



AGENDA MOTIONS

ALLOWANCES

A1 Lakes District Branch

Allowances

CARRIED/LOST

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

Explanation:

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

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

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

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

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

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

A2 Goldfields Eyre Branch

Allowances

CARRIED/LOST

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

Explanation:

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



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

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

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

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

Explanation:

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

DISTANCE EDUCATION, SOTA & CURRICULUM

A4 Meekatharra Air Branch *Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum* **CARRIED/LOST**

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

Explanation:

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

A5 Meekatharra Air Branch *Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum* **CARRIED/LOST**

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

Explanation:

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

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

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

Explanation:

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

A7 **Goldfields Eyre Branch*****Distance Education, SOTA & Curriculum*****CARRIED/LOST**

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

Explanation:

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

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

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

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

RURAL & REMOTE SCHOOLS

A9 Lakes District Branch

Rural and Remote Schools

CARRIED/LOST

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

Explanation:

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

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

Examples could be but are not limited to:

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

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

A10 Lakes District Branch

Rural and Remote Schools

CARRIED/LOST

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

Explanation:

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

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

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

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

- A review of the schools in the Country Teaching Program incentives and eligibility.
- Rental subsidies for both private and GROH accommodation.
- Flexible working arrangements e.g. an additional two days leave per term.



- Incentives in exchange for two or three years of continuous service in one position.
- Reduced Higher Education Contribution (HECS-HELP) loan.

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

A11 Goldfields Eyre Branch***Rural and Remote Schools*****CARRIED/LOST**

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

Explanation:

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

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

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

Additional Incentives could include:

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

A12 Lakes District Branch***Rural and Remote Schools*****CARRIED/LOST**

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

Explanation:

The CTP is an incentive package that offers financial reward to teach at certain country schools which are deemed difficult to staff and have limited services. According to the Department of Education website teachers and school leaders in 146 regional and rural schools are paid annual allowances ranging from \$5,000 to \$13,730 as a part of our Country Teaching Program.

The Country Teaching Program is adding a further disadvantage to small regional and rural schools in the Great Southern that have no monetary allowances on offer. In the Great Southern, Katanning Primary School has



subsidised housing, free relocation and an \$8,020 monetary incentive. Katanning Shire with 4,200 people has a large regional centre with commercial businesses, hospital, retail and shopping precincts. Nyabing a small town with 235 people, 70km from Katanning only has subsidised housing and free relocation under the CTP.

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

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

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

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

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

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

A13 Lakes District Branch

Rural and Remote Schools

CARRIED/LOST

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

Explanation:

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

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

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

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



TEACHER TRAINING

A14 Goldfields Eyre Branch

Teacher Training

CARRIED/LOST

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

Explanation:

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

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

TRAVEL

A15 Lakes District Branch

Travel

CARRIED/LOST

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

Explanation:

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

Example:

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

A16 Meekatharra Air Branch

Travel

CARRIED/LOST

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

Explanation:

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

**A17** **Lakes District Branch****Travel****CARRIED/LOST**

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

Explanation:

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

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

A18 **Lakes District Branch****Travel****CARRIED/LOST**

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

Explanation:

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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