

SUPPLEMENTARY MOTIONS

ALLOWANCES

S1 Midwest Branch

Allowances

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) advocates the Minister for Education and the State Government adjust the eligibility criteria for the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) to include geographically isolated students who are ineligible for the Assistance for Isolated Children allowance due to their proximity to a District High School.”

Explanation:

RURAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS

S2 Lakes District Branch

Rural and Remote Schools

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) advocate for the Department of Education to take into account the proximity of a school to the district boundary they fall under when determining school closures due to the fire behaviour index.”

Explanation:

If a school is listed on the bushfire zone register with a risk rating of extreme or very high and a fire behaviour index (FBI) of 75 or greater is forecast, the school may be then subject to pre-emptive (planned) closure. However, the pre-emptive closure will then be based on the fire weather district in which the school is located.

On Friday 23rd February 2024, schools within the Fitzgerald Inland zone were closed due to an FBI rating of extreme. Gairdner Primary School is located **200 metres** from the boundary of the Fitzgerald Coast and Fitzgerald Inland zones and is surrounded by bushland. At 1:49pm the local Chief Fire Control Officer reported wind gusts of 36km/hour (with winds forecast to increase), a temperature of 44.2 degrees and a calculated FBI of 101. Furthermore, the Fitzgerald National Park located within the Fitzgerald Coast zone and 47km from the school was closed.

This scenario outlines a situation where Gairdner Primary School, despite its proximity to high-risk bushfire zones and concerning local weather conditions, was not subject to pre-emptive closure due to its classification. This school was assessed by its location in Fitzgerald Coast with a projected FBI of 50, well below the threshold of 75 to trigger a pre-emptive closure. On the other hand, Fitzgerald Inland was assessed to expect an FBI of 75, hence, any school located in this fire weather district with a bushfire risk level of extreme or very high was subject to pre-emptive closure.

Authorities need to weigh the risk factors carefully and consider the safety of students and staff when making decisions regarding school closures in the face of bushfire threats. If the nearby zone's conditions pose a significant risk, it may be necessary to extend the closure measures to schools like Gairdner Primary School, despite their classification in a lower-risk zone.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

S3 Lakes District Branch

Student Accommodation

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) advocates the Minister for Education to prioritise increased support for staff and students in Residential Colleges. This support should particularly focus on students with heightened needs, including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), anxiety disorders and other mental health challenges.”

Explanation:

Collaborative assistance is especially crucial in situations where extenuating circumstances place significant stress on the child. Moreover, the establishment of a comprehensive network involving youth engagement and professional resources is essential for effective support delivery.

“Allowing a student with a hidden disability (ADHD, anxiety) to struggle academically or socially when all that is needed for success are appropriate accommodations and explicit instruction, is no different than failing to provide a ramp for a person in a wheelchair.”

Case Study:

A boarding student facing significant mental health challenges experienced severe repercussions when they were denied placement at two Residential Colleges. Consequently, they faced the imminent risk of homelessness until they found accommodation at a Home for Youth catering to individuals aged between 16 and 25 years old.

This student suffers from ADHA, anxiety and ODD. To add to the student's emotional state, over the past few years, they were impacted when two residential students committed suicide at different boarding facilities where they were residing. Following this, school psychologists were in touch 2 -3 times over the following two months or so, but that was all the support provided by the Department of Education.

The student's mother has tried desperately to support her child and has reached out to various government agencies where they were either let down or her child refused to engage. She felt helpless and exhausted in trying to get support for her child. At times she was unable to afford a bus fare for him to return home and reunite them under difficult circumstances, which resulted in a heavy reliance on boarding staff to support her child.

As described by the parent; *‘Children with ADHD have impulsive behaviours, lack emotional control and have executive functioning disorders. Their needs are not deemed high enough that they are unable to be in the standard school setting, but they are definitely high enough that they need considerations with accommodation and allowances within a boarding school setting.’*

Residential staff need support and additional resources for:

- Training in mental health and establishing connections within the Department of Health and other agencies.
- Ability for students to be able to return during the day to the residential facility for time out including flexible arrangements between school health staff and facility supervisors.
- Acknowledge that some students need a mental health respite day.
- Feedback from parents as to how they think their child is coping under high stress situations.
- Improved communications between schools and boarding facilities if a child has issues during a school day that might impact their presence back in boarding.

TRAVEL

S4 Lakes District Branch

Travel

CARRIED/LOST

“That ICPA (WA) advocate the Minister for Transport and the Department of Transport to provide additional staffing, training or restructuring of the School Bus Services (SBS) division to support regional and rural families to ensure open, collaborative and timely communications in determining school bus routes.”

Explanation:

The Transport Operation Policy item 10.5 states that under the ‘Consultation and Communication’: *“The process of reviewing either a single service route or an area review of multiple service routes will be conducted in an open and transparent way. SBS will engage; School Bus Advisory Committees (parent representative groups), Contractors and schools to ensure all affected parties are provided with the opportunity to discuss any concerns.”*

School Bus Services provide an amazing service transporting regional and rural children to and from school often covering vast distances and facing many local challenges.

Boosting staffing levels and/or establishing a dedicated 'resolution team' could expedite the approval process for bus-related matters, addressing changes or issues promptly without necessitating assistance from a Local Member of Government.

A structured communication process detailing the involved parties, direct access to a resolution team member and a transparent planning process will improve outcomes for regional families utilising the school bus service in remote and rural areas.

An improved planning process for school bus routes would ensure families who know the best routes are involved in changes. Effective communication regarding potential impending issues well in advance is essential for affected families. A documented timeline outlining the process for school bus route alterations, including input and review by impacted families before final approval, is necessary.

Given that the policy has documented the intent of the ‘Consultation Process’ it is evident that more support and change is needed for the School Bus Services division to deliver this outcome.

Case Study 1:

In January 2024, a regional family living 15km from town and new to the school was declined access to the school bus service for their eldest child due to no seats available one week before the commencement of Term 1.

Being declined for a school bus service creates logistical issues for parental work commitments, is deflating for a child who was excited to step on a school bus for the first time, plus the issue of driving the child to and from school. In this case, the parent also had a toddler at home who now needs to be travelling 60km a day to school for drop off and pickups.

Again in January 2024, it was discovered that School Bus A had exceeded its capacity, carrying 15 children on a bus with only 13 passenger seats. Consequently, School Bus Services sought to change the route of School Bus B serving the same school. However, there was no communication or consultation with the bus contractor or families using School Bus B regarding the proposed new route. Families, including one with complimentary passengers, were notified in Week 5 of Term 1 that the new bus route would begin in Week 6 of Term 1.

School Bus Services had informed the bus contractor that they were only eligible to transport 12 students (not 13) as the 13th seat (being the front passenger seat next to the bus driver) was deemed ineligible for primary school students to utilise. Clarification was sought from the local member of parliament and the Department

of Education by the Parents and Citizens Association - school bus representative. In Week 5, Term 1 2024 School Bus Services confirmed the 13th seat could be used as per Department of Transport passenger vehicle policy.

Case Study 2:

A family with 3 children moved to a small regional area in 2017, enrolled at their closest school 35km away and were told that they would get a school bus to their driveway or within 5km. They were immediately told by the bus driver that the pickup would be 15km from the house, meaning 60km every day to put the children on the bus.

Despite many requests, they were told the change would affect other children on the bus route. The children were the last off the bus in the afternoon which is 1 hour and 20 minutes and nearly the last on in the morning.

An email response from SBS was one line stating that they could not change the terminus and it would add extra time to the bus run. However, as soon as a new child started at the school they received the bus service to their door and the run was extended adding 20 minutes to the child's time on the bus. Other children along the same road travel even further to catch the same bus.

In June 2021, her child was diagnosed with Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG – a highly aggressive tumour on her brain stem). When they returned home from Perth after treatment in September 2021 all she wished to do was return to school to be with her friends.

The school bus contractor wanted to help but advised they would need to go through SBS. There was a lot of back and forth but in the end, the bus was not approved to their door and instead offered conveyance allowance. She could no longer continue the fight with SBS as she had limited time left with her daughter.

Every year until 2023 they have reapplied to have the bus come closer with no success and no compassion to their situation. *"We are just one of the many families affected by those who sit in an office in Perth and their children have easy access to education".*