

AGENDA MOTIONS

ALLOWANCES

A1 Lakes District Branch

Allowances

CARRIED/LOST

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

Explanation:

The BAHA is an important subsidy that assists families living in remote areas of our State who send their children away to school. Many of these students face having to leave home and attend a boarding school as they do not have access to a local high school.

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

WA Residential Colleges boarding facility cost for 2023 which covers bed, meals, facilities, and pastoral care.	\$14,823
Federal government assistance (if eligible) with the Assistance for Isolated Children Basic Boarding Allowance (AIC)	\$ 9,396
Additional Boarding Allowance (if eligible and income-tested)	\$ 2,695
Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA)	\$ 1,350
Total potential reimbursement:	\$13,441

This reflects a shortfall of \$4,077 for AIC and BAHA recipients or \$1,382 for AIC and BAHA recipients (if in receipt of the Additional Boarding allowance) per student per regional family.

In addition, families face the added cost of transporting students, from their place of residence to school.

An increased contribution from the State Government to the BAHA would aid in enticing families to remain in the regions, fill employment roles and sustain communities by assisting in making boarding school an affordable option.

In 2010 the BAHA payment increased from \$1,320 to \$2,105 (or an extra \$785 allocated per student, per year) under the Royalties for Regions for Western Australia to address the inequality in accessing education.

In 2018 the State Government reduced the BAHA rate to \$1,948 with further decreases annually to only \$1,320 in 2022. The failure to have this Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjusted over recent years and consistently reduced is ignoring the needs of regional families to access affordable education.

The State Government wrote to ICPA (WA) advising of an increase by CPI from \$1,320 in 2022 to \$1,350 in 2023, which equates to 2.27%; yet the CPI index for the September 2022 quarter from Reserve Bank non-adjusted was 7.3%. Therefore, a current CPI increase would be \$96.36, totalling \$1,416.

Regional areas are suffering the most with increased pricing across all sectors and although we are grateful for this slight increase, families continue to feel disadvantaged. It is imperative we keep regional families in regional boarding facilities.

A2 Goldfields Eyre Branch *Allowances* **CARRIED/LOST**

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

Explanation:

In September 2017 Minister Sue Ellery announced that the BAHA would reduce over four years due to the Royalties for Regions (RfR) funding ceasing after 2017. The RfR program started funding support for the BAHA in 2013 with an increase in the BAHA of \$785.

Boarding fees continue to rise annually throughout Western Australia by up to 8%. This is causing a significant gap between what is charged and what is received by parents as support from both Federal and State Governments. Families who have no choice but to send their children away to boarding school are increasingly under financial pressure to provide their children with suitable educations. Currently, there is a gap of \$4,077, at Residential Colleges in WA, that isolated families must pay after receiving the AIC and BAHA payments (without AIC additional) from both the Federal and State Governments.

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

A3 Meekatharra Air Branch *Allowances* **CARRIED/LOST**

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

Explanation:

While we appreciate that BAHA will now be increasing each year with Consumer Price Index (CPI), it is an important subsidy that rural and remote families rely heavily on each year when sending their children away from home to provide them with an adequate education. An increase in this allowance would significantly help rural families as boarding fees are increasing annually.

A4 Goldfields Eyre Branch *Allowances* **CARRIED/LOST**

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

Explanation:

Under the current guidelines, part-time distance education students are ineligible for the Distance Education (DE) component of the AIC allowance, which means families enrolled in the 4-year-old programme must bear the costs of maintaining and setting up the classroom in that first year of schooling. Early Childhood Education is a materials/resource heavy time which translates to expensive. This coupled with the costs associated with setting up a classroom for the first time means that many families are under undue financial pressure at an already stressful time in the isolated education journey.

COMMUNICATIONS

A5 Goldfields Eyre Branch *Communications* **CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (WA) consult with telcos regarding the impact that the phasing out of the 3G network 850Mhz spectrum will have on very remote locations. The 4G and 5G Networks have far greater download speeds but they range significantly less than 3G which will leave many areas without phone service.”

Explanation:

The 4G and 5G Networks have far greater download speeds but the range is considerably less than 3G which will result in a much smaller footprint of service areas leaving many areas without phone service, which previously had it with the 3G network. This completely contradicts the blackspot eradication programme that has been successful in delivering service to many locations that may become blackspots again in the 4G/5G rollout.

DISTANCE EDUCATION, SOTA & CURRICULUM

A6 Goldfields Eyre Branch *Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum* **CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (WA) requests ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate the Federal Government to establish a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) in recognition of the role the home tutor plays in educating geographically isolated students via distance education.”

Explanation:

The service provided by Home Tutors in the delivery of education to students in rural and remote Australia who have no choice but to be educated via the distance education mode of delivery needs to be acknowledged. Home Tutors provide what the government simply cannot cost-effectively supply and as such should be recognised and remunerated fairly.

RURAL & REMOTE SCHOOLS

A7 Lakes District Branch *Rural and Remote Schools* **CARRIED/LOST**

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Education ensures our regional and remote schools can access suitable staff to fill short to medium-term vacancies to allow teachers to take appropriate leave such as Long Service Leave when it is due.”

Explanation:

In 2022 a teacher was recalled from planned and preapproved Long Service Leave (LSL) after the teacher appointed to cover the position moved to another job. Another teacher was then secured but was unable to continue on in the position shortly after she started. Eventually, the permanent teacher was asked to return from LSL to complete the year. There were numerous teachers flowing through the class and this proved very disruptive for the students.

The same teacher had then arranged for 18 weeks of LSL starting at the beginning of Term 1, 2023. After much searching and a vast amount of time spent, a teacher could not be secured for this time frame. The permanent teacher has had to come back from LSL to start this school year until a member of the Flying Squad can be secured.

These staffing difficulties and uncertainties are having a vast impact on the teacher, the Principal, students and their families.

A8 Lakes District Branch *Rural and Remote Schools* CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Education and the Department of Education to ensure the Focus 2023 strategic direction extends to regional, rural and remote schools, including Schools of the Air.”

Explanation:

In late 2022 *Focus 2023* was released by Director General Lisa Rodgers for the purpose of providing strategic direction and priorities for schools for the year ahead.

Regional, rural and remote schools are specifically mentioned just once in the six main points. In point 2 it states, ‘support for schools will provide funding and support to strengthen secondary education in district high schools’.

Ms Rodgers states in the introduction, “There are residual challenges of recent years with the impact of disruption on student attendance, mental health and wellbeing, and achievement.” This comment is very true and the real impact has been much longer than ‘recent years’ for our rural and remote students and their families.

There are greater complexities that attribute to challenges in rural and remote areas including distance, access to services and multi-age classrooms (at times there may be four year levels in one class) and it is requested that the Minister provide documentation pertaining to the application on these *Focus 2023* strategies and priorities for regional, rural and remote schools, including Schools of the Air.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION

A9 Lakes District Branch *Specific Education* CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health work collaboratively to increase the allocation of services by psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and speech pathologists that are provided by the State Government to better support students in regional, rural and remote schools.”

Explanation:

Health professional positions are often unfilled and/or understaffed in regional, rural and remote WA and it can be difficult to attract and retain staff thus leading to months and sometimes years of waiting for appointments.

Additionally, a high turnover of staff slows down the process for our students in receiving the assistance they require; as health professionals need to make their own observations and assessments before they can act.

Due to the lack of access to health professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic, our students have been missing out on much-needed support to ensure they have their needs met to reach their full potential.

Alternative solutions such as:

- pooled staffing resources across regional and rural schools as opposed to set days/times to ensure demand is matched with staffing
- the employment of health professionals by the Department of Education
- greater collaboration between the Education and Health departments.
- Earlier implementation of key learning programs in early childhood i.e. Katanning Oral Language Program (KOLP).

A10 Lakes District Branch

Specific Education

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education ensures health professionals that service regional and remote schools (physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, school psychologists) are replaced when they are taking leave.”

Explanation:

In Term 1 at a local school, the Occupational Therapist that services the school is taking leave for all of March. The school has been told there are two dates later in the term that the Occupational Therapist will be able to see students who have been referred. Given the lack of services provided to students and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is unacceptable to have to wait a whole term for an appointment with an Occupational Therapist. Early intervention is the key to good development and our children have been missing out and continue to do so.

A11 Lakes District Branch

Specific Education

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) approach the Minister for Education to investigate how the implementation of Autism Specialist Learning Programs in larger schools can be adapted to support students in regional, rural and remote schools.”

Explanation:

In 2022 an additional six Autism Specialist Learning Programs (SLP) have been set up in schools. There are currently twenty four schools. None of these schools would be classed as regional or remote. There are several very small regional and remote schools with four year levels being taught by a single teacher that have multiple children with autism. We would like to be able to support our children the best we can.

Expanding the use of Specialist Learning Programs to support students with autism is specifically mentioned in Point 5 of the *Focus 2023*.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

A12 Midwest Branch

Student Accommodation

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Education, Minister for Disability, and other relevant ministers provide funding for students with a disability in boarding houses facilities so that their needs can be met, and reasonable adjustments and accommodations can be implemented in accordance with The Disability Standards for Education 2005.”

Explanation:

When a student with a funded disability (e.g. Autism) is enrolled at a school, the school is eligible to apply for schools plus funding or special education funding from the WA Education Department, via their individual system dependent on what type of school they are classified as. The amount of funding given per student is in accordance with their diagnosis and needs. This funding is then dispersed at the school's discretion for the purpose of education.

A boarding student (24 hours per day, 7 days a week in school term) gets the same level of funding as a day student. The boarding house has a duty of care, responsibility and accountability for the increased needs of a student with a disability. This is inclusive of wellbeing, medical, social, homework/prep education, nutrition, extracurricular school activities such as sports or choir and boarding house excursions and activities. Students with a disability require extra support in their daily lives to reach their full potential. Currently, there is no clarity on whose jurisdiction or agency the needs of a person with a disability fall under in the secondary boarding house systems. Access to funding for a person with a disability in a boarding house is not currently provided in any way.

The relevant bodies included in the shared response to the needs of a person with a disability in WA include the Department of Education, the Department of Communities, the NDIS and NDIA. Relevant Standards and Registrations that cover off on schools' compliance to meet the needs of a student with a disability include Registration Standards for Non-Government Schools (in accordance with section 159 of the School Education Act 1999), Boarding Standard for Australian Schools and Residences 2015, The State Disability Strategy 2020 - 2030 and The Disability Standards for Education 2005.

We urge you to pass this motion so that students with disability needs are being met in boarding houses across Western Australia through funding to provide an equal and inclusive opportunity to education for all students.

TRAVEL

A13 Midwest Branch

Travel

CARRIED/LOST

"That ICPA (WA) continues to advocate the Minister for Transport increase the payment per kilometre for the Public Transport Authority (PTA) Conveyance Allowance to better reflect the costs of running a vehicle, noting that it is currently paid at 25.24 cents/km, whereas the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) business expense rate is 78 cents/km."

Explanation:

The Conveyance Allowance is an important payment to support rural families travelling long distances daily to meet school bus services. As per Recommendation 14 of the Bus Fair Report by the Public Accounts Committee (August 2022): "The Minister for Transport should ensure the Public Transport Authority review the Conveyance Allowance to ensure it is based on a contemporary benchmark, adjusted in line with the Consumer Price Index, and the basis for adjustments is transparent."

This recommendation was accepted in principle by the State Government. Further work was to be undertaken by the Public Transport Authority in consultation with the Department of Treasury to investigate whether the conveyance allowance appropriately relates to the cost of running a vehicle. (December 2022).

At a rate of 25.24 cents/km (from Term 3, 2022), it is only a third of the rate used by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) for claiming business kilometres (78 cents/km) in a private vehicle.

A14 Lakes District Branch
Travel
CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Transport increases the payment per kilometre for the Public Transport Authority conveyance allowance to better reflect the actual costs associated with running a vehicle.”

Explanation:

Recommendation 14 of the ‘Bus Fair’ report review into the Student Transport Assistance Program (STAP) recommended this allowance be adjusted. The current payment of 25.24 cents/km as a contribution towards the cost of fuel, tyres, repairs and maintenance of a private vehicle is no longer reflective of the rising costs associated with running a vehicle and is approximately ⅓ of the rate used by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) when claiming car-related expenses (78 cents/km for 2022-23).

It is accepted that the rate of the allowance is not intended to fully reimburse families for the cost of transporting children to school, however, the rate has not increased in line with Consumer Price Index (CPI) over the past 10 years.

A15 Lakes District Branch
Travel
CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Department of Education and the Minister for Education ensure that any bus hired and/or used by any school be fitted with suitable seatbelt restraints.”

Explanation:

In the last few years, there have been instances when regional, rural and remote students have travelled to excursions and camps on buses without fitted seatbelts. We understand there are difficulties at times with securing affordable and appropriate vehicles to hire but believe that our students’ safety must come first.

A16 Lakes District Branch
Travel
CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) requests the Minister for Transport to promptly implement recommendations as presented in the ‘Bus Fair’ report, following the inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework.”

Explanation:

In August 2022, the report ‘Bus Fair’ was tabled and contained forty (40) recommendations covering the overarching principles of the Student Transport Assistance Policy (STAP).

For example, some of these points included a number of key recommendations into:

- Eligibility criteria to the nearest appropriate school
- Access to gifted and talented programs
- Adequate notification of the alteration of services
- Reviewing and administration of the conveyance allowance
- Improved sharing of school bus services information to local schools and families
- Establishment of a complaints management process
- Guidelines for safety requirements, construction and maintenance of bus stops.

Travel costs and transport accessibility continues to be a barrier to appropriate education for rural and remote families.