. A 2<sup>nd</sup> Roundtable discussion is scheduled for the 18<sup>th</sup> of March.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD REPORT**

### **Megan Dorrell – Portfolio Leader, March 2026**

Motions presented at the 2025 State Conference for the Early Childhood Portfolio were limited in number; however, this did not slow State Council’s commitment to recognising and advocating for the need for three-year-old programs across rural, regional and remote areas of Western Australia.

I attended the 2025 Federal Conference held in Adelaide, which was well attended by WA Branch members and representatives. During this conference, I had the opportunity to establish an in-person connection with Amy Graham from Minderoo Foundation. I look forward to strengthening this relationship to explore opportunities for collaboration that support the expansion of early childhood programs into the areas where they are most needed.

### **The Motherland WA Event**

In September, ICPA WA was invited to attend Motherland’s first Western Australian event, held at Darken Town Hall. The event welcomed over 100 mothers, many with babies in tow, and created a warm and supportive environment for connection and shared experiences.

I hope to continue building this positive working relationship with the Motherland team into 2026. ICPA Federal Council also attended Motherland’s National Conference on 13–14 March, where each state was invited to provide materials for attendees. Participating in events such as these allows us to connect with potential members and strengthen collaborative networks that benefit rural and remote families.



### **Child Care Subsidy – 3 Day Guarantee**

On 5 January, it was announced that all Child Care Subsidy (CCS) eligible families can now access a minimum of 72 hours of subsidised childcare per fortnight.

Families may be eligible for up to 100 hours of subsidised care per fortnight per child if they:

- Care for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child
- Have more than 48 hours of recognised activity per fortnight
- Have an exemption or exceptional circumstances approved by Services Australia
- Receive Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) for child wellbeing, temporary financial hardship, or grandparent care

Families are encouraged to visit the Services Australia website for further details on eligibility and application requirements.

### **Early Years Community Plan Update – Derby**

A significant milestone has been reached in the development of the proposed Early Learning and Family Centre in Derby, with a \$261,832 grant awarded to the Ngunga Group Women’s Aboriginal Corporation to deliver the project’s first phase. This funding will support the development of a project definition plan to guide the establishment of the centre, which aims to provide culturally secure early learning opportunities for local children and families.

The grant forms part of the Early Years Partnership — a collaboration between the Western Australian Government, Minderoo Foundation, and The Kids Research Institute Australia — focused on improving developmental, health, and learning outcomes for children aged 0–4 in partner communities including Derby, Mowanjum, Pandanus Park, Armadale West, Central Great Southern, and Bidyadanga. The Partnership received a \$34.6 million funding boost in the 2024–25 State Budget to support continued investment in early childhood development.

The Derby centre is one of 24 priority projects funded through the Partnership and was identified through the community-led plan *Wirriya Dunyji Ooba Babanil Ingun – Happy Strong Small Children*, which highlighted the need for culturally safe early learning services. Overall, \$8.3 million has been committed by the State Government toward establishing the centre, alongside a \$2.2 million contribution from Minderoo Foundation.

This initiative represents a strong example of community-driven planning and cross-sector collaboration supporting positive early childhood outcomes in regional Western Australia.

ICPA WA remains committed to ensuring that early childhood opportunities are equitable, accessible, and responsive to the unique needs of rural and remote families.

## **RURAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS REPORT**

**Jane Cunningham & Megan Dorrell – Portfolio Leaders, March 2026**

### **SIDE**

The School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE), based in Leederville, supports the education of nearly 4,000 students across almost 300 partner schools throughout Western Australia, from Kindergarten to Year 12. SIDE provides an essential service for students who are unable to attend a traditional school setting due to geographical isolation, mental or physical health challenges, or where specific subject programs are not available locally.

In 2025, ICPA WA initiated the SIDE Primary Maths and Science Program for upper primary students in Level 3 regional and remote schools. The program reached 19 small schools and has proven to be an invaluable support. Many of these schools operate multi-age classrooms, sometimes catering for as many as five year levels in one room (for example, Years 2–6). Through this initiative, Year 4–6 students are able to access year-level specific Maths and Science programs delivered by SIDE, while the classroom teacher can concentrate on teaching the younger cohort (Years 2–3).

This model has delivered significant workload reduction for teachers in small, multi-age settings, while also ensuring that regional, rural and remote (RRR) students receive access to specialist subject instruction comparable to their metropolitan peers.

There had been discussion of expanding the program to include HASS and English in 2026; however, to our knowledge, this expansion has not yet occurred.

Paul Mathews, Principal of SIDE, continues to be a strong supporter of ICPA WA. We regularly meet with him during our in-person visits, often when staying at the camp accommodation at SIDE. Jane Cunningham, ICPA WA President, also serves as a SIDE School Board member, ensuring that regional voices are represented and heard wherever possible.

### **Fairbridge**

Following the 2018 announcement that Fairbridge Western Australia Incorporated would assume management of the Kalgoorlie Camp School, Pemberton Camp School, Geraldton Camp School, Point Peron Camp School, Bridgetown Camp School, and Dampier Camp School, ICPA WA has remained in regular communication with successive CEOs and relevant Ministers regarding the operation of these facilities.

Unfortunately, in recent years the quality of programs offered, along with general facility maintenance — particularly at Kalgoorlie and Geraldton — has not consistently met community expectations. This has resulted in both sites presenting in an unsatisfactory condition at times and becoming underutilised.

Kalgoorlie School of the Air (Kal SOTA) has used the Kalgoorlie Camp School for decades. The site has been integral to students’ in-person learning opportunities and to fostering social connection among SOTA families. However, in recent years the camp has been deemed unsuitable for Kal SOTA’s use due to concerns regarding cost, maintenance, and management.

ICPA WA has been very pleased to establish open communication with David Nancarrow, the current CEO of Fairbridge WA. We have appreciated the opportunity to meet with him and are encouraged by the updates and future plans outlined for the Kalgoorlie and Geraldton sites in particular. We look forward to hearing directly from David as he presents at the 54th State Conference.

David brings a background in teaching and boarding environments and has been open and transparent in discussions regarding past challenges, current circumstances, and future direction. When speaking with ICPA WA State Council in February, we were particularly encouraged to hear that “risk-based” activities will continue to form part of the camps’ offerings. Planned initiatives include the continuation of sea camps at Dampier, a proposed rock-climbing wall at Kalgoorlie, and the reinstatement of the flying fox at Geraldton — all important elements in delivering engaging, confidence-building outdoor education experiences for regional and remote students.

### **Staffing**

Staffing our RRR schools is an ongoing challenge. That includes, ensuring positions are filled, but also that the teachers are suitably trained and qualified for the positions. In 2024 and 2025 The Department of Education

introduced Teacher and Leader Mobility Trials. This was aimed at supporting staffing in regional schools by allowing metropolitan based teachers to work in regional locations for a 3 year period without losing their permanent position.

In February ICPA WA State Council met with Jay Peckitt, Director General; Vicki McKeown, Executive Director Schools; and Karen Roberts, People Services who unfortunately reported that a very minimal number of staff had taken up the opportunity during the mobility trials. Thus debunking the theory that teachers and leaders would move to the regions for a few years with the safety of holding their position in the metropolitan area. Thankfully it was reported that teacher resignations have reduced and there is an increase in the number of graduate teachers.

Did you know that if you are employed by the Department of Education under the Teachers Agreement — including pre-service teachers employed as untrained teachers — you may be able to access paid study leave that can be used for practicum placements?

If you are employed as an Education Assistant or AIEO, you are entitled to up to 200 hours of paid study leave.

This could be a huge bonus for students who may be ineligible for the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP).

### **Kindergarten Pilot**

The Full-time Kindergarten Pilot began in February 2026 including South Kalgoorlie Primary School. An additional schools 10 schools will join the pilot in 2027, as yet which schools will be chosen is unclear.

### **Regional Education Strategy**

Twenty months after the announcement of the development of a Department of Education Regional Education Strategy (RES) at the 2024 ICPA WA Annual State Conference—and following extensive consultation—the Regional Education Strategy: A vision for strengthening public education in the regions was released on 6 November 2025.

ICPA WA welcomes the release of the RES and is encouraged by its vision: “for students in the regions to have equitable educational opportunities to achieve their potential and put them on a pathway to a successful future, no matter their geographic location.” This aligns directly with ICPA’s own vision. Likewise, the Director General’s message—“All our students deserve a good education that sets them up for a successful future, regardless of their postcode”—closely echoes the theme of our upcoming 2026 ICPA WA Annual State Conference, Opportunity knows no postcode.

While the strategy represents a positive step forward for regional, rural and remote education in Western Australia, several important areas still require greater focus, particularly inclusion and disability.

Pillar 4: Developing partnerships to create opportunity is a key area where further attention is needed. The opening statement, “Education is a shared responsibility,” reflects a principle ICPA strongly supports—however, true partnership must extend beyond regional collaboration. We urge government to strengthen cross-agency partnerships, particularly between the Departments of Education, Health, Transport, Housing and Agriculture.

Education does not exist in a silo; it is a shared responsibility across all sectors.

I encourage all members to use the link below to access the RES and to review the four pillars that underpin the strategy. Let us use this document to ensure our voices continue to be heard, and that the priorities of regional, rural and remote families remain at the forefront of government planning.

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/regionaleducationstrategy>

### **VacSwim**

VacSwim continued to be discussed with Peter Lillywhite, the Principal of the School of Swimming and Water Safety at ICPA (WA) face to face meetings throughout the year. It was reported that participation numbers increased during the free VacSwim program period. While this initiative improved access for many families, concerns were raised about high non-attendance rates, with approximately one third of enrolled participants not attending sessions. The Department acknowledged that the free model may reduce accountability and indicated that program structure, pricing and refund processes are currently under review.

A key issue raised by ICPA WA members remains the difficulty rural and remote families experience in securing places in VacSwim programs. Peter confirmed that they are exploring options to introduce a two-phase enrolment process that would allow local families priority access before bookings open more broadly. While this is acknowledged as an issue, system limitations meant that changes could not be implemented for the 2025 program. The Department has committed to continuing work on this process with the aim of improving access for local communities as soon as possible and will advise ICPA WA of enrolment opening dates so information can be shared with members.

Access to programs in regional and remote areas also continues to be affected by instructor shortages, venue availability, and travel distances for families. Members highlighted cases where no VacSwim venues were available within a 150km radius, as well as situations where local pools were not open during key program periods. Peter welcomed support from communities in promoting instructor opportunities locally to help address staffing shortages.

Peter also provided updates on broader improvements to the School of Swimming and Water Safety program. Work is underway to improve systems, curriculum, and support for schools, including better resources for water safety education and enhanced inclusion for students with disability. Funding has been approved for system upgrades, including improvements to the WAVIS enrolment system, although implementation may take some time.

ICPA WA continues to advocate for improved accessibility, flexibility and communication around VacSwim programs to ensure rural and remote students have equitable opportunities to participate in swimming and water safety education.

### **Teacher Housing Security**

Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH) Program provides accommodation for government employees in regional and remote areas. GROH housing continues to be a challenge to access in many areas and this is having a direct impact on the attraction and retention of teaching staff.

Munglinup Primary School is currently facing a serious staffing crisis that is directly linked to the lack of teacher housing in the town. This issue has been ongoing for many years despite consistent efforts from the local community to work with the Department of Education, Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH), and the Shire of Ravensthorpe to find a solution.

A teacher house had previously been approved, funded, and built for Munglinup, which was specifically sold by the Shire for that purpose. The community was advised that the build was progressing and expected to be delivered. However, the house was later reallocated to another location after Munglinup was deemed a lower priority. This decision was made without consultation with the local community.

The effects of this decision are now being felt very clearly.

There is now a situation where a year 3 students who has attended the school for five years has had 7 different principals and 8 different teachers as they cannot sustain the travel required to work at Munglinup Primary School and reside up to 100km away. These staff members often want to stay, but cannot due to the pressure, cost and safety concerns of travel.

Our children are now the ones who are suffering. Frequent changes in staff mean that teaching approaches, programs, and leadership direction are constantly changing. Students are repeatedly forced to adjust to new teachers and different ways of learning, which can disrupt both their education and wellbeing.

ICPA WA met with both the Director General of Education and the Minister of Education in early February to discuss this issue. Both assured us that they have made it clear to the Department of Housing that the building of a 2<sup>nd</sup> house in Munglinup is a priority, but unfortunately this is all they can do as it now lies with the Department of Housing.

Our small communities are feeling abandoned.

### **ACARA**

In June Jane Cunningham met with Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) CEO Stephen Gniel alongside Pania Turner, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations (WACSSO), Julie Brooks, Senior Vice President WACSSO, and Siobhan Allen, Executive Director, Catholic School Parents WA.

Great discussions were held about NAPLAN (not just the testing, but how the data is then used and shared) and curriculum, including the need for further curriculum resources to support multi-age classrooms. Changes to the curriculum were also discussed and in this fast-changing world, technology and AI and the impact of student learning and safety.

### **Closure of Gardiner Primary School**

After 12 months without student enrolments, Gairdner Primary School— the closest school to our family and one that both my husband and sons attended—was officially closed at the end of 2025. The past year has been a sensitive and uncertain time for the local community. The closure of a school is never something a community welcomes, and the process has been difficult for many who have strong connections to the school and its history.

The official closure also raised concerns within the community regarding the future of the school's history, memorabilia and grounds. While a Closure Committee was established (consisting of only 2), the opportunity for community members to participate was not widely or effectively communicated. For those who did become aware of the opportunity but chose not to be involved, this reflects just how difficult and emotional the experience of losing a local school can be for a community.

On a personal level, I was disappointed not to be contacted directly by the Department regarding the closure decision, particularly after I had expressed on multiple occasions my willingness to assist and work constructively with the Department throughout the process. Greater communication and direct engagement with those closely connected to the school would have helped ensure the community felt more included and informed during such a significant transition.

At the February face-to-face State Council meeting with Jay Peckitt and Vicki McKeown, I had the opportunity to share feedback about the community's experience throughout this process. Concerns were raised regarding the lack of clear communication and limited information provided to the community about decisions and processes occurring behind the scenes. It is hoped that lessons from this experience can help inform improved

communication and consultation practices for other communities that may face similar circumstances in the future.

ICPA WA has also received notice that the Department of Education will be commencing consultation with the Nungarin community this year regarding their local school. Experiences such as the closure of Gairdner Primary School highlight the importance of clear communication, meaningful community engagement, and sensitive handling of these situations.

No community wants to see its local school close. While a range of factors can contribute to the difficult decision to cease operations, this does not lessen the emotional impact on families and communities. Small schools are often the heart of rural communities, and their absence is deeply felt by those who have learned, worked and gathered there over many years.

## **SPECIFIC EDUCATION REPORT**

### **Jasmyn Allen – Portfolio Leader, March 2026**

The Special Education Portfolio advocates for **equitable access to education** for students with disability, behavioural challenges, neurodivergence and medical needs in **rural and remote Western Australia**.

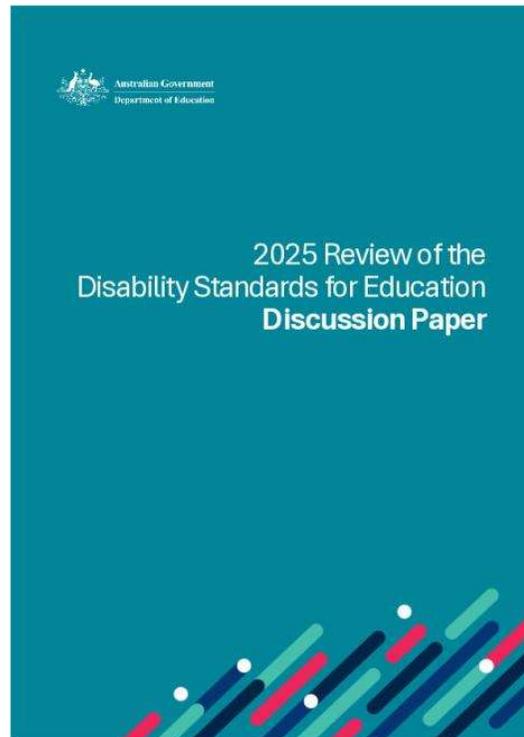
Challenges for isolated families include limited access to allied health professionals and specialist teachers, delays in diagnosis and assessment, reduced therapy services and intervention programs and travel requirements to access specialist services or schools.

#### **Recent reforms and reviews impacting rural students:**

- **NDIS updates (2025–2026)**
- Introduction of the **Thriving Kids** early intervention program
- **2025 Review of the Disability Standards for Education**
- **2025 Review of the School Education Act (WA)**
- **Regional Education Strategy 2024 (released 2025)**

NDIS announced changes to their reform around children under 9 years old, with a focus on community-based intervention rather than NDIS funded private providers. In our rural locations across WA many of the community-based providers were completely replaced by the surge of NDIS businesses and the landscape of what is available has changed. The **Thriving Kids Program** has been introduced to specifically work with children with mild/moderate developmental delays and Autism, which is of great concern to our rural families who may have already waited considerable time to get to diagnosis point and therapy intervention. Services are meant to be delivered through schools, childcare and community providers, which are some of the hardest things for our rural families to access. Families are also being contacted for NDIS reviews with questions around functional capacity testing that is required to continue services, for many of our rural families getting this testing done in allocated time frame is not feasible due to travel and wait lists, which is having an impact and lessening of funding available going forward.

The **2025 Review of the Disability Standards for Education (federal)** in Australia aims to strengthen the rights of students with disabilities to access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers, building upon the 2005 standards and incorporating recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission. For rural and remote students, this review is critical, as it directly addresses the significant, and often overlooked, barriers they face regarding access to services, funding, and specialist support. A positive of the review for our rural families is that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) has now been introduced into the standards, which is crucial for inclusion and early intervention if children in our isolated areas are using childcare services. The review also recommended utilization of the “Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) location loading to provide further funding in 2026 to regional and remote areas, a recognition that educating students in these areas often costs more.



ICPA WA spent considerable time putting a submission into the Review of the School Education Act 1999 (WA), we attended face to face sessions in Perth at the Department of Education and in regional locations face to face. Our message was clear and simple... ***“Every child and young person with a disability and or complex medical needs living in Rural, Regional and Remote Western Australia should have equity in access to quality educational opportunities that will enable them to achieve their full potential and put them on a pathway to a successful future where they feel valued and included.”*** The review was tabled and released in October 2025. The key themes of ICPA WA advocacy were to include all forms of medical, social and educational disability into the definition, giving clarity to our families that their child with a diagnosis of a condition such as ADHD should be treated with fairness and inclusion into framework of educational planning.

Treatment of our rural kids on attempting to enrol into a school with a disability and medical conditions was also addressed at length; we spoke about the barriers of being accepted into a boarding school and access to bus services at length. Too often we hear of families that have had issues enrolling their kids into a boarding school, due a child’s medical or education needs, some of our families have been asked to come back in a few years’ time, once they have grown up a bit. Does this sound like a fair and inclusive enrolment process?

Bus and transport services were also addressed, accessibility for our rural families to use these services on the same basis as everyone else is imperative to our ability to educate our kids in our local community and access education throughout the journey from primary, secondary and tertiary.

Stakeholder group	Percentage that expressed the enrolment provisions should change*	Key themes raised by the stakeholder group
Families of those with a disability	92%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear right for students with disability to enrol and attend the local school (regardless of disability or cultural background).</li> <li>• Requirement for local schools to provide reasonable adjustments and an inclusive environment.</li> </ul>
Those employed in the education sector	77%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear right for students with disability to enrol and attend the local school (regardless of disability or cultural background).</li> <li>• There is a need for additional resources to ensure schools can make reasonable adjustments for students with disability.</li> </ul>

\*of those who responded with a view on whether or not there should be changes to the SE Act’s provisions on enrolment (i.e. this does not include those who were unsure or did not express an opinion).

Additional themes raised during consultation include:

- a desire for the entitlement to enrol on an equal basis as other children, to also apply to non-government schools, including those within boarding schools, as this can be a significant barrier for regionally isolated children with disability to access education within the non-government sector
- the importance of the accessibility of school buses, which are often critical to students accessing school, particularly in regional/**rural** settings.

Submissions highlighted barriers to accessing adjustments in education, including a lack of understanding, lack of consultation, and inconsistent or undefined processes. Submissions also identified opportunities to overcome these barriers including enshrining the right to reasonable adjustments in the SE Act, defining key concepts (e.g., reasonable adjustments), and creating a transparent and collaborative process for identifying, planning, and implementing reasonable adjustments. Submissions also noted the importance of accountability and monitoring reasonable adjustments. This also includes accountability for when students are denied support.

Other key themes raised among stakeholders include:

- obligations for reasonable adjustments must be supported by an adequate funding system and improved infrastructure and technology (some stakeholders noted that in regional WA, access to internet can be a barrier to using some assistive technologies)
- to be most effective and consistent for students, adjustments should extend to matters outside of the SE Act such as school buses, **boarding** schools, and assessments for National Assessment Program such as Literacy and Numeracy (or NAPLAN) and Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (or ATAR)
- obligations for reasonable adjustments must be supported by training.

**Accessing the AIC and BAHA with a Medical Statement – Student with Special Needs.**

The Australian Government Guide to Policy Law website has all versions of the AIC allowance policy and review since 2002. ICPA WA have reviewed these documents which can be found here: <https://guides.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2025-12/1196-december-2025-aic-0.pdf> And believe them to be the best source of information to access the AIC if your children needs to be educated at home through a distance ed program or attend boarding school to be close by a medical professional. The above website has examples of medical conditions that would be deemed suitable to qualify for the AIC. Many of our rural children choose boarding for access to medical treatment and care along with specific education programs that can be offered in a different location. Some of our member families have had success in applying for this AIC allowance, with submission of the below (SY099) medical form that can be completed by a doctor. Please contact your schools Specific Education Unit to discuss further also, as they can provide supportive documentation to assist.

## Your Voice, our kids, our stories.

*Examples of case studies that we use in our advocacy to give an accurate picture of what it really feels like to live and be educated in a rural environment in WA. Your voice matters and your stories are powerful in effecting change.*

### **Parent, child (year 6) with multiple medical conditions. Transition from small town primary school, to large town high school, 70minutes travel by bus morning and night.**

"The current Education Act is designed to provide a framework for supporting students with a range of educational needs. However, its provisions often fall short when addressing the specific requirements of children with multiple small ailments, such as Type 1 diabetes coupled with other conditions like ADHD. This report explores how the Act's limitations impact these students, particularly beyond the primary years, and proposes considerations for improvement.

#### **\*\*Current Provisions of the Education Act\*\***

Under the existing Education Act, additional support is typically available for children with significant medical or educational needs, such as severe disabilities or complex health conditions. For instance, children with Type 1 diabetes receive support in managing their condition primarily during the early years of schooling. However, the Act does not consistently extend this support beyond Year 3 (age 8-9), despite the ongoing needs of these children as they advance through their education.

#### **\*\*Case Study: Type 1 Diabetes and ADHD\*\***

Type 1 diabetes requires meticulous management to maintain stable blood glucose levels. This management often includes regular monitoring, insulin administration, and dietary adjustments. When a child also has ADHD, which affects attention and impulse control, these tasks can become even more challenging. For example, a child with both Type 1 diabetes and ADHD may struggle with remembering to check blood glucose levels or managing their diet in a classroom setting, which can lead to both health and academic difficulties.

Despite these challenges, the current Education Act does not provide specific provisions for extending additional support beyond Year 3 for children with Type 1 diabetes. This gap means that as these children progress into higher year groups, they may lack the necessary support to manage their health effectively, especially if their ADHD exacerbates their difficulties.

#### **\*\*Impact on Affected Children\*\***

The lack of tailored support for children with multiple conditions can have several adverse effects:

1. **\*\*Health Risks:\*\*** Inadequate support for managing Type 1 diabetes can lead to serious health issues, including frequent hospitalizations or severe hypoglycemic episodes.
2. **\*\*Academic Performance:\*\*** The combined effects of ADHD and diabetes can impact cognitive functioning and concentration, leading to potential academic underachievement.
3. **\*\*Emotional Well-being:\*\*** Constantly struggling with unmanaged health conditions and learning difficulties can affect a child's self-esteem and overall emotional well-being.

#### **\*\*Recommendations\*\***

To better support children with multiple small ailments, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **\*\*Extended Support Provisions:\*\*** Amend the Education Act to include specific provisions for children with chronic health conditions and additional needs beyond Year 3, ensuring they receive continued support throughout their schooling.

## STUDENT ACCOMMODATION REPORT

**Jasmyn Allen – Portfolio Leader, March 2026**

At the 2025 Federal Conference the WA State delegates sat on a table with people from SA, NSW, QLD and the NT. Conversation kept flowing back to the cost of boarding and how expensive it is getting. We discussed what each state offers as a allowance to help manage the cost. In WA, we are well behind. Our current Boarding away from Home Allowance sits at \$1461 per year. QLD is as high as \$10,891 with additional allowances for travel and disability. As a result of this newfound information, we have met with the Minister for Education to request an increase of the BAHA to **\$5000** to bring us into line with other States offerings. Successful applicants for the BAHA are also dropping, with a reduction of successful applicants by 26%.

### **BAHA RATES and RECIPENTS – 6 years of captured data**

<b>Year of Schooling</b>	<b>Number of applications</b>	<b>Per year per applicant \$</b>	<b>Total cost of scheme</b>
2026	<i>Yet to open</i>	<i>\$1461</i>	-
2025	936*	\$1424.00	<i>Still open for applicants</i>
<b>2024</b>	<b>1024</b>	<b>\$1,389</b>	<b>\$ 1,422,336.00</b>
<b>2023</b>	<b>1046</b>	<b>\$1,350</b>	<b>\$ 1,412,100.00</b>
<b>2022</b>	<b>1190</b>	<b>\$1,320</b>	<b>\$ 1,570,800.00</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>1279</b>	<b>\$1,279</b>	<b>\$ 1,635,841.00</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>1338</b>	<b>\$1,338</b>	<b>\$ 1,790,244.00</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>1375</b>	<b>\$1,375</b>	<b>\$ 1,890,625.00</b>

A 36 page document has been shared with the Minister outlining our recent conference motions, the true cost of boarding and our recommendations to look at who is boarding and where are they located. The 14 WA Government Residential boarding facilities currently offer 1400 places, and the non-government sector has more than 2,800 placements. The cost range is from \$9,563.00 to \$69,425.00 per year for boarding and tuition. The Non-Government Sector now has a average boarding cost of \$29,538.89 per year in 2026.

ICPA would also like to acknowledge that we have had little movement in the Tertiary education space for accommodation, yet we know that there are many students who need accommodation to access university. We would be pleased to hear from you and your child’s journey to fund suitable accommodation for uni, tafe, prac placement and trade qualifications.

<b>Residential Boarding Facilities In Western Australia 2026</b>	
Aquinas College	Residential College Broome
Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School	Residential College City Beach
CAPS Coolgardie	Residential College Esperance
CAPS Wongutha - Gibson	Residential College Geraldton
Carmel Adventist College	Residential College Merredin

Christ Church Grammar School	Residential College Moora
Clontarf Aboriginal College	Residential College Narrogin
Esperance Anglican Community School	Residential College Northam
Great Southern Grammar	Rotary Residential College
Guildford Grammar School	Santa Maria College
Hale School	Scotch College
Karalundi College - East Murchison	St Brigid's College
La Salle College	St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls
Manjali Studio School - Kimberley	St Mary's Anglican School for Girls
Martyku Jijku Maya - MJM Boarding House Newman	Wesley College
Mazenod College	West Aust College of Agriculture Cunderdin
Methodist Ladies College	West Aust College of Agriculture Denmark
Penrhos College	West Aust College of Agriculture Harvey
Perth College	West Aust College of Agriculture Morowa
Presbyterian Ladies College	West Aust College of Agriculture Narrogin
Residential College Albany	Yiramalay Studio School - Kimberley

**List of current boarding facilities in WA**

**Australian boarding facilities can be guided by AS 5725:2015, *Boarding standard for Australian schools and residences***

The review for boarding standards has been announced, and we have the Federal ICPA President Mrs Louise Martin and Department of Education Staff Member sitting on the review committee. We would be pleased to hear from you on your thoughts around the standards and we hope to offer or be involved in the review into the future to benefit all of our ICPA families and children in their educational journey.



## Department of Education WA Standards

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/standards> Guide to registration standards and other requirements for non-government schools effective 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 can be found on the Department of Education website.

Extract on section 8, boarding to follow.

### Standard 8: Boarding

- 8.1 Supervisory staff employed in school boarding accommodation are competent, fit and proper persons, qualified to manage the care, welfare and needs of all boarding students.
- 8.2 The school maintains open and effective communication with the parents and guardians of boarders.
- 8.3 The boarders receive a well-balanced and nutritious diet.
- 8.4 The boarders are consulted on all matters affecting their accommodation, recreation, support services, code of conduct, safety and wellbeing.

#### Definitions

##### Supervisory staff

For the purpose of standard 8.1, the supervisory staff are all those whose duties include the supervision of boarders at any time.

Note that boarding supervisors, like teachers and nurses, are now mandatory reporters. A "boarding supervisor" is "a person who holds an office or position at a boarding facility the duties of which include the supervision of children living at the facility" [*Children and Community Services Act 2004*<sup>16</sup>, s.124A].

#### Director General's considerations

##### Staff

The Director General may check that supervisory staff qualifications, including first aid qualifications, are relevant to the direct care and development of students.

As to whether staff employed to supervise boarders are fit and proper persons, the term 'fit and proper', as with governing body members, is intended to give the widest possible discretion to the decision-maker. It covers both character and competence, enabling the decision-maker to take into account matters which can be fairly seen to be relevant to the role. A person with a history such as the following would not be considered a fit and proper person in this role:

- any conviction as an adult for any offence involving children and/or violence; or
- any criminal conviction for fraud or similar, e.g. stealing as a servant; or
- any finding of negligence or serious incompetence in a similar role.

A school's boarding staff recruitment policy should at least outline the offending history considered relevant to fitness and propriety, other checks to be made, qualifications and other matters considered to be relevant.

Professional learning for all staff within boarding facilities about the school's Code of Conduct and other child-safe policies and procedures is to be conducted annually. Boarding supervisors must also receive professional learning annually in their mandatory reporting obligations.

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law\\_a9243.html](https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law_a9243.html)

#### **Policies and procedures**

Policies and procedures must be in place for student boarding facilities which detail how a safe, healthy and supportive boarding environment for all enrolled boarders, including those with disabilities, is being provided and maintained at all times. Students, parents and staff must be given a clear and comprehensive statement of these policies and support their implementation.

The policies and procedures should be benchmarked against contemporary best practice in protecting the safety and wellbeing of students in boarding facilities, as determined by a relevant peak body, such as the *Boarding Standard for Australian schools and residences* [AS 5725:2015] published in July 2015.

#### **Communication with parents or guardians**

Mechanisms for regular two-way communication with parents or guardians should be developed and maintained and take account of the different communication channels accessible to parents. The school should facilitate regular, private communication between the boarders and their parents/guardians.

#### **Diet**

Catering arrangements for students should be informed by relevant dietary guidelines approved by a peak body such as the National Health and Medical Research Council.

#### **Consultation with boarders**

For the purpose of standard 8.4, a satisfactory consultation with boarders will involve:

- informing the boarders about the overall process, including who else will be consulted, and its desired outcome;
- providing information relevant to the issue, which may include the limits of what outcome is possible, in accessible language;
- offering the boarders a choice of methods to communicate their individual and collective views, including where unanimity cannot be achieved; and
- giving due consideration to the opinions expressed.

Models of consultation may vary depending on the issue to be resolved. In some cases it will be appropriate to seek the views of a representative sample of boarders or from a boarders' council, particularly where the council members have been selected by the boarders themselves.

### **Residential and Agricultural Colleges**

We have several motion in recent years around residential colleges, funding of infrastructure and management. At the time of writing this report ICPA WA understands that all 9 Residential Colleges and 5 Agricultural Colleges have been brought under the same leadership team going forward. LINC committees (as per information below) have been introduced for community input for residential colleges. ICPA WA look forward to the evolution of these committees to bring a greater understanding between families, students and community and will follow closely their evolution and purpose to form transparent engagement and greater understanding for families including Terms of Reference and Good Governance Training for members. Functions of Link Committees can be found in the School Education Act 1999, PART 6A, Student Residential Colleges. The School Education Act 1999 can be found on the WA Legislation website.

## Part 6A — Student residential colleges

### What this Part is about

This Part provides for student residential colleges.

page 200 Compare 28 Nov 2016 [04-d0-01] / 24 Jan 2017 [04-e0-00]  
Extract from www.slp.wa.gov.au, see that website for further information

### 2130. Functions of LINC committees

- (1) A LINC committee for a student residential college has the following functions —
  - (a) to provide advice regarding the operation and management of the college;
  - (b) to promote the interests of the college and to foster community interest in the college;
  - (c) to carry out the functions given by sections 213E(4) and 213J(4);
  - (d) to undertake such other functions prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this section.
- (2) A LINC committee for a student residential college may do any or all of the following —
  - (a) take part in and provide advice on the selection, but not the appointment, of any person employed at the college, if the person comes within a class of employees referred to in section 235(1);
  - (b) provide advice as to the means by which disputes or complaints about the conduct of students at the college may be dealt with;
  - (c) take part in the planning of, and provide advice on, the financial arrangements and priorities for the college.
- (3) A LINC committee cannot —
  - (a) intervene in the operation or management of a student residential college; or
  - (b) exercise authority over any person employed at a student residential college.
- (4) A LINC committee may do all things necessary or convenient to be done for or in connection with the carrying out of its functions.

Compare 28 Nov 2016 [04-d0-01] / 24 Jan 2017 [04-e0-00] page 209  
Extract from www.slp.wa.gov.au, see that website for further information

## **TEACHER TRAINING REPORT**

**Jasmine Carmody – Portfolio Leader, March 2026**

Two motions were presented at the 2025 State Conference

### **A28 Goldfields Eyre Branch**

***“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.”***

An email was sent to Rebecca Bope on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2025 outlining the below;

ICPA WA is continuing to advocate for improved access to affordable, short-term accommodation for pre-service teachers undertaking regional practicums. This follows a 2024 meeting with Department of Education representatives, during which Pam Moss committed to investigating the use of existing Department facilities, particularly **camp schools**, for this purpose.

#### **Key Points:**

- ICPA WA fully supports the use of **camp schools** and additionally recommends the inclusion of **residential colleges** as viable accommodation options.
- Making use of these existing facilities would:
- Reduce barriers for pre-service teachers considering regional placements.
- Strengthen the teacher supply pipeline to rural and remote schools.
- Increase year-round utilisation of underused Department assets.

#### **Benefits Identified:**

- More feasible and appealing regional placements for education students.
- Long-term support for teacher recruitment and retention in the bush.
- Better use of infrastructure such as camp schools and residential colleges.

#### **Action Requested:**

- An update from the Department regarding progress or investigations into this initiative.
- Continued collaboration with ICPA WA to advance and support the concept.

A meeting with relevant parties was organised for September Face to Face meetings. Vicki McKewon, Rebecca Bope and Paul Matthews attended and discussions were held. It was stated that timing has been an issue for pre-service teachers to use camp schools as their accommodation during their practicums as there is a risk of adults being in close vicinity to students.

Unfortunately, there was not a solution or a way forward that was visible at the time.

### **S5 Lakes District Branch**

***“That ICPA (WA) advocates for the Minister for Education and the Minister for Tertiary and International Education to create financial incentives that encourage and support university students completing their practicum work placement as part of the Bachelor of Education in regional and rural areas.”***

ICPA WA has written to Minister Sabine Winton (Education) and Minister Tony Buti (Tertiary and International Education) to advocate for increased financial support for Bachelor of Education students undertaking practicum placements in regional and remote Western Australia.

While the upcoming Commonwealth Prac Payment of \$319.50/week (effective July 2025) is a welcomed initiative to reduce financial strain during compulsory unpaid practicums, it is insufficient to cover the full costs of travel, accommodation, and income loss associated with rural placements.

ICPA WA highlights that:

- Regional communities struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers.
- Positive practicum experiences in rural settings can lead to long-term workforce engagement in those areas.
- Targeted State-based financial incentives are needed to supplement federal supports and improve the uptake of rural placements.

The letter urges collaboration between the Ministers for Education and Tertiary Education to create a targeted support program for pre-service teachers completing placements in rural WA. The goal is to reduce financial barriers, encourage rural exposure, and address chronic teacher shortages in regional communities. ICPA WA is seeking opportunities to meet with ministerial offices to further discuss this proposal and contribute to the development of supportive measures.

We are still awaiting response or update from both the ministers.

## **TERTIARY, TRADE AND TRAINING REPORT**

**Arlene Sutherland – Portfolio Leader, March 2026**

### **Changes to Apprenticeship Incentives**

The Australian Government has updated the **Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System**, which affects both apprentices and employers.

Key changes include:

- A **Key Apprenticeship Program** targeting critical industries such as housing construction and clean energy
- Employers can receive **up to \$5,000** for training apprentices in priority occupations.
- Apprentices in priority trades may receive **up to \$10,000 in support payments**.
- Interest-free **apprenticeship loans of up to about \$25,983** remain available, with a **20% discount on completion**.

### **Sector specific & Regional support**

- **WA Construction Training Fund (CTF):** New and existing WA construction apprentices can receive a \$1,000 annual bonus payment for continuing their training from Jan 2025, plus a tool allowance rebate of up to \$1,000.

- **Priority Occupations:** Many new incentives are specifically tied to the **Australian Apprenticeship Priority List**, which includes many electrical, fabrication, and mechanical engineering trades.

#### **Why it matters for rural students:**

These incentives are designed to increase the number of apprentices in high-demand trades

#### **Increased Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA):**

From 1 July 2025, the allowance for apprentices who need to move for their training increases significantly:

- o **1st Year:** \$120 per week (up from \$77.17).
- o **2nd Year:** \$90 per week (up from \$38.59).
- o **3rd Year:** \$45 per week (up from \$25.00).

#### **Australian Apprenticeship Support Loan (AASL)**

The [Australian Apprenticeship Support Loan](#) (AASL), formerly Trade Support Loan, is an interest-free, government-funded loan up to \$25,983 (2025-26) to help apprentices with living and tool expenses. Paid monthly in arrears, it is repaid via the tax system only when earning over \$67,000, with a 20% bonus reduction upon completion.

#### **Key Aspects of the Apprenticeship Loan**

- **Eligibility:** Must be an Australian citizen/permanent resident undertaking a qualification on the [Australian Apprenticeship Priority List](#).
- **Loan Amount & Structure:** Up to \$25,983 (for 2025-26) can be borrowed over the apprenticeship duration. It is front-loaded to support lower wages: higher payments in early years, reducing in later years (\$816.41/month in Year 1, down to \$204.10/month in Year 4)
- **Repayment & Interest:** The loan is interest-free but subject to annual indexation (capped at the lower of CPI or Wage Price Index). Repayments start only when income reaches \$67,000 for 2025-26.
- **Completion Bonus:** Upon successful completion of the apprenticeship, a 20% discount is applied to the total amount borrowed.
- **Application:** Apprentices choose how much to borrow and can opt in/out for six-month periods.

The loan is intended for living expenses, tools, or other costs associated with training. As of Jan 1 2026, a 20% reduction applies to loans if you have a debt on 1 June 2025.

#### **Expansion of Fee-Free TAFE and Short Courses**

Several states (including WA) continue to offer **fee-free training in priority skill areas**.

Examples include:

- Over **130 training courses available fee-free** under “Job Ready” programs.
- Courses include trades, construction, agriculture, healthcare and IT skills.

**Benefit for regional students:**

Removing course fees lowers the financial barrier for students who might otherwise struggle to relocate or pay tuition.

### **Advanced Apprenticeships and Industry-Linked Degrees**

A newer model being explored is the “**advanced apprenticeship**”, where students:

- Work for an employer
- Complete structured training
- Graduate with a **university qualification as well as workplace experience**

Programs linked with the **Regional Education and Skills Program** have supported more than **1,400 students in regional Australia** through funded training and skills development opportunities.

This model aims to blend:

- university study
- vocational training
- paid employment.

### **Support for Employers and Small Businesses to Take Apprentices**

Recent reviews of the apprenticeship system have recommended:

- **Subsidies for Group Training Organisations** to help small businesses employ apprentices.
- Expansion of **shared apprenticeships** where multiple employers share training costs.

**Why it matters:**  
Many rural employers cannot commit to a full apprenticeship alone. Shared training models help overcome this barrier.

### **Growth in Regional Skills and Training Programs**

Government and industry partnerships are funding **regional training initiatives**, particularly where skill shortages exist.

Examples include programs focused on:

- agriculture and pastoral industries
- energy and resource projects
- construction and housing trades.

These programs provide **paid training and mentoring with employment pathways**, helping young people stay in regional areas rather than moving to cities.

### **WEST AUSTRALIANS NAMED NATIONAL WINNERS AT AUSTRALIAN TRAINING AWARDS IN 2025**

Western Australia's seven finalists have excelled at the 2025 Australian Training Awards, in its now 31<sup>st</sup> year of Australia's premier training awards, securing two of the nation's most coveted accolades, and as the Hon Andrew Giles MP, Minister for Skills and Training stated “*These Awards are an opportunity to celebrate the best of Australia's vocational education and training sector – and remind Australians that there's never been a better time to pursue new skills and qualifications. And as a nation we reap the benefits from the dedication*

*and commitment of VET students, teachers and trainers. It is fitting that every year we celebrate their achievements through these awards”.*

When winners were announced our representatives from the State won the Vocational Student of the Year and Small Training Provider of the Year.

### **Vocational Student of the Year (Winner) - Arabella Poole**

This award recognises outstanding achievement by a vocational student in a course of study leading to a nationally recognised qualification.

Emerging from a complex medical journey that spanned 13 years, Arabella rebuilt her life through vocational education. Inspired by her occupational therapist, Arabella enrolled in a fitness qualification to reconnect with her love of learning. It was an act of hope, and one that proved to be life-changing. Arabella turned a trial into triumph when she followed a vocational pathway in fitness. Now a personal trainer and group fitness instructor, Arabella is rebuilding her core strength in a new career. Her vocational journey marks the beginning of a new chapter in her life.

### **Small Training Provider of the Year (Gold) - Taylor Weir Hairdresser and Barber Training**

The Small Training Provider of the Year Award recognises small, registered training organisations (RTOs) with fewer than 500 students that offer a range of training products and services and that demonstrate excellence and high-level performance in all aspects of vocational education and training.

Taylor Weir Hairdressing and Barber Training has been shaping careers and styling success in Western Australia for 29 years. Blending innovation with student-focused education, the long-established RTO delivers nationally recognised programs with passion and personalised support. Award-winning and industry-recognised, Taylorweir is empowering the next generation of hair professionals with rewarding careers and proving itself a cut above the rest.

### **Apprentice of the year – Finalist - Lewis Italiano**

Growing up in the small town of Wokalup, Lewis enjoyed woodwork at school, with encouragement from his family and guidance from his teachers, Lewis began an apprenticeship at Studio Milton. He completed a Certificate III in Cabinet Making and Timber Technology through South Regional TAFE, and the support he received during his apprenticeship changed the trajectory of his life.

Lewis’ cabinet making journey has been highlighted by success at WorldSkills Australia and WorldSkills International competitions. He committed countless hours to perfecting his craft, and his efforts were rewarded with gold medals and Medallions of Excellence. He has also been recognised by the Master Builders Association as the most outstanding cabinet making apprentice and overall apprentice of the year.

### **Trainee of the year – Finalist – Elisa Jane Thompson**

When a knee reconstruction derailed her budding career as a ballerina, Elisa Jane had to pivot. She loved teaching ballet to children, so she decided on a career in early childhood education. It was a life-changing moment. She is now completing a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care through Central Regional TAFE, and she is employed as a trainee at Toodyay Early Learning Centre (TELC).

Elisa Jane has embraced her leadership role as TELC’s Toddler Room Leader, and she is proud to be one of the youngest educators in the Centre’s history to hold the position. She strives to be a role model, advocate and safe presence for every child, and she is passionate about making a positive impact in her workplace.

### **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Student of the year – Finalist – Laurenzia Divilli**

Seeking a fresh career and a new challenge, Laurenzia completed a Certificate IV in Beauty Therapy at the Broome Campus of North Regional TAFE, gaining practical and theoretical skills in skincare, nail care, makeup, waxing, and salon operations.

In addition to her salon talents, Laurenzia holds a Certificate III in Leadership and a Certificate III in Business. This rich selection of vocational skills will empower her to fulfil her future goals, which include managing a salon and launching her own beauty business.

Proud of her cultural identity and strong community connection, Laurenzia hopes to represent Indigenous women and promote self-care in the beauty industry.

In her role as an Aboriginal Educational Support Officer with North Regional TAFE, Laurenzia supports current beauty students through their training, while providing a positive example to the young people in her community.

### **Australian School based Apprentice or Trainee of the year – Finalist – Cadie Doyle**

Cadie's interest in engineering was sparked in a Year 9 metalwork class. Her love of oxy welding led her to a school-based traineeship, and she's now working in a team at an ore car repair shop near Port Hedland.

Cadie is a Year 11 student at Hedland Senior High School. She is undertaking a Certificate II in Engineering through North Regional TAFE (RTO) and Category 5 (GTO), and she is employed part-time at BHP Rail.

Cadie's traineeship has been an incredible journey. She has worked on MIG and stick welding projects, ground burrs off couplers and cleared hazards from work bays. Along the way, she has also developed teamwork and leadership skills. Most importantly, her confidence and motivation have grown. With her hands-on technical skills and new-found confidence, Cadie is forging a bright future in engineering.

### **VET Teacher/Trainer of the year – Finalist – Chanelle Williams**

After working overseas as an early childhood caregiver, Chanelle returned to Australia to pursue a career in teaching. Now a lecturer at North Regional TAFE, Chanelle delivers Certificate III and Diploma-level qualifications in early childhood education and care. She also plays a pivotal role in leading the RTO's early childcare education and care team.

Taking excellence to a whole new level, Chanelle travels to the northernmost regions of Western Australia to deliver essential training to early childhood students. She is passionate about inclusion and adapts training to meet the regional needs of learners, empowering them to pursue meaningful careers. Chanelle has an ongoing collaboration with the Ngunga Group Women's Aboriginal Corporation in Derby. Having developed a culturally responsive, trauma-informed program for the corporation, there has been a significant increase in Aboriginal student participation in the area. Bright futures are being shaped across the Kimberley.

### **Skills West careers and employment Expo may 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> May 2026 & Skills West Expo July 2026**

These events are held every year and is for students, graduates and job seekers.

### **Emerging Issues Relevant to Rural Students**

- **Access to training facilities** remains a challenge for rural students.
- **Travel and accommodation costs** still limit participation in apprenticeships.

- **Online and hybrid learning models** are becoming more common but are not suitable for all trades.
- Increasing focus on **skills needed for clean energy, housing construction and agriculture technology**.

Recent reforms in apprenticeship incentives, fee-free training initiatives and industry-linked education pathways show a strong national focus on strengthening Australia's skilled workforce. However, ensuring equitable access to these opportunities for rural and remote students remains critical. Issues such as travel, accommodation, training availability and regional employer capacity continue to influence whether young people from isolated communities can fully benefit from tertiary trade and training pathways.

## **TRAVEL REPORT**

### **Arlene Sutherland – Portfolio Leader, March 2026**

As the well-known tune goes, *“The wheels on the bus go round and round”... but sometimes for rural and remote families they hit a few potholes along the way!*

Throughout 2025 the Travel Portfolio once again focused on the challenges faced by geographically isolated families when accessing education. Reliable and practical transport remains one of the most significant factors influencing whether country children can attend their nearest appropriate school.

At the 2025 State Conference six motions relating to travel were presented by branches including Eastern Districts, Midwest and Lakes District. These motions highlighted several key issues for rural families including access to school bus services, communication processes, consultation with local communities and the need for fair and practical policy application.

One motion raised by the Eastern Districts Branch requested that School Bus Services ensure all rural children have a realistic option to access their local school by removing the “complimentary” passenger classification and ensuring that even small bus runs are serviced. For many regional families this classification can create uncertainty, as complimentary seats may be removed when eligible students require them. For families who rely heavily on these services to access education, this uncertainty can create considerable stress when trying to plan daily school travel.

Communication and consultation regarding school bus services also remained a strong theme in the motions raised at Conference. Several motions called for improved engagement between School Bus Services (SBS), School Bus Advisory Committees (SBAC), contractors, schools and families. These motions emphasised the importance of ensuring that consultation occurs with SBACs and other local stakeholders before changes are communicated to families, allowing the valuable knowledge of local communities to inform decision-making. ICPA (WA) have been encouraging school communities to make sure they have registered their School Bus Advisory Committees (SBAC) with School Bus Services, as we discovered at one of our meetings with Mr Anthony Cattai, Operations Manager of School Bus Services that there was not as many SBACs registered as what we thought.

Rural communities often have a strong understanding of local road conditions, distances and family logistics which can greatly assist in developing practical transport solutions. The formation and strengthening of School Bus Advisory Committees was therefore strongly supported, as these committees provide an important avenue for collaboration between parents, schools, contractors and School Bus Services.

ICPA (WA) wrote to the Minister for Transport, the Hon Rita Saffioti MLA, following these motions outlining the concerns raised by members regarding communication processes and resourcing within School Bus Services. In response, the Minister's office advised that following recommendations from the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee "Bus Fair" report (2022), additional funding has been provided to the Public Transport Authority's School Bus Services Branch to improve communication and consultation with stakeholders.

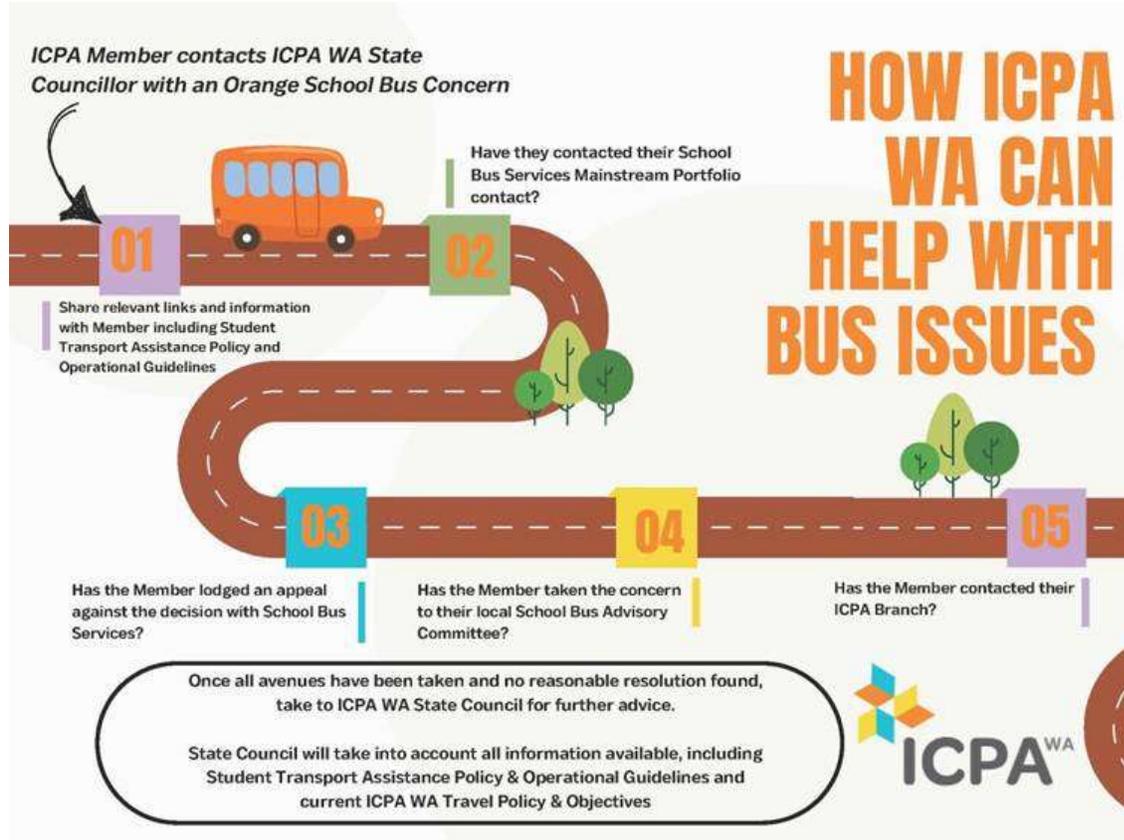
Several new positions were created in 2024 to support these improvements, with further roles expected to be permanently filled during 2025. These positions are intended to strengthen communication with contractors, schools and regional communities regarding school bus services. ICPA (WA) welcomes this commitment and will continue to monitor how these changes support rural families.

Another motion raised by the Midwest Branch addressed eligibility criteria for students living shorter distances from a school bus route. While the existing policy outlines distance requirements, this motion highlighted situations where available seats may exist on a bus service but cannot be utilised due to policy constraints. These situations can place additional logistical pressure on families and in some cases may impact enrolment numbers at small rural schools.

During 2025 the Travel Portfolio also worked on developing a *School Bus enquiry flow chart* to assist members when navigating school transport issues. The aim of this resource is to provide families with a clear step-by-step pathway outlining who to contact and the processes involved when concerns arise regarding bus eligibility, route changes or transport decisions.

ICPA (WA) met with Mr Anthony Cattai, Operations Manager of School Bus Services to discuss school bus matters and present the draft flow chart. At our next meeting with Mr Cattai he reviewed the document and provided helpful suggestions to ensure the information accurately reflected the processes within School Bus Services. This resource will assist members in understanding the steps available to them when navigating school bus matters. ICPA (WA) have a good and productive relationship with School Bus Services and we are always able to have meetings with Mr Anthony Cattai, Operations Manager of School Bus Services. We appreciate the time that Mr Cattai and his department are able to give us, and yes sometimes the outcome is not to suit everyone but we at ICPA (WA) are still able to be a voice for our rural school communities.

The following is the School Bus enquiry flow chart and the breakdown of the chart that is on the ICPA (WA) website:



For families in rural and remote Western Australia, access to reliable school transport is a critical part of educational equity. When issues arise with Orange School Bus services, it can be challenging to know where to turn or how to resolve the concern effectively. The Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Western Australia (ICPA WA) offers a clear, step-by-step guide to help members navigate these challenges and find a resolution.

**Step-by-Step Support for Bus Issues**

**Step 1: Share Relevant Information**  
 The first step when a member contacts an ICPA WA State Councillor with a bus issue is to ensure they are informed. Councillors will share key documents and guidelines, including the Student Transport Assistance Policy and the Operational Guidelines. These resources provide a framework for understanding rights, responsibilities, and eligibility criteria.

**Step 2: Contact the Mainstream Portfolio Officer**  
 Before escalating the issue, it is essential to determine whether the member has contacted their School Bus Services Mainstream Portfolio contact. This initial communication often helps clarify misunderstandings or minor issues.

**Step 3: Appeal the Decision**  
*If concerns persist, the next step is to lodge a formal appeal against the decision with School Bus Services. This official process ensures the matter is reviewed within established protocols.*

**Step 4: Engage the School Bus Advisory Committee**  
*Members are also encouraged to take their concerns to their local School Bus Advisory Committee. These committees offer community-level insight and may be able to provide direct advocacy or support for specific issues.*

**Step 5: Connect with Their ICPA Branch**  
*Local ICPA branches are invaluable sources of peer support and local knowledge. Members are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their branch before further escalation.*

**When All Avenues Have Been Explored**

*If all the above steps have been taken and no satisfactory resolution is found, the issue can then be brought to the ICPA WA State Council for further consideration. The Council will review the matter using all available information, including the official transport policy documents and ICPA WA's own travel policy and objectives.*

**A Trusted Voice for Rural Families**

*ICPA WA continues to play a vital role in supporting equitable access to education for rural and remote families. This structured approach ensures that all appropriate steps are taken to resolve transport issues fairly and in line with policy, while also empowering members to advocate confidently for their children's education needs.*

Another important and ongoing issue raised at the 2025 State Conference by the Meekatharra Air and the Goldfields Eyre branch highlighted the lack of financial assistance available for families of Distance Education and School of the Air (SOTA) students who must travel long distances to attend compulsory face-to-face learning programs.

These “in-school” learning sessions are a vital part of the educational delivery for geographically isolated students. During these sessions teachers deliver curriculum content aligned with the Western Australian Curriculum, including assessments and learning activities that cannot be completed through online lessons alone. Despite this, families are currently required to cover all travel costs associated with attending these programs, which can involve travelling hundreds of kilometres several times each year.

ICPA (WA) wrote to the Minister for Transport advocating for the introduction of a conveyance allowance to support families attending these essential educational programs. In response, the Minister’s office advised that under the Student Transport Assistance Policy (STAP) conveyance allowances are currently only available where students are travelling to their nearest appropriate school and no school bus service exists.

While there is currently no transport assistance available for travel to Distance Education or School of the Air camps, the Department advised that the Road Travel Subsidy and other student travel subsidies will be subject to a major review during 2025–26, and that the matters raised by ICPA (WA) will be considered as part of this review. It was welcoming from Minister Saffioti’s office when they encouraged ICPA (WA) to continue the dialogue with Department of Transport and Major Infrastructure (DTMI).

We also had a meeting with Minister for Education the Hon Sabine Winton and explained the issue that these families are facing and the Department of Education have taken it on board, they have asked for further information and so ICPA (WA) are in process of following up on the requested information.

ICPA (WA) welcomes the opportunity for this issue to be considered during the upcoming review and will continue to advocate for equitable travel assistance for geographically isolated families whose children must travel significant distances to access these important face-to-face learning opportunities.

ICPA (WA) will continue to work constructively with government agencies, School Bus Services and local communities to ensure the practical realities faced by rural families are considered when transport policies are reviewed and implemented. Ensuring fair and workable transport arrangements remains an essential part of supporting strong rural schools and vibrant regional communities.

While policies and frameworks are important, the reality for many of our families is that accessing education in regional and remote Western Australia often involves significant distances, careful daily planning and a good deal of determination. What may seem like a small transport decision on paper can have a very real impact on a family's ability to ensure their children attend school each day.

ICPA (WA) appreciates the ongoing dialogue with School Bus Services and the Department of Transport and recently we were pleased to receive some important updates from School Bus Services, and in the words of School Bus Services "our updates are designed to make it easier, faster, and simpler for schools, contractors, and families to connect with us in 2026!" So firstly School Bus Services have had a name change and now are officially called SCHOOLBUSES! A modern name that reflects a modern, family focused service...who would have thought.

There is also a new contact centre in 2026, supported by an enhanced Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. These improvements are designed to make it easier, faster, and more reliable for families to get in touch with School buses. Seamless Regional Support, if your usual direct contact isn't available, another team member within your region will be able to assist. School buses goal is to make sure they are available to families, contractors & schools when needed. In the coming weeks a new contact centre number will be made available and to make it even easier School buses will provide you with detail and a regional mapping guide to identify your region so when calling through you know what numbers to press to navigate the new IVR system. All in all these changes brings all School buses together under one clear name and one reliable point of contact. With these new changes ICPA(WA) looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for rural and remote students as school transport is not simply a convenience it is a critical link that makes education possible— ensuring that, for country kids, *the wheels on the bus really do keep going round and round.*

## **RURAL AND REMOTE EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (RREAC) REPORT**

### **Naomi Obst – Appointee, March 2026**

On 24/10/2025, I submitted an updated resume as requested to the RREAC Executive Officer, Ben Fisher for my application to be renewed pending nomination from ICPA.

My nomination was forwarded by the ICPA State Council at the end of October 2025.

In 2025, there was no further activity or correspondence from RREAC.

As of March 2026, I have been informed by Ben Fisher (RREAC, EO) That all nominations remain before the Minister for Education, and he is hoping that they can get these submissions to Cabinet by the end of March.

It remains my view that ICPA is an important voice on the RREAC council as a voice for regional and remote education in Western Australia. It is disappointing that RREAC is not an active participant in providing the Minister with strategic and solution-based advice as the terms of reference outline.

### **Representatives**

Groups represented in Council may change from time to time according to appointments made by the Minister. Members use their experience, skills and qualifications to provide strategic advice to the Minister from a cross-sectoral perspective. The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson also meet with the Minister on a regular basis. The Minister for Education appoints the members of RREAC with the endorsement of Cabinet.

### **Community and Consumer Representatives**

- Isolated Children's' Parents' Association (WA) Inc
- Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc
- Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia - parent representative
- Community representative for education
- State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia and Independent Union of Australia WA Branch
- Catholic School Parents WA

### **Funder and Provider Representatives**

- Catholic Education Western Australia
- Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
- Western Australian universities
- Department of Education
- Education and training interests
- Aboriginal education and training interests
- Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry (WA)

### Terms of reference

The Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC) provides the Minister with evidence-based and solutions-focused strategic advice on education and training issues in rural and remote areas of Western Australia.

RREACs Terms of Reference are:

- To provide the Minister with evidence-based and solution-focused strategic advice on education and training issues and developments in rural and remote areas of the State.
- To provide specific strategic advice on the education services that give senior secondary students in rural and remote areas equitable opportunities for compulsory participation in education and training.
- To advise about rural and remote community and consumer interests in education and training.
- To ensure strategic advice is provided from a cross-sectoral perspective across the schools, training and higher education sectors and encompasses both the public and private provision.

RREAC may initiate its own inquiries within its terms of reference. From time to time the Minister may

establish terms of reference for, or refer items to, RREAC for consideration and report. Refer to: [Outlook and directions \(/web/rreac/outlookand-directions\)](/web/rreac/outlookand-directions).