

PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

ALLOWANCES REPORT

Chandra Ridley – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

At the 2022 State Conference, allowance motions A1, A2 and A3 were raised regarding increasing the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA).

A letter was sent to the Minister for Education, Hon. Sue Ellery. The Minister responded on 30th June stating that the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) will be increased by \$30 in 2023 in line with the Consumer Price Index to \$1350 per annum.

In 2021 the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) commenced, this is a one-off, means-tested payment of up to \$5000 to assist eligible students with the cost of relocating to undertake tertiary study for school leavers from inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote areas who relocate more than 90 minutes by public transport from their family home, undertake a full-time, eligible higher level tertiary education course (Certificate IV or above) in the year following Year 12 or equivalent and the parental income is below \$250 000.

Changes to the eligibility and payment structure occurred in response to the evaluation of the program in late 2021 (which ICPA (Aust) provided feedback to) commenced in 2022 including:

- Eligibility extended to inner regional students
- Eligible students from outer regional, remote, and remote areas, will continue to receive up to \$5,000 in two payments, and students from inner regional areas will receive a single payment of \$3,000
- Application and payment process for **all** TAP applicants will be administered solely through Services Australia

Federal Council will continue to seek further adjustments to the TAP including:

- The alignment of the TAP to the Relocation Scholarship payment rates, thus an annual and ongoing payment to recognise the costs not just being borne in the first year of the student's course.
- Non-means tested and therefore does not jeopardise the eligibility of payments including Youth Allowance (YA) and ABSTUDY.
- Extended to students who do not go straight to university or onto a VET course – for gap year students, acknowledging they still have the high cost of relocation.
 - Ideally, the removal of the \$250,000 parent income threshold criteria.
 - Means testing - the choice of one-of-three-year provision for Independent Youth Allowance (IYA) should be applied here also to allow for fluctuating incomes brought about by drought, sales etc.
 - Apprentices - Inclusion of rural and remote Australian Apprentices who fulfil the criteria.

From 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2024, apprentices training in Priority Occupations including Aged or Disabled Carer and Metal Fabricator can receive assistance of up to \$5000 (\$1250 paid every six months for their first two years), to ensure they are supported to complete their training.

From 1 July 2024, the Australian Apprentice Training Support Payment will continue to target areas of skills needed with apprentices training in Priority Occupations able to receive assistance of up to \$3000 (\$750 paid every six months for their first two years). The full Australian Apprenticeship Priority List can be found at dewr.gov.au

The Assistance for Isolated Children, Distance Education Allowance has increased from \$4,428 per child per year in 2022 to \$4,698 in 2023. The Basic Boarding Allowance has increased to \$9,396 from \$8,856 in 2022 and the Additional Allowance has increased to \$2,695 from \$2,540.

BOARDING

Table of BAHA Rates 2013 – 2023:

2013	\$2,105
2014	\$2,105
2015	\$2,105
2016	\$2,105
2017	\$2,105
2018	\$1,948
2019	\$1,791
2020	\$1,634
2021	\$1,477
2022	\$1,320
2023	\$1,350

Table of Applications 2014 – 2022:

School Year	Total Applications
2014	1247
2015	1397
2016	1503
2017	1453
2018	1244
2019	1375
2020	1338
2021	1279
2022	1167*

*Applications still being accepted and paid

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Sally Brindal – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

There were no communication motions presented at the 2022 Annual State Conference.

REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDEPENDENT REVIEW COMMITTEE (RTIRC)

The Australian Government formally responded to the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC) report: A step change in demand, to which ICPA (WA) made a submission. The full response is available at: www.rtirc.gov.au, along with the report.

The response has five key elements:

- A new \$811.8 million initiative, Connecting Regional Australia, to further invest in digital infrastructure, services and skills, particularly mobile.
- \$450 million to toward a major expansion and upgrade of the nbn fixed wireless network with flow-on benefits to Sky Muster users.
- \$5 million in funding to expand and continue the Regional Tech Hub to provide consumer support.
- Further work on key regulatory and policy issues, and
- A new, more co-ordinated and strategic approach to regional communications investment,

As identified in the 2022-23 Budget, the Australian Government has committed \$1.3 billion in direct investment in regional telecommunications.

TELSTRA

Telstra looks forward to discussing the details of the RTIRC recommendations with their customers, stakeholders and the Federal Government to best support the aims of the review. This includes deciding how they invest the additional \$75 million of funding they have specifically set aside to further enhance connectivity in regional Australia, as well as their \$200 million co-investment fund that aims to improve regional connectivity over the four years ending FY25.

Telstra has also committed \$150 million to improve the regional mobile network customer experience. This includes addressing areas of network congestion by upgrading over 180 3G sites, augmenting capacity at

selected 4G sites with high traffic, and further 4G site optimisations to better balance 3G/4G traffic and address localised customer demand.

At the beginning of 2022, Telstra announced a 10-year arrangement that would allow TPG Telecom to acquire mobile network services from Telstra that would deliver faster mobile service speeds in more regional locations around Australia. The arrangement would provide access to some of TPG Telecom's spectrum across 4G and 5G. This additional spectrum would significantly reduce the increased congestion in busy times that has been caused by more people moving to regional areas during COVID. It would also enable Telstra to continue upgrading their network to provide even better coverage for their customers, while maintaining their network advantage of around one million square kilometres. Telstra would also obtain access to, and deploy infrastructure on, up to 169 additional TPG Telecom mobile sites also improving coverage for all customers in the zone.

Telstra and TPG Telecom (TPGT) asked for ACCC authorisation to share their separately owned spectrum for the delivery of mobile services in a regional coverage zone. Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) submitted that these proposed arrangements could benefit people living in the regional coverage zone by improving the quality of existing Telstra mobile services and increasing the choice of mobile providers. However, ACCAN also questioned aspects of the arrangements and urge the ACCC to closely examine the longer-term implications for consumers.

The ACCC decided to block the \$1.8 billion regional network sharing deal, arguing it would entrench Telstra's already dominant market position and discourage innovation and investment by competitors. TPG said it would take the matter to the competition tribunal and described the decision as *"a missed opportunity to deliver greater competition and choice for the people of regional Australia"*.

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Telstra has announced a boost in the support it offers customers in rural, regional and remote Australia.

As part of the Telstra Connected Communities program, Telstra will triple its annual investment in community engagement activities and support organisations such as chambers of commerce and other local groups. They will also collaborate closely with nbn Local to improve digital inclusion and community technology solutions, as well as partner on emergency response and preparedness.

- 100% of stores were back in Telstra ownership by September 2022. Telstra welcome feedback from customers' visits and hopes the ownership will be able to better align systems and processes to give customers a better-integrated experience in-store and online.
- 100% of all call centres were back on shore by July 2022.
- Telstra will double the number of locally based Regional Engagement Managers to work with communities to improve customer experience, provide information about coverage, performance and management of outages and build connectivity literacy and digital capability.
- Telstra will triple the number of highly experienced Regional Network Advisors to work with customers to address complex network issues and, for the first time, appoint a Remote Community Advocate. The Remote Community Advocate will monitor the performance of the network and communicate recovery times to affected communities as part of responding to the needs of these communities. The Remote Community Advocate will be part of a new Telstra Customer Advocate Council reporting directly to the Telstra CEO.
- The Telstra Customer Advocate Council will ensure regional, rural and remote customers have an even louder voice at the table. The Council members also include the Chief Customer Advocate, Chief First Nations Advocate and the Chief Regional Advocate.
- Telstra is looking to connect teams internally, e.g. retail teams with field technicians to create better communications within Telstra to help address customer concerns/issues.

- Regional Business Centres will be operational for business-based queries, although customers can approach retail shops the Business Centre will have more expertise in business-based solutions.

The Connected Communities Program also involves visiting communities to connect with customers and help resolve customer issues. In 2022 Boyd Brown, Regional General Manager, Telstra and Eva Colic, Regional Engagement Manager, along with a Telstra Team, visited a number of areas including Roebourne, Marble Bar, Nullagine, Meekatharra, Wiluna, Laverton, Leonora, Kambalda amongst others. They covered thousands of kilometres offering service and support to communities and reviewed outstanding debts to Telstra from prior operations, mostly now cleared.

Similar visits to other areas are to be co-ordinated in the future. Please contact me if you think your community would benefit from such a visit.

ONE WEB PARTNERSHIP

In early March, Telstra partnered with the low earth orbit (LEO) satellite communications company, OneWeb, to explore new solutions for improved digital connectivity across Australia and the Asia Pacific region.

The non-exclusive agreement brings together Telstra's telecommunications expertise in Australia, and OneWeb's satellite capability to deliver innovative connectivity in the future. The partnership complements Telstra's T25 ambition to grow and extend its network leadership position and boost mobile coverage across the country, in addition to being another key milestone for OneWeb's path to global coverage.

The partnership reinforces Telstra's ongoing commitment to providing world-class communications for regional Australia at a time when investment in expanding digital infrastructure remains a top priority for the country's economic recovery and development post-pandemic.

Telstra envisages many opportunities for their consumer, small business and enterprise customers using LEO satellite connectivity, including additional resiliency for emergency services and agritech.

CONNECTING RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA FROM SPACE

Telstra's new partnership with the global leader in satellite communications, ViaSat, will help connect rural, regional and remote Australia from space.

Telstra will use their InfraCo assets to enable the final part of ViaSat-3 – a three-part global satellite 'constellation' covering the Americas, Europe and Asia-Pacific

The first ViaSat-3 will be launched this year over the Americas, with the other two satellites expected to launch at later dates. When complete, the constellation will cover 4.1 billion people in 48 countries – more than half the world's population.

A satellite is basically a self-contained communications system in space that uses radio waves to send and receive signals to antennas on earth.

Satellites offer cost-effective coverage to hard-to-reach places and huge capacity, which is important as data-rich technologies like Internet of Things (IoT), edge computing and new 5G uses become more in demand.

For a satellite to deliver communications it needs to interact with infrastructure on the ground. That is where Telstra comes in.

ViaSat will build and launch the satellites and Telstra will build the on-ground infrastructure that will enable the project to deliver over 1Tbps of total network capacity and provide data and video streaming at a speed of more than 150Mbps.

The 16.5-year deal is a first-of-its-kind infrastructure build for Telstra and makes ViaSat one of Telstra Enterprise's largest customers. This project will help Telstra keep up with the increasing demand for data so more people in rural, regional and remote Australia can participate in the growing digital economy.

STAND-ALONE POWER SUPPLY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Earlier in 2022 Telstra partnered with Horizon Power to launch their first mobile base station in Western Australia that is connected by a Stand-alone Power Supply (SPS).

The move helps bolster the resilience of regional telecommunications in the Mt Ney area east of Esperance as well as reduce carbon emissions and improve community safety. The SPS initiative effectively takes the site off the mains power grid, with the power supply now via solar power, backed up with battery banks and a genset. The SPS unit is powered by eight kilowatt (kW) solar panels, a 16.8kW hour battery and a 26kW backup generator, which together can deliver 12kW of continuous power.

This will enable the tower to continue operating during natural disasters and emergencies; which may impact a traditional network of poles and wires, keeping the local community connected and informed at crucial times. The system was delivered by Horizon Power and its joint venture partner, Boundary Power, and is an example of one of the many commercial opportunities that can be leveraged by off-grid technology.

TELSTRA DAY

Telstra resurfaced Telstra Day in 2022. You could score smartphones, tablets, speakers, smartwatches and accessories for a discounted price. Telstra Day comes around sporadically, and there is also a caveat – each deal is only valid for the day.

SCAMS

Telstra announced the activation of a new SMS scam filter tool to protect consumers from scam text messages. The new SMS scam filter is part of their Cleaner Pipes initiative.

The number of scam text messages is on the rise – in 2021 there were more than 11,000 reports of malicious texts on Android devices compared to 50 reports in 2020. The new SMS scam filter feature blocks scam text messages at the network level before they reach mobile devices. Telstra undertook a 3-month internal pilot of the SMS scam blocking filter, with two and a half thousand employees taking part. Telstra is now rolling this technology out to every customer on the Telstra network. The SMS scam filter is automatically activated and there is no action required by customers.

The SMS filter works by using automatic machine scanning to pick out suspicious content such as malicious links and combines this with other patterns and characteristics like time, sender, the number of messages sent and the recipient. There are protections in place to ensure legitimate messages still get through, so commercial messages from banks and other large businesses, government departments, emergency alerts and Telstra applications like MessageBank will not be blocked. Fast-forward a few months and Telstra have blocked a staggering number of scam texts. In the past three months alone, their system has blocked just over 185 million malicious texts. That is around 1,500 malicious texts blocked every minute.

Telstra takes its privacy obligations seriously. They know there is a fine balance between protecting customers and ensuring their privacy. While the technology is learning, it might flag a potentially suspicious message asking if it is a scam. To avoid blocking something legitimate, the new message format may be reviewed by their specialists to identify if the message is a scam, but the details of the recipients will remain masked. You can find further detail on Telstra's approach to privacy, including their privacy statement at <https://www.telstra.com.au/privacy>.

Telstra has a lot of tips on how to stay safe on www.telstra.com. If you receive something you think is a scam, you should report it to Telstra. It helps them track scams in the wild and teaches their system what to look out for next. To report a scam, you can email Telstra at scams@telstra.com and they can investigate.

You can also report a scam to Telstra using their website or call them on 13 22 00. If you want to learn more, they also have more cyber safety advice on our website.

eSMART

Telstra Foundation is a supporter of eSmart libraries.

What is eSmart?

eSmart, an initiative of the Alanna & Madeline Foundation, helps schools maintain a supportive and connected community to reduce online and offline bullying and increase well-being. eSmart offers a set of educational tools.

- For Principals – a how-to guide on tackling bullying and cyberbullying.
- For teachers – lesson plans and training.
- For students – classroom activities and active learning.
- For parents – how to see the signs and help.

Over 2,200 schools are implementing the eSmart Schools framework to help their school manage online safety, more than 80% of libraries are teaching their community to be safe online and over 200,000 students have registered for the eSmart Digital Licence. An online resource teaching smart online behaviour.

FREE WI-FI

On 25 August 2022, Telstra announced free Wi-Fi would be available to all Australians on approximately 3,000 of their payphones, with plans to upgrade their entire network of almost 12,000 payphones over the coming years. What this means is that Wi-Fi from select payphones will be free for all Australians – whether they are a Telstra customer or not. Giving more Australians access to free internet will help more people stay connected - whether they are in a vulnerable situation and need access to help, or just want to connect with friends or family.

A recent survey by the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) found that 60 percent of respondents agree that free public Wi-Fi is important to them, however, only 36 percent are using free public Wi-Fi near where they live, and a further 31 percent do not even know where they can access it.

TELSTRA'S 3G NETWORK CLOSING ON 30 JUNE 2024

Why are they making this change?

- Demand for mobile data is growing at around 30 per cent per annum.
- To help customers benefit from new technology – from making a simple voice call to using HD video and remote sensors to manage livestock – the 3G network needs to upgrade to 4G and 5G.
- 4G and 5G networks are much more efficient than 3G – they can connect more devices, provide higher speeds, and have lower latency. They also use the same towers and spectrum frequencies as 3G.
- To bring customers across Australia the benefits of 4G and 5G the 3G network will be closing on 30 June 2024.

How can you prepare?

The 3G network closure is a little over a year away. Telstra are sending out letters and other communication to inform customers who may still have active 3G devices about the change. This may include mobile phones, tablets, dongles, monitoring devices and EFTPOS machines.

For devices that can receive SMS messages, Telstra has also sent a message directly to the service that is actively using the 3G network advising of the need to upgrade the device.

To be prepared, you will need to upgrade your device(s) to the 4G or 5G network prior to June 30th 2024.

Telstra's commitment:

- Telstra will continue to work with customers to help them move to 4G and 5G devices.
- The entire 3G network will remain open until 30th June 2024.
- Impacted customers include those using 3G mobile and IoT devices, such as EFTPOS machines, which operate on the 3G network only. These customers will be able to continue using their device until 30 June 2024, but after this date, if the device has not been updated to be 4G or 5G compatible, it will no longer be able to get a 3G signal.
- Telstra understands the impact this upgrade has on customers and is committed to supporting their move to a 4G or 5G capable device before the closure date through regular and proactive engagement. Telstra is also putting a strong focus on assisting vulnerable customers.
- Before Telstra closes the 3G network, they will expand their 4G network, so it provides equivalent coverage to 3G today. Simply put, if you currently only receive 3G coverage, you should receive 4G coverage following 3G closure.
- Telstra are conducting detailed checks to ensure their 4G coverage (as they upgrade sites) is equivalent to 3G coverage.
- Telstra is also using re-purposed 3G spectrum (850 MHz) to support their 5G rollout, so they can expand their 5G coverage in regional Australia earlier and more extensively than would otherwise be possible.

BLUE TICK PHONES

Connectivity is becoming more crucial than ever – and in regional and remote areas it can mean complete isolation. This is why, for the last 15 years, Telstra has been putting phones to the test to see if they deserve a Blue Tick.

The Telstra Blue Tick is the mark they give phones that their technicians and engineers have thoroughly tested to ensure they deliver superior voice coverage in regional and remote areas.

Regional coverage tips for Blue Tick

If you want to get every bit of coverage you can and the most out of your Telstra Blue Tick phone, here are a few tips to follow, straight out of the Telstra lab:

- Hold your phone as light as possible – how you hold your phone matters a lot. So next time you are trying to make a call on the edge of coverage, try not to squeeze the life out of your phone.
- Turn on Wi-Fi calling and SMS – if you get coverage outside, but not inside your home, you can turn Wi-Fi calling and SMS on to make phone calls or send texts like normal using your home internet, even without any mobile coverage.
- Use a headset or headphones for calls – do not need to worry about how you are holding your phone if you are not holding it, right?
- Take a look at repeaters or antennas – an external antenna or repeater is much larger than the antenna in your phone and can pick up coverage your phone cannot. It then repeats that signal short distances for your phone to connect to.

AUSTRALIAN DIGITAL INCLUSION INDEX (ADII)

The Index uses survey data to measure progress on digital inclusion across three dimensions including access, affordability and digital ability. It explores how these dimensions vary across both the country and different social groups.

In September this year, Telstra decided to undertake additional research to widen the data informing the Index. This means that they expect to release the next ADII report in 2023.

The additional research being undertaken includes:

- Additional First Nations data is being collected through the [Mapping the Digital Gap](#) project.
- A deep dive into Queenslanders' experiences of digital inclusion through a collaboration with the Queensland Government and the ADII research team at RMIT and Swinburne University of Technology.
- Additional ADII survey data to provide more in-depth insights into digital inclusion in the Northern Territory and Tasmania.

After the 2023 report, Telstra will publish the ADII every second year to allow more time for consideration of trends and collection of data.

GET ONLINE WEEK

Telstra was the Principal Supporting Partner of 'Get Online Week' which ran from 17-23 October. Through this partnership with the Good Things Foundation, Telstra supported Australians to build their digital skills. This is another way Telstra is helping to close the digital divide and build a connected future, so everyone can thrive.

TELSTRA SUBMISSION

Telstra recently made a submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Co-investment in Multi-carrier Regional Mobile Infrastructure.

To ensure lasting and positive outcomes for those living and working in regional communities, Telstra believes that government policy and funding programs, concerning co-investment in regional infrastructure should be designed with five key considerations in mind.

- Continued recognition of the importance of government co-funding, ensuring that this is focussed on areas where investment would be otherwise uneconomic.
- A co-ordinated and place-based approach by government at all levels.
- Program rules should not be overly restrictive or prescriptive but should generally support commercially agreed sharing.
- Funding for more than just outdoor black spots, and
- Using the best technology for the job (and ensuring people know about it).

You can read more about these five key considerations at: [Submissions – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](https://aph.gov.au/submissions)

3G CONCERNS/CONNECTIVITY ISSUES

Telstra has been in discussions with ICPA regarding members' issues particularly around 3G concerns. Telstra are developing a template that can be distributed to members for completion to give them a detailed and precise location of the problem areas. It is hoped the template will be released soon.

E-WASTE DEVICE

If you are upgrading your devices, a great way to minimise your footprint is to recycle or trade in unused devices to stop them from going into landfill. As part of [Telstra's sustainability commitment](#), they are aiming to reuse or recycle 500,000 mobile phones, modems and other devices each year to 2025.

But they need your help.

Bring your e-waste device into a Telstra store and claim bonus Telstra Plus points.

Find out what devices are eligible and where you can recycle them on their website under climate and sustainability – Bring back Bonus with Telstra.

REGIONAL TECH HUB

Established in 2020, the Regional Tech Hub (RTH) is a centralised resource providing regional, rural, and remote residents with the critical support needed to navigate the complex world of connectivity and technology options. The Regional Tech Hub provides independent and free information about digital technologies, services available, equipment solutions, setup, and installation.

In November 2022 the Regional Tech Hub, alongside the Minister for Communications, the Hon. Michelle Rowland MP and the National Farmers' Federation, launched 'Connectivity Month' - a campaign designed to jumpstart awareness of the options available to help people get connected and stay connected to mobile and internet services.

Connectivity Month aimed to address the gap in digital inclusion between regional and metropolitan communities, by simplifying the noise, confusion, and frustration around phone and internet connectivity. If you answer yes, to any of the following questions, then the Regional Tech Hub can help you.

- Do you need to get connected?
- Are you wanting to stay connected?
- Would you like to improve your connection?
- Would you like to be able to better use your connection?

People living in rural, regional and remote Australia are encouraged to reach out to the Regional Tech Hub for independent support to address these four questions.

Two-thirds of Australia's landmass currently has no mobile coverage, despite a third of Australia's population living outside metro cities. Evolving internet and mobile solutions are helping our regions overcome the digital divide; however, they can be confusing.

Since December 2020, the Regional Tech Hub (RTH) has received close to 100,000 requests for help, including more than 70,000 website enquiries and helped close to 10,000 people with their mobile and internet connectivity options.

Of the queries received, maximising coverage through the nbn Skymuster Satellite service was the most common advice sought, followed by requests for information on mobile broadband, mobile phone, nbn fixed wireless and nbn fixed line.

RTH Manager Jennifer Medway said many queries are from people living with an unreliable service that is too expensive or does not meet data needs. In most cases, there are options available, of which the RTH is looking to raise awareness during Connectivity Month and ultimately help more people to find the best solution suited to their needs.

Activities across the month shone a light on connectivity gaps in the bush and featured a suite of new resources, debunked old myths, and connected people with personalised connectivity options.

The Minister for Communications, the Hon. Michelle Rowland MP, acknowledged the difference in the connectivity experience of people living in regional Australia, where digital inclusion is considerably lower than the national average.

"Prosperous regional communities are central to the economic success of Australia, and yet there remain significant connectivity gaps in rural and remote areas of the country."

The Regional Tech Hub offers support via its website, a phone support line 1300 081 029 and social media pages [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

SCAMS

Nearly 48 million scam texts have been blocked since new rules were introduced by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) in July 2022 to combat the growing scourge of scams.

The new rules, which require telcos to identify, trace and block SMS scams were developed in December 2020 in response to evidence that SMS scams are increasing in prevalence and impact. By the end of September 2022, telcos had stopped more than 800 million scam calls reaching Australia.

Combatting SMS scams was recently announced by ACMA as one of seven priority areas for compliance in 2022-23 due to the potential financial and social harm they can cause to the Australian community.

According to Scamwatch data, SMS scams reported to Scamwatch have already cost Australians in excess of \$17 million in 2022.

Under the rules, telcos must also publish information to assist their customers to proactively manage and report SMS scams, share information about scam messages with other telcos and report identified scams to authorities.

As part of national Scams Awareness Week, (7-11 November 2022) ACMA revealed the top 5 reported phone scams to the agency.

Top 5 scam calls:

- Amazon impersonation: Scam calls about an issue with your Amazon account. They claim funds will be taken from your account if you do not act immediately by providing personal information.
- Banking/finance impersonation: Scam calls, emails and SMS claiming suspicious activity, unauthorised debits, or that your account has been suspended. They request personal details to verify your identity.
- Nbn impersonation: Scam callers posing as someone from technical support. They claim there is a fault with your internet to get access to your computer and personal information.
- Telstra impersonation: Similar to the nbn scam. Callers pose as Telstra technical support and claim you have issues with your service or internet to access your computer and personal information.
- eBay impersonation: Scammers use a recorded message to claim you have made a purchase that requires a charge to your account. This is to get you to provide personal information.

All five of the top reported scams impersonate trusted and well-known businesses, with scammers often displaying a fake number or sender information on your phone to make the contact look legitimate.

Many businesses clearly state they will not contact you out of the blue or send messages with links seeking financial information or personal details, so always treat these calls with caution.

LOST PHONE/NEW NUMBER SCAMS

Scamwatch is urging the public to be wary of text or WhatsApp messages appearing to be from a family member, relative or friend using an unknown number, claiming they need help, asking for money or that you delete/block their old number following a significant rise in “Hi Mum” scams in recent months. More than 1,150 Australians fell victim to the so-called “Hi Mum” scam in the first seven months of this year, with total reported losses of \$2.6 million. The vast majority of these scams were reported in June and July 2022.

The ACMA (Australian Communications and Media Authority) is aware of reports of scammers impersonating family members claiming to have changed their number and asking you to save a new number on your phone. These messages often begin with ‘Hi Mum’ and could provide several varied reasons for why they are using a different phone number, including switching providers or having a lost or broken phone.

TOLL ROAD OPERATOR SCAMS

Scammers are sending messages pretending to be toll road operators, including Linkt. If you've been sent a text claiming you have an overdue toll road account or insufficient funds, it could be a scam.

Linkt, operated by Transurban, provides accounts for toll road payments across Australia. Scam messages may come from an unknown number or have the word 'Linkt' in the sender display details to make them appear genuine.

These phishing scams are trying to trick you into clicking on a link that leads to a convincing, but fake website designed to steal your personal or financial details.

If you are in any doubt about whether a message you have received about your toll road account is genuine, do not click on any links or rely on the information in the message. Instead, go to the Linkt website or app to log in to your account and check your recent activity.

This also applies to toll road messages from other companies – if in doubt, log in to your account or use a verified app from the company.

Linkt has more information about how to identify a legitimate message on its website, including examples of scam messages.

myGOV

Be wary of emails and SMS claiming to be from myGov suggesting you are owed a refund. It may be a scam!

The ACMA is aware of increasing reports of myGov impersonation email and SMS scams. These scams try to get you to click on a malicious link or visit a fake website in order to receive a repayment or refund, such as a tax refund. Other examples may ask you to update your personal details via a link or attachment.

These messages often reference other government agencies or services, such as the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) or programs like Medicare. They may also use government logos to make the message look legitimate.

Do not click on any links or open any attachments in these messages. They are phishing scams designed to steal your personal or financial details.

myGov will never send you an email or SMS with a link. If in doubt, type my.gov.au into your browser and sign into your myGov account or contact Services Australia directly. Do not rely on the contact information in the email or SMS if you think it's a scam.

You can find more information about how to identify and avoid these scams via the myGov website. Services Australia also provides advice to consumers on these and other similar scams on its website.

If you are concerned that you may have given your myGov and other personal information to a scammer, contact the Services Australia Scams and Identity Helpdesk on 1800 941 126.

If you are a victim of a scam, contact your financial institution and phone provider to let them know what has happened as quickly as possible. Scammers target everyone. Learn more about how to protect yourself from phone scams on the ACMA website and make a report.

BIRRR

[Discussion on BIRRR Facebook page regarding Starlink – 17 Nov 2022](#) - Credit to Better Internet for Regional Rural and Remote Australia (BIRRR).

SPACEX SATELLITE INTERNET SERVICE

Starlink is a satellite internet constellation operated by SpaceX, providing satellite internet access coverage to 36 countries.

Starlink is a low orbit satellite 350 miles above Earth, 60 times closer than traditional satellites. Starlink claims the latency should be between 25ms and 35ms. Download speeds should range between 100Mbps and 200Mbps. Upload speeds have averaged 138.12Mbps.

As of May 2022, SpaceX has over 2300 functioning Starlink satellites in orbit. Currently, Starlink is only available to fixed internet services to a home or business. The map below shows current coverage for Australia (light blue) and those areas waiting in dark blue.

Starlink plans cost \$139 per month, unlimited data, plus \$924 in hardware fees and \$115 in shipping. Availability is limited, and orders are filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.



Starlink internet orders include a Starlink dish, mounting tripod for ground level use, and Wi-Fi router.

STARLINK OPPORTUNITIES & OBSTACLES

As [#Starlink](#) moves from the geeks to the masses, BIRRR is seeing a big uptick in requests for support (issues with ordering, setup and technology comparisons). The following information has been developed to help Australian consumers be aware and informed of regional technology offerings.

When signing up for any connection please ensure you are aware of the terms and conditions of the service. Also, ensure you have checked out all of your connectivity options. The Regional Tech Hub can produce a free connectivity report that outlines all your connectivity options, so you can match technology to your needs and budget.

BIRRR is a technology agnostic, independent volunteer support, advisory, information and advocacy group and is in no way affiliated with Starlink or SpaceX.

Keep updated on their website <https://birrraus.com/starlink-in-australia/>

STARLINK SATELLITE
BIRRR CONNECTIVITY LITERACY 101
OPPORTUNITIES

- SPEED**
Fast download speeds
- DATA**
Unlimited data (currently)
- PORTABILITY**
Can be made portable if not installed at a fixed address, at an additional cost. Can be relocated if you move addresses (as long as the cell isn't full).
- AVAILABILITY**
currently available across Australia & Lord Howe Island, equipment is currently on sale in Australia until 31/12/22
- PLANS**
Easy to order, one plan, one provider. There are currently no Australian resellers of residential connections.
- LATENCY**
Lower latency than other satellite technologies as it is a Low Earth Orbit Satellite (LEO)
- INSTALL**
Self-install#. professional installation using a registered cabler is recommended by BIRRR for permanent installations - at your own expense.

STARLINK SATELLITE
BIRRR CONNECTIVITY LITERACY 101
OBSTACLES

- ACCESS**
Connection numbers are limited, some cells in Australia are already full. Roaming SL is affected in these areas. If you cease a SL account, reconnection is not guaranteed, if the cell is full.
- SUPPORT**
SpaceX are an international company with support based in the United States of America. Support can be raised by the smartphone app or by accessing your account at www.support.starlink.com
- EQUIPMENT**
THE SL equipment is not rated above 50°C, it is recommended to bring dishy inside in extreme weather.
- WARRANTY**
Equipment has a 12 mth warranty. Things such as storm, lawnmower or animal damage are not covered, with all replacement equipment being at your own cost.
- RESELLERS**
There are currently no Australian resellers of Starlink residential services.
- DISCONNECT**
Dishy cannot be disconnected from the network for long periods, even if monthly payments are maintained, as the software can become out of date, rendering re-connection impossible. Transferring to a new owner can be a tricky process.
- PLANS**
Plan offerings may change without notice, costs may increase, data limits may be introduced, or speeds may be limited. T & C's may change.
- IP ADDRESS**
No static IP address on non-business plans
- COST**
 - Equipment* & professional installation costs are high.
 - Credit card charges can attract additional international fees with some banks, for equipment & monthly plan costs.
 - If you wish to use your existing home wi-fi network & router an ethernet cable kit must be ordered, this needs to be ordered AFTER the Starlink kit is ordered.
 - BIRRR recommend a professional installation by a registered cabler for permanent installs, this is at your expense.
 - Starlink equipment is currently on sale in Australia until 31/12/22

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There are Radio Telescopes and restricted Radio Frequency zones in WA, so Starlink will not be available in those areas.

NBN CO

Nbn welcomed a \$2.4 billion investment from the Federal Government to roll out more fibre to communities across Australia. This investment will contribute to the fibre upgrade program already underway, helping them stay on track to enable around 10 million premises across Australia to access nbn's higher wholesale speed plans by the end of 2025.

There will be further announcements, but the government has already [revealed a small selection of towns and suburbs](#) where premises will become eligible to upgrade, if they order a suitable plan from their preferred Retail Service Provider, including parts of Yass (NSW), Albany (WA), Bowen (QLD), Bendigo (VIC), Mount Gambia (SA), Burnie (TAS) and Monash (ACT).

Meanwhile, upgrades in their fixed wireless network and deploying 5G wireless technology is helping to better serve remote, regional and peri-urban areas.

MAJOR INVESTMENT TO DELIVER FASTER SPEEDS TO NBN® FIXED WIRELESS AND NBN® SKY MUSTER CUSTOMERS

Thousands of homes and businesses across regional Australia are set to benefit from faster internet connectivity thanks to a \$750 million investment in the nbn® Fixed Wireless network, which includes \$480 million from the Australian Government and \$270 million from nbn.

Over the past few months, nbn has been focused on doing the initial work needed to deliver the Regional Upgrade program, including consulting with their Retail Service Providers and securing the innovative technology required to enable the upgrades, from long-time partners such as Nokia and Ericsson.

It is a great step to boost connectivity in the bush and will help to meet the growing needs of thousands of homes and businesses across regional Australia that are set to benefit from the program.

This investment aims to deliver four major benefits, including:

- Extended Fixed Wireless - Enhanced coverage and extended maximum range limit for some nbn fixed wireless towers resulting in expansion of the fixed wireless footprint coverage by up to 50 percent,

enabling approximately 120,000 formerly satellite-only eligible premises to access fixed wireless services.

- **Faster Fixed Wireless wholesale speeds** - Following consultation and launch, nbn proposes that homes and businesses in the expanded nbn Fixed Wireless footprint will be able to order retail services via their service provider over nbn's wholesale tiers proposed to offer potential maximum wholesale download speeds of up to 100 Mbps. nbn is aiming to an anticipated 85 percent of the expanded footprint will also be able to order services with potential maximum wholesale download speeds of up to 250 Mbps, which is up to three times faster than the highest wholesale speeds available today.
- **Improve Fixed Wireless typical wholesale busy hour speeds** - Fixed Wireless network improvements are expected to allow nbn to implement a new measure to indicate the network's capability to achieve 'typical wholesale busy period speeds' of at least 50 Mbps (download).
- **Enhanced data limits and network performance on nbn™ Sky Muster** - For the homes and businesses that remain on nbn Satellite, nbn is proposing to unmeter nbn® Sky Muster Plus data for the majority of the day with the off-peak period for unmetered data increasing to 16 hours (12am - 4pm) per day, from the current six-hour window (1am - 7am). This is to be applied from 1st July 2022. In addition, for regular Sky Muster, nbn is aiming to increase average monthly data allowances to 55 Gigabytes (GB), increasing to 90 GB once the fixed wireless upgrade is complete in around two and a half years' time.

One of the advantages with SM+ is that YouTube is now all unmetered during school hours.

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM ROUND 2

The Federal Government's Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) is a competitive grant offering up to \$112 million of funding for the delivery of telecommunications infrastructure projects to improve digital connectivity across regional, rural and remote Australia.

The nbn team submitted 30 applications for 41 locations totalling \$224 million worth of build activity, with nbn to co-contribute up to \$62 million of its own funds for these projects.

If successful, nbn will work with more than 40 external partners to deliver these projects for local communities and help ensure they can continue to participate in the digital economy.

OSCAR

Want to improve your online skills?

With more of our lives and daily activities happening online, knowing how to navigate the digital world is more important than ever.

That is where OSCAR comes in. nbn created the Online Skills Check and Resources (OSCAR) to help measure our skills and find resources to help us on our digital journey.

OSCAR takes us through four essential competencies:

- Online knowledge
- Device usage
- Sharing data and e-safety
- Online communication

Want to learn more? You can check your online skills and find relevant resources.

Since the launch of nbn® OSCAR, more than 8,500 Australians have completed the survey, of which over 6,000 respondents are from regional areas.

New resources are reviewed and added all the time, so you are encouraged to take the test and see how you fare!

INNOVATE WITH NBN®

Nbn developed the Innovate with nbn® Grants Program in partnership with the Regional Australia Institute (RAI) and is now in its third year. The program aims to encourage businesses from regional or remote areas to build on technology-led ideas to drive productivity using innovation, connectivity and networking. The third round of the Innovate with nbn program is about to open, and anyone with a good idea is encouraged to apply.

The grant program awards one grant of \$15000 to an organisation or business project aligned with the following categories:

- Health
- Arts
- Education
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Women in Regional Business
- Indigenous Business

Additionally, one regional/remote business will be recognised and awarded with the Innovate with nbn® Champion award worth an additional \$20,000.

2021 Health category winner: Kylie Toynton, Speech Pathologist at Language for Life

Kylie Toynton from Gunnedah, NSW, has been a speech pathologist for more than 20 years. Due to limited availability in the bush, Kylie has seen some parents wait months for an assessment or travel up to 300 kilometres for a session. Not only does this place stress on the family, but it also means the child is not receiving the help they need when they need it.

Kylie is building a platform that provides evidence-based information on child development and strategies that parents can use. The packages come in video, audio and written format so all parents can feel capable and competent to help their child.

Kylie will use the Innovate with nbn™ grant to progress the next stage of Language for Life's project. This will include adding other allied health and medical professionals from across regional Australia and offering synchronous online therapy and training packages for parents, teachers and schools.

2021 Education and overall Innovate with nbn™ Champion: Bitlink

Taking out the Education category and also declared the overall Innovate with nbn™ Champion, Bitlink is an education technology company based in Launceston, Tasmania, passionate about digital literacy. The business, run by co-directors James Riggall and Troy Merritt, has spent two years co-designing an Internet of Things (IoT) education kit with teachers in its local area, which enables them to teach young people about IoT, including coding, electronics, design thinking and how to use sensors.

Bitlink will use the grants to get its kits into regional and remote areas, with an initial focus on Flinders, King and Cape Barren Islands, as well as donate classroom sets to schools on these islands to make sure Bitlink's visits have a lasting impact.

BEING PREPARED FOR EMERGENCY SEASON

Recent steps taken by nbn to help keep communities and emergency services connected during emergencies include:

- Road-testing a Point of Interconnect on Wheels, an Australian-first innovative addition to their suite of mobile Temporary Network Infrastructure, designed to keep up to 500,000 customer services for as long as required during an emergency.

- Continuing the installation of nbn Disaster Satellite Services at local nominated emergency management sites and evacuation centres across Australia, funded through the Australian Government's Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters (STAND) program.

Nbn are urging communities to do what they can to prepare and understand how the nbn network may be impacted during an emergency event, and to test residential evacuation and business continuity plans. This link to their website has [some simple but effective tips to keep in mind](#).

LINKEDIN NEWSLETTER

The following information was sourced from a newsletter on LinkedIn – makes for interesting reading if nothing else!

OPTIONS FOR FARMERS TO STAY CONNECTED

If you understand the difference between 5G low and high band, fixed wireless, repeaters and extenders then you don't have to read this.

While the tech-savvy knows their way around digital connectivity, the vast majority of us are staggering around in the dark when it comes to getting information on how to get a couple of extra signal bars on our mobile phones or stop the download lag on our broadband.

Most of the available information put out by the likes of Telstra, Optus, nbn, DPIRD or the myriad of resellers is more marketing spin and glossy pictures than listing the simple step by step options of how to speed things up or get a better signal.

Even the recently released federally funded 'On Farm Connectivity Guide' is largely useless unless you want to read four pages of definitions.

So, I thought I might have a crack at summarising what is available.

Cel-FiGo

First things first, if you are still operating in the dark ages without a booster jammed under the seat of your car, ute, or header then, as Molly on Countdown used to say, *'do yourself a favour'*.

You cannot complain about Telstra, Optus or Vodafone and their networks if you don't use a booster.

At \$900 they are cheaper than half the latest iPhones and when connected to the right antenna do add a bar or two to your signal strength (not that the bars are a good reflection of signal strength).

3G, 4G, 5G

3G is being progressively shut down and will be all gone within two years, 4G is being expanded to fill some of the gaps which is good as it is 3 – 6 times faster, but the new 5G low band is also being rolled out to take over the 3G 800 MHz frequency.

5G low band is not the superfast 5G high band that they are rolling out in the CBD (and only goes 500m), rather it is a thing called inter-band, non-contiguous, sub-6GHz carrier aggregation, which reuses the 850Mhz to get greater coverage and bandwidth but in reality, it is not much different to 4G maybe 20% on speed but with potentially 3G range of 80km in ideal conditions.

The good old 3G worked a treat because it is primarily a voice network that travels easily through walls and travelled up to 80km from the tower, but it is slow to carry data, and today connectivity is all about data.

By repurposing the 3G to 5G low band and expanding 4G most of us will be better off, just be aware if you have any special farm monitors that tap the mobile network make sure they can pick up 5G.

What the shutdown of 3G means for coverage on your farm is the luck of the draw, but then we have all complained about the shutdown of CDMA and we survived.

One thing to bear in mind is utilising both the Optus and Telstra networks. Optus is continuing to build more towers in the bush, if part of your farm gets better Optus reception, then buy a dual sim card phone and put in two Cel-FiGos and work off both networks.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MOBILE BLACK SPOTS

Telstra is not Telecom and there is no universal obligation to provide coverage across your whole farm, but they do have to provide you with a fixed phone which may be a satellite phone for your station if you really are out in the sticks.

If you have a booster and you still can't get a signal, then send all your complaints to the State and Federal governments, it is their responsibility to find the money to build more towers to fill black spots not Telstra's, Optus's or Vodafone.

To date rounds 1 to 5A have delivered 1270 towers for \$875 million of federal funding with another \$400 million committed by the Albanese government for improved coverage along regional highways.

That is under \$1 billion from the \$4000 billion the Feds have spent in the last decade on all government outlays. I will leave you to work out if you agree with me that it is probably one of the best value for money infrastructure programs this country has ever rolled out, and maybe we need to keep it going with the aim of doubling the number of regional towers by 2030 to 3000. Note to Federal Liberals and Nationals, here is a policy election idea for you.

The next \$400 million is good news for those who live near a major regional highway as they might luck in with a new tower in the next four years, but be aware, there are a lot of highways around Australia in hilly areas which need a lot of towers to make a difference. Not so good for those who live on the empty flat lands far from a major highway.

Also, as fast as they build new towers, farm data usage plus the kids on TikTok and Netflix hooovers up new capacity as fast as it is built. So we probably need to be doubling the number of towers just to maintain current speeds.

STATE GOVERNMENT REGIONAL DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

There is no great news on the mobile front as far as the State Government kicking in, as the recently retired WA Minister for Regional Development did not like the big corporate carriers, preferring to back small start-ups that promise the world but lack the capital and technology to make a big difference.

This has seen a disastrous misallocation of State Government funds, with limited connectivity for the dollars spent over the past three rounds of grants.

The latest grant is \$43 million, of which around \$30 million is yet to be allocated; \$30 million would build another 60 towers across the bush or run fibre underground through country towns or build a fixed wireless tower which would also benefit the surrounding farms.

The new Minister needs to review this project and start again.

MOBILE BROADBAND

If you are lucky to have a couple of bars on your phone when wandering around the farmhouse and don't mind paying extra for a big data contract, then stick up a 5-10 metre pole and antenna and plug in the various boxes that will allow you to live stream Netflix.

Start with a new tuned to site Yagi antenna \$200, new cables \$50, a stationary repeater \$800, a dongle data box \$100 month, an indoor-outdoor signal booster/extender for the house \$100, a repeater antenna \$200 and a second indoor outdoor booster for the sheds \$100. Or package Telstra GO G41 Yagi and Panel Antenna bundle \$2232.

Then you will be maximising what you can get out of mobile broadband be it to surf the net, watch Netflix or make calls via a Wi-Fi link.

HIGH ON THE HILL FARM ANTENNA

You do not have mobile coverage at the house, but you pick up 2-4 bars up on the high point of the farm, then head up there and put up a 1-10 metre tower, with an antenna (max 10m the cables won't carry signal much further) and then plug in a stationary receiver plus a second antenna to repeat the signal down to the house (maximum 3km away) and pick up the signal that way.

To the set-up you will need to add a battery and solar system to power the repeater. Talk to this clever mob call Zetifi in Wagga Wagga who can build mini Wi-Fi cells with smart beam antennas ZetiRover and ZetiCell for the last mile links to and from the back paddock.

NBN FIXED WIRELESS

If you are lucky and live within 14km of town and have line of site (or close enough to it) to a nbn fixed mobile tower then you may be one of the growing number of regional Shires that can get onto the fixed wireless network.

Fixed wireless is basically a direct digital signal feed sending data from an nbn tower (or other provider) usually located in town across the airwaves, rather than via optic fibre to your house, all at broadband data pricing.

From the house or an antenna on a high point on the property, you can rebroadcast the signal via a microwave, kilometres to a second location then via a third antenna, radiate the signal across a smaller 500m radius.

Farmers use this to give broadband coverage to the sheds or around the field bin when working in the paddock, house, shed etc.

It can even be used to make and receive calls on your mobile, but you have to tap into the Wi-Fi calling setting on your phone, but again you have to be in that 500m radius. It offers fast broadband but is limited in distance to that 14km from the main tower, but that will hopefully double to 28km in 2025, but remember it still must be line of site to the towns tower.

Earlier this year nbn™ and the Federal Government announced a \$750 million program of work to upgrade the fixed wireless network adding nearly every Australian town. The upgrade will extend the range, deliver high speed tiers and increase the busy hour speed from 6mb to 50mb.

It, along with Starlink, is the next big thing in connectivity.

NBN SATELLITE SKYMUSTER

SkyMuster Plus is the latest upgrade to the old satellite system. It now has uncapped data 16 hours per day for video streaming which fixes a major complaint.

Cost is around \$100 per month with a dish included, but speeds are limited to 512MB which is vastly slower than what is on offer using land based mobile, fibre or fixed wireless or Starlink.

Once again, you can use satellite to push a signal around your farm just like you can with fixed wireless.

STARLINK

You can help Elon Musk pay off Twitter by signing up to join his Starlink satellite network. The service has been being taken up by over half a million people across 44 countries, with hundreds of Australian farmers signing on this year.

The satellites, which are 60 times closer to earth than the big two nbn™ ones sitting stationary 44,000 miles up, which means no latency.

They don't work with your mobile unless it is through a Wi-Fi application, even though it should be possible to send emergency data calls directly via the satellite. But they are a non-starter for replacing earth-based towers.

Again, voice over internet fed through your modem via Wi-Fi to your mobile phone is a simple workaround option out to 500m from the dish.

You could put one in the header and run around the paddock, and it will work. Have a read of Tucks Truck, a blog by a couple of British travellers (great read for those who want to go exploring the world in their bongo van) who installed a dish on top of their 4WD.

Musk has worked out there is demand for portability in motion, so there are new flat dishes coming that can sit on the roof of a truck/ute/header/tractor for on-the-go connectivity, but seems it already works with the current small round dish as proven by Tucks Truck.

No doubt Musk is talking to John Deere, CNH etc. and it is likely to be an option on your next tractor/header.

Cost for the kit \$924 (was discounted to \$450 until Xmas), \$139 per month plus the repeater extender \$500 to radiate the signal out 500m. My guess is most farmers will end up with one that they will bolt to the header or tractor or set up on the high point of the farm, as they are a good back up when mobile coverage fails.

BUILD YOUR OWN MOBILE TOWER

If you are really frustrated with Optus or Telstra, there is no reason that you can't write a cheque for \$500k - \$1m and get them to build you a tower on your farm. The miners do this all the time, your neighbours will love you.

There is also a good business opportunity for someone to put together a deal, sub leasing mobile base stations to groups of farmers. Only problem is I don't know how you lock out the free riders who are all for you paying while they get the advantage of extra bars on their phones.

The development commissions working with the councils are the obvious coordinators. Councils can rate the cost onto all their rate payers, but those sitting near existing towers won't be too impressed with the new tower levy on their rates.

The added problem is Optus and Telstra will be selective on where they can be set up so as not to end up messing with existing towers. Optus should be more interested as they have big gaps in their network.

No doubt growers with large farms in the eastern wheatbelt who are unlikely to even see a new tower in their area will eventually decide to sort the problem themselves, 20 growers, 20 years, \$1 million and the cost benefit will soon stack up. Even more so for the neighbours who don't contribute.

For those who are thinking about doing this then use the State Governments Agricultural Produce Commission (APC) fundraising mechanism, it is a simple, cheap way to administer the funding of industry good projects involving a group of growers.

ADVICE

Now, this took me a day to put together, so no doubt I have missed parts of the equation or got it wrong.

But at the very least it should help point you in the right direction. For independent advice on farm and regional connectivity talk to the Regional Tech Hub 1300 081 029, Boyd Brown, Regional General Manager WA, Telstra boyd.m.brown@team.telstra.com, Naomi Evans Head of Regional Community Affairs (WA), nbn naomievs@nbnco.com.au and Dan Winson from Zetifi hello@zetifi.com for last mile solutions around the house, sheds and field bin.

If it is simply to complain about black spots then pick up the phone and call the State and Federal Labor Ministers for Regional Development, it is they who are standing on the blackspot hose.

Last word and first bit of advice for the new Minister, instruct DPIRD to commission an independent \$20,000 review of their Regional Connectivity Program and call for submissions from nbn, Optus and Telstra and Zetiti to find out what they can do with \$30 million to boost on farm connectivity.

DISTANCE EDUCATION, SOTA & CURRICULUM REPORT

Louise Ford – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

At the 2022 State Conference, allowance motion A4 was presented by the Meekatharra Air Branch.

A letter was sent to both the Hon. Sue Ellery, MLC (former Minister for Education) and the Hon. Mark McGowan, MLA, State Premier. A response received on 8th August 2022 outlined the many services offered to regional students but stated *“that a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) was not going to be considered”*. With the point of the initial letter being lost, another email was sent dated 23rd September 2022 outlining once again the purpose of the DETA.

The second response received 25th October 2022 from Minister Ellery stated that the Australian Government administers Assistance for Isolated Children and has no plans on implementing the DETA allowance. She did however encourage me to raise the idea with the Federal Minister, the Hon. Bill Shorten MP.

CURRICULUM

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) was completed for the first time fully online in May 2022 by more than 1.3 million students. 2022 was the final year that testing was completed in May and from March 2023 NAPLAN will move to Term 1. By bringing the testing time forward, results can be accessed earlier in the year, allowing for more targeted teaching and learning programs throughout the school year and also give teachers more time to better assess what support students need for the remainder of the year.

The way NAPLAN is reported to parents and carers is also changing. New proficiency standards with 4 levels of achievement for each year level will replace the previous 10-band structure that covered all 4 levels tested and the old national minimum standard set in 2008. The numerical NAPLAN bands and the national minimum standard will be replaced by the following 4 levels of achievement:

- Exceeding
- Strong
- Developing
- Needs additional support.

NAPLAN 2023 will run from 15th to 27th March.

In October 2022, ACARA released the 2022 NAPLAN national report. According to ACARA CEO, David De Carvalho, the national results continue to defy earlier predictions that COVID-19 would negatively impact NAPLAN performance. The results were stable on a national level, except for year nine spelling and year five numeracy, which saw a drop in performance.

In 2008, all governments agreed a national curriculum was needed to deliver an equitable, quality education for all young Australians and the national curriculum was then developed over a number of years. The national curriculum is reviewed every 6 years and the 2020-21 review resulted in the Australian Curriculum, Version 9.0. The new curriculum provides schools, teachers, parents and students with a clear understanding of what students should learn. This curriculum applies no matter where a student lives or what school system they are in. It is now available online and is designed to be clearer for teachers when assessing students.

Recently endorsed languages approved for the Australian Curriculum included German, Indonesian, Modern Greek, Korean and Spanish for Foundation – Year 10. These were approved after public consultation last year.

SCHOOLS OF THE AIR (SOTA)

Schools of the Air had to unfortunately cancel plans for Canberra camp or replacement camps due to COVID-19 restrictions earlier in 2022. School camps and home visits were permitted to resume from the commencement of Term 2.

Schools of the Air also unfortunately had to cancel plans for their annual Muster Camp stating *“the revised COVID-19 regulations brought out in early August as being too hard to adhere to”*. Many parents were very upset about this and as a result a letter was sent to the Director General, Lisa Rodgers, asking for consideration of SOTA families when guidelines are being made. A letter of response was received stating that camps should all be taking place and parents should consult with their relevant schools.

A meeting was held on 1st December 2022 for parents from all SOTA’s across the State to be able to connect and discuss the positive and the challenges of schooling your children through SOTA. Approximately eight parents attended, and a great dialogue about what works and what they struggle with were tabled. Some of the main areas of concern were that Principals were losing flexibility to make standard SOTA practices happen, e.g. camps, delivery of curriculum to a standard way above expectations and fundamentals getting lost. This results in children struggling and families leaving SOTA because the programs are unengaging for the students and difficult to deliver.

All in all, this was a great discussion and the passion for our SOTA’s remains strong. It is proposed that these meetings continue each term with hopefully more parents in attendance.

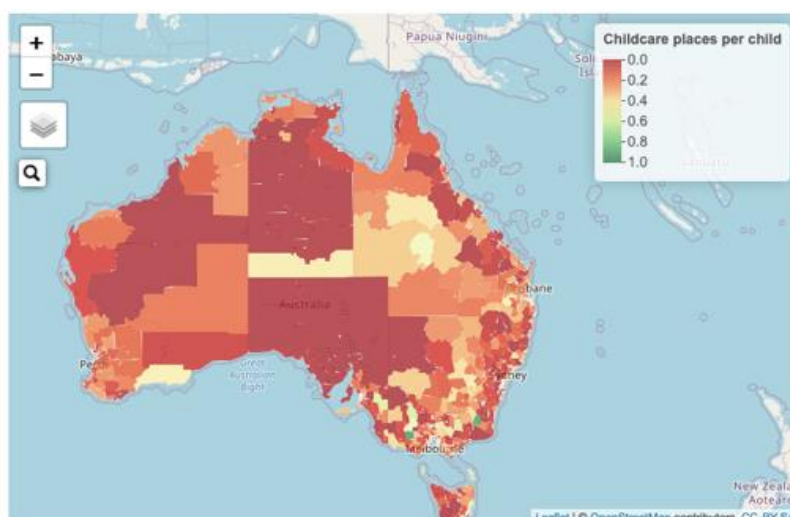
EARLY CHILDHOOD REPORT

Jane Hughes – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

There were no Early Childhood motions at the 2022 State Conference.

On 22nd March, the Mitchell Institute released a report highlighting the many challenges faced by families trying to access childcare, particularly in rural remote Australia. With about 1.1 million Australians living in regional and remote areas where they have no access to childcare at all. Below is where you can find the report.

<https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/early-learning/childcare-deserts-oases-how-accessible-is-childcare-in-australia>



On 27th April, the West Australian Government announced that \$27.7 million will be allocated to Early Childhood Education (ECE) and out of home care in the 2022-23 State Budget.

On 9th May, I attended an Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) joint portfolio meeting. Points of interest included:

- Minister for Home Affairs Karen Andrews responded to a letter from Federal Council detailing their progress with WWCC saying there was a National Cabinet commitment to eliminating red tape and streamlining the WWCC process.
- Letters were sent to then Minister for Education Alan Tudge and Acting Education Minister Stuart Robert regarding employment incentives for Early Childhood (EC) educators and EC programs in rural and remote areas and funding for mobile programs.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) report was released in May 2022 with results showing an increase in children who are developmentally vulnerable.

Below is an extract from the report, which can be found at <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data>

The fifth AEDC data collection was undertaken between May and July 2021. Nationally, data was collected from over 305,000 children in their first year of full-time school and from approximately 7,500 primary schools.

At a national level, the AEDC data shows the percentage of children who were on track on 5 domains decreased for the first time since 2009 (from 55.4% in 2018 to 54.8% in 2021).

Results also show a slight increase in the proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable:

- Children assessed as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains increased from 21.7% in 2018 to 22% in 2021.

Children assessed as developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains also increased from 11% in 2018 to 11.4% in 2021.

At the 2022 ICPA Federal Conference, 16 motions were put forward with issues surrounding:

- Assistance for Isolated Children allowance,
- In Home Care (IHC),
- To review pay rates and incentives to get Early childhood workers out into rural and remote areas,
- To prioritise re-establishing educational programs in regional and remote areas,
- A national WWCC and
- Better childcare funding for rural remote areas

On 7th September, childcare workers across Australia met in cities and some regional towns to protest for sector reform:

- Better wages,
- To be valued as an early education centre the same way that schools are valued and;
- For children to be put before profit.

One thousand childcare centres were shut down and approximately 70,000 families were affected.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-09-07/childcare-worker-protests-across-australia-amid-sector-shutdown/101413958>

BHP and Child Australia have teamed up to expand the Thriving Futures program with the launch of the Thriving Futures Educator Recognition Program, which is focused on attracting and retaining quality childcare workers and ensuring sustainability within the sector for future generations. BHP has made a commitment of \$2.5 million over the next three years. Due to the success of the program it is now being extended to the Nickel West Goldfields communities.

<https://thesector.com.au/2022/09/13/bhp-and-child-australia-team-up-to-expand-thriving-futures-program/>

Seventy initiatives have been launched by major ECEC stakeholders to fight workforce challenges. The Federal Government has launched 16 initiatives, all States and Territories have included their own initiatives also, except for Western Australia who did not feature at all.

FEDERAL/PEAK BODY INITIATIVES

- Following extensive consultation with the outside school hours care (OSHC) sector, National Outside School Hours Services Alliance ([NOSHSA](#)) co-ordinated the development of a new nationally accredited Certificate III course for new OSHC educators.
- The Australian Government will establish a new agency, [Jobs and Skills Australia](#), which will be responsible for researching workforce trends and providing advice about current and future skills needs. The Government has committed to a tripartite approach to the new agency, which will work with governments, employers and unions, and use data and insights from industry to inform the government labour market and skills policy.
- A range of early childhood teaching courses are being presented by Edith Cowan University through literacy units in early childhood education with updated Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) guidelines that reflect contemporary terminologies and research.
- The Australian Government will expand the 'High Achieving Teachers Program' to support up to 1,500 high achieving professionals to retrain as teachers.
- The Australian Government will offer up to 5,000 new students a \$10,000 a year bursary throughout their teaching degree. Bursaries will be available to high school-leavers who achieve an ATAR of 80 or above, First Nations students, and students from regional areas, with a top up payment of \$2,000 for placements in regional areas.
- The Australian Government will provide [465,000 Fee Free TAFE places](#) including 45,000 new TAFE places. In addition, the Australian Government has announced up to 20,000 additional university places to provide more opportunities for Australians to find a spot at a university.
- From 1 July 2022, the [Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System](#) will help increase completions, providing financial and non-financial support at the time the apprentice needs it. Government support is focussed on priority occupations, including ECEC workers.
- The Australian Government has committed to strengthen the ability and capacity of the [Fair Work Commission](#) (FWC) to order pay increases for workers in low paid, female dominated sectors and industries, such as the ECEC sector.

- Australian Government [Child Care Discount for Early Childhood Workforce](#) introduced in 2022 allows childcare providers to discount the gap fee their employee pays when the employee's child is enrolled at a service where they work or that their employer owns.
- The [Skills Assessment Pilots](#) seek to maximise the contribution of Australia's onshore migrant workforce and address skills shortages and includes free, fast-tracked skills assessments for the Child Care Worker (Group Leader) occupation for eligible migrants who are residing in Australia.
- The Australian Government is investing \$9.1 million in the [National Intermediary THRYVE Pilot](#) led by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care ([SNAICC](#)), to support community-controlled early childhood providers to improve quality and increase access to training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators.
- [Early Childhood Australia](#) has developed '[How to talk about early childhood education and care](#)' to promote the use of consistent, affirmative, inclusive and sector-accepted language that supports professionalism.
- [Be You Early Learning](#) supports early childhood services to build a positive, inclusive and resilient learning community where every child, young person, educator and family can achieve their best possible mental health.
- In conjunction with Be You, peak body Early Learning and Care Council of Australia ([ELACCA](#)) launched a bespoke training program in mental health and wellbeing for its members, aimed at area managers. The online training program will aim to strengthen area managers' ability to embed mental health and wellbeing initiatives across multiple early learning and care services.
- [JobTrainer](#) provides funding for anyone to have access to low-fee short courses and a range of approved qualifications including certificate III, IV and diploma level qualifications to work in the early childhood and school age education and care sectors.
- ELACCA launched [the 'Big Roles in Little Lives'](#) in 2021, a campaign that promotes the value and benefits of a career in early learning and care to secondary school students and career-changers.

Copied from this website <https://thesector.com.au/2022/09/13/over-70-initiatives-launched-by-major-ecce-stakeholders-to-fight-workforce-challenges/>

The West Australian Government has recently appointed the Hon. Sabine Winton, MLA as Minister for the newly created Early Childhood Education portfolio.

From July 1st 2023 the Albanese Government's landmark reform will make early childhood education and care more affordable for around 86,000 families in Western Australia.

The McGowan Government has also launched a new Early Childhood Education and Care job-ready program which will deliver short, sharp training for jobseekers and young people.

The Federal Government are making an additional 1,469 university places available this year for early childhood teachers across Australia.

The Federal Government will also be providing funding for First Nations children which will involve 68 activities in Western Australia including an early childhood program at Halls Creek.

The University of Notre Dame in Western Australia has just launched a new fast tracked teacher training program with a Bachelor of Early Learning. This will allow students to complete training in just three years teaching children aged 0-4 years.

A Kimberley Development Commission report released on 20th December 2022 showed Western Australia's Northwest Region is one of the hardest places to secure childcare services. Childcare services in the Kimberley are currently running at 69 percent capacity, staff shortages have caused several childcare centres to close due to low wages and a lack of affordable housing.

RURAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS REPORT

Jane Cunningham – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

At the 2022 State Conference one motion was present by the Goldfields Eyre Branch in regard to the state of disrepair and lack of services offered at the Fairbridge WA run camp schools, in particular Goldfields Camp School in Kalgoorlie.

Fairbridge took over the running of the Dampier, Geraldton, Point Perron, Pinjarra, Pemberton and Kalgoorlie Camp Schools in 2018 with a press release from the Hon. Sue Ellery stating that, *“Staff are committed to providing students from all schools in Western Australia with an affordable and high-quality camp experience.”*

Disappointingly, our members have been reporting a degradation of facilities and poor-quality camp experiences at Fairbridge run camp schools, specifically the Geraldton and Kalgoorlie sites. This is of particular concern to the Goldfields Eyre Branch, as the termly School of the Air camps have been impacted significantly.

In May 2022, letters were sent to the CEO of Fairbridge and Hon. Sue Ellery, Minister for Education.

At the June face-to-face meeting, ICPA (WA) met with Ms Mirina Muir, the CEO of Fairbridge. Ms Muir was not aware of what School of the Air was and the significance of camps each term for children and their families.

Ms Muir met with us again at the October face-to-face. During this meeting, she acknowledged that after our first meeting she had a much greater appreciation of the need for Kalgoorlie School of the Air to access appropriate facilities at the Kalgoorlie Camp School. We were told that she would be visiting the sites late last year and there were changes being put into place.

On 9th February 2023 I received an email stating, *“There isn’t much more I can add. I have been discussing your situation with the Department of Education and how next we can assist you. These are ongoing discussions.”*

Some changes have been made, but as it stands, the camp school is still not a suitable venue for our students and their families to stay. Currently, families are staying in a local caravan park.

Ms Ellery was disappointed to hear about the declining conditions and facilities at Kalgoorlie and Geraldton Camp Schools and arranged to send representatives to inspect the sites. We were due to meet with Ms Ellery online to discuss these inspections and how we can move forward on 14th December 2022. Unfortunately, approximately an hour before our scheduled meeting, there was a Labor Government Cabinet reshuffle and Dr Toni Buti was appointed as the Minister for Education, so our meeting was cancelled. Dr Buti has been contacted and we are waiting patiently for his team to contact us to arrange a meeting.

STAFFING OF RURAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS

2022 saw a continued difficulty to staff some regional and remote schools.

There has been a notable increase in the number of teaching vacancies filled by an unqualified teacher with a limited registration. These appointments are usually pre-service teachers, or untrained teachers with specialisations in specific subject areas which have been difficult to source. These are usually students in their fourth year, though there are reports of many second and third year trained teachers in our regional schools.

INCENTIVES TO BOOST TEACHER SUPPLIES

On November 13th, Minister Ellery announced \$12.4 million to boost regional and remote teacher supply. The aim, to attract more teachers to 48 Western Australian schools that are harder to staff. It includes one-off payment incentives payments for 2023, varying from \$5000 to \$17 000 depending on location.

While these new immediate measures target WA's hardest-to-staff schools, the State Government continues to work with the Commonwealth to address the national teacher shortage. This includes development of a

National Teacher Workforce Action Plan with Education Ministers from around the country and an extra \$328 million in funding announced by the Federal Government for associated actions aimed at attracting, training and retaining educators.

On December 7th additional initiatives were announced to boost teacher supply for WA public schools.

The package of new measures includes:

- Provision of an Attraction and Retention Initiative payment of \$5,000 to new and existing teachers working in education support schools and centres in 2023
- Establishment of a pre-service Teacher Recruitment Pool to support pre-service teachers with limited registration in their final year of study while they are employed
- Broader eligibility requirements to employ registered teachers with a three-year qualification, with targeted training to support those who are new to WA's public school system
- Trialling Highly Accomplished, Lead Teacher (HALT) positions to support quality teaching in regional secondary schools experiencing staffing challenges
- Additional stipends of up to \$700 per week for final year secondary pre-service teachers undertaking a placement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) learning areas.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION REPORT

Jane Cunningham – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

2022 continued to bring COVID-19 related issues for those requiring specific needs education. Many services and programs had been cancelled or were only accessible online. One major area which has been impacted is the continued restrictions from WA Health on therapists visiting schools and conducting programs. For much of the year outside therapists were not allowed to attend school sites to work with students, rather they were stuck in hospital settings swabbing for COVID-19.

EXPANSION OF AUTISM SPECIALIST LEARNING PROGRAM

In 2022 an additional 6 Autism Specialist Learning Programs (SLP) have been set up in schools. There are currently 24 schools. None of these schools would be classed as regional or remote. At a regional, hard-to-staff school of 42 pupils that I am familiar with, there are 4 students with autism that require significant support.

Expanding the use of the SLP is mentioned specifically in point 5 of the 'Focus 2023'. I wonder how this will extend to be implemented in regional and remote WA in 2023?

SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS STATE COUNCIL CATCH UP

In October, a Specific Education Needs ICPA Joint State and Federal catch-up was held via Zoom. There was much discussion about different States and their Patient Assisted Travel Scheme's (PATs) and what appointments they do and do not cover for specialist services for children with special needs. I would be interested to hear of any cases where appointments are not covered, and you believe they should.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION REPORT

Jane Hughes – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

On 15th March Nuveen Real Estate's first purpose-built accommodation 'The Switch' opened in Perth Central providing accommodation for international students and young professionals. The portfolio of four properties totals 1721 beds for students.

On 12th May, the Western Australian Government announced a \$41.2 million package for international students.

A \$10 million incentive package will aim to increase awareness of the State's international education sector through overseas education agents who enrol international students in WA institutions.

A \$1 million familiarisation program will also allow key offshore stakeholders to visit and experience Western Australia. (Copied from online)

On 14th September, the Western Australian Government released an announcement stating they will invest a further \$16.8 million into encouraging international students to study in WA.

\$10 million is committed to the Agent Incentive Scheme in 2022-23, which will provide payments of:

- \$500 per student to agents enrolling a confirmed international student in an English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) or VET provider.
- \$1000 per student for a confirmed enrolment at one of the five WA universities.

\$6.8 million was committed to continuing the International Student Accommodation Subsidy (ISAS) and the International Student ELICOS Bursary (ISEB) to support and attract international students to WA. This will provide a one-off payment.

- ISAS - \$1,500 for up to 2,500 eligible students to offset accommodation expenses while studying full time in WA in semester 2 2022.
- ISEB - \$1,500 for up to 2,000 eligible international students to offset fees when undertaking an approved ELICOS course in WA.

Over four years, \$4 million has been allocated for the Premier's WA Certificate of Education Bursary and \$2 million for the Premier's University Scholarships, both are new scholarship programs.

An annual report by Edstart school analysed fees at 100 boarding schools from around Australia finding an average increase in fees by 2.56% up from 1.83% last year.

The Eastern States experienced a higher rate of fee increases than Western Australia and South Australia.

Average boarding fee increase by state

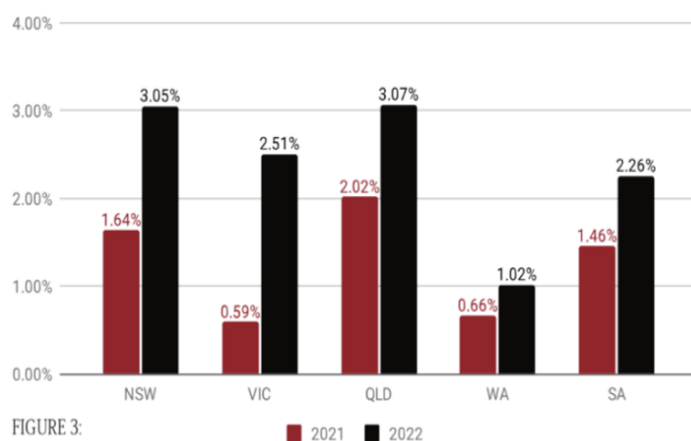
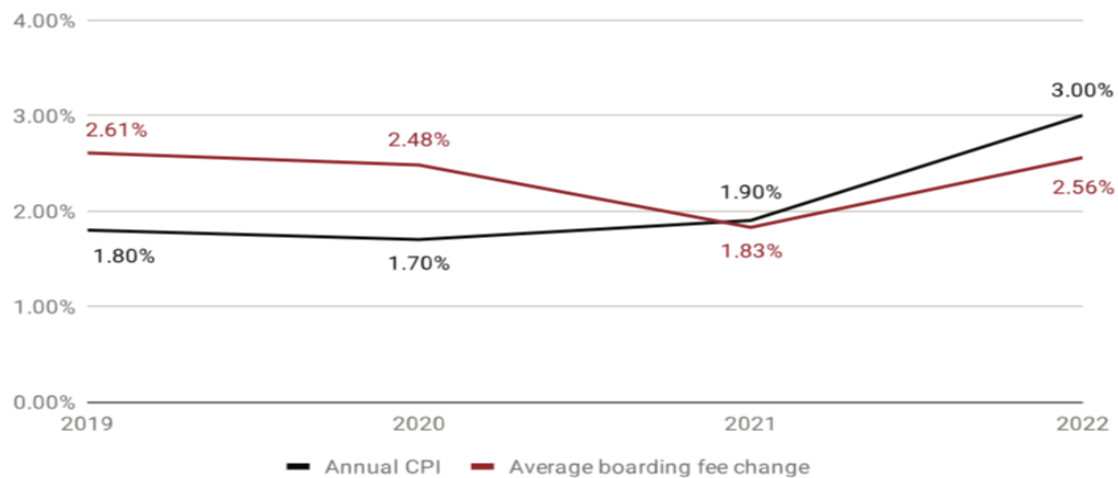


FIGURE 3:
Average boarding fee increase by state

Average school fee increase	
National	2.90%
NSW	3.04%
VIC	2.90%
QLD	3.56%
WA	2.79%
SA	0.91%

FIGURE 4:
Average school fee increase per state

Average change in boarding fees



The University of Western Australia (UWA) has partnered with MyStay International also known as Australian Homestay Network, to offer new and returning students struggling with the tight housing availability the opportunity to live with a local family. This comes as good news as the West Australian reported that WA has the lowest amount of student accommodation in Australia.

Austudy and Youth Allowance will be increasing from 1st January 2023.

Welfare payments increasing on January 1

YOUTH ALLOWANCE (living at home): Up \$19.10 a fortnight to \$332.90 from \$313.80

YOUTH ALLOWANCE (living away from home): Up \$32.40 a fortnight to \$562.80 from \$530.40

YOUTH ALLOWANCE (single with children): Up \$41.40 a fortnight to \$720.40 from \$679

AUSTUDY (single with no children): Up \$32.40 a fortnight to \$562.80 from \$530.40

AUSTUDY (single with children): Up \$41.40 a fortnight to \$720.40 from \$679

ABSTUDY: Up \$22.40 a fortnight to \$389.40 from \$367 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and apprentices aged 18 to 21

CARERS ALLOWANCE: Up \$8.30 a fortnight to \$144.80 from \$136.50

TEACHER TRAINING REPORT

Jasmine Carmody – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

Four motions were presented at the 2022 Online State Conference. Two from the Lakes District Branch were requesting the Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA) recognise the work carried out by qualified teachers who work as home tutors and for previously qualified teachers who volunteer with Retired Educator Volunteers for Isolated Students Education (REVISE) to have their hours count towards meeting registration requirements.

Correspondence was sent to the TRBWA asking for their consideration and action on the motion points. Rozana Kemp (Assistant Director, Policy and QA) responded with the below email.

"Please consider my response as preliminary advice which will be shortly followed up more formally with a letter from the Director of Teacher Registration.

Whilst the advice is sound, the response was inadvertently sent to you in a less formal format than was intended for the ICPA (WA) State Council.

As you are aware, for a registered teacher to be able to renew Full Registration, there are requirements that need to be met by the end of the registration period. To maintain proficiency, it is generally expected that a teacher is currently teaching in an educational venue or has been actively teaching in an educational venue for a reasonable period of time.

As you are aware, the professional engagement requirement in Western Australia is a minimum of 100 days teaching in an educational venue since the registration was last granted or renewed.

In accordance with the Teacher Registration Act 2012 (TR Act), only those days taught in an 'educational venue' as defined by the TR Act count for the purposes of renewal. Other experiences, such as supporting a child at home in their attendance at the School of Isolated and Distant Education (SIDE) or a regional School of the Air, will not count for the purposes of renewal of teacher registration.

Any teaching undertaken as a staff member or employee of an educational venue counts towards the professional engagement requirement.

Please note that the tutoring hours provided by these parents may be able to be linked to the professional learning registration requirement, however this will be considered by the Board on a case-by-case basis."

A letter was sent to TRBWA thanking them for their reply and asking them to attend the ICPA (WA) State Council October face-to-face meeting to discuss options for registration for our home tutors and how we can collaborate with the TRBWA to move forward in this area.

Following this email response Rebecca McNeillage Acting Assistant Director, Policy and Quality Assurance and Graham Grossman Manager of Registrations attended, to engage in conversations with State Council to better understand the situations of our home tutors and for councillors to gather advice to pass onto home tutors who wish to retain the TRBWA registration. The messages and advice we received from them is as follows:

- Teaching is referred to as teaching curriculum, assessing curriculum at an educational venue as defined under the Education Act.
- Home-schooling at your home is, therefore, not defined as an educational venue under the Teacher Registration Act or the Education Act.
- We discussed the Professional Standards requirement for teachers in WA:
 - For full registration, you must meet the professional standards at the proficient level.
 - To have taught for a minimum of 100 days at an educational venue in the 5 years prior to application.
 - For full registration renewal, complete 100 hours of professional learning.
- Those teaching at TAFE colleges and Universities do not meet the requirements of teaching at an educational venue for the purpose of maintaining full registration.
- It has been ten (10) years since the last review of the Act.
- Levels/categories of registration were discussed:
 - Provisional registration
 - Non-practicing registration (Non-practicing registration can be extended and maintained indefinitely.)
 - Limited registration
 - Full registration
- A discussion was had on the point that home tutors do not need to hold a teaching degree and therefore to ask for those that hold a such qualification to be recognised is problematic.

Overall, the takeaway recommendation is for qualified teachers who are working as home tutors that wish to retain their registration to ensure you have applied for a Non-practicing registration.

Two motions were presented by the Meekatharra Air Branch and Goldfields Eyre Branch requesting universities investigate time spent teaching set work on station count towards their practical placements as part of their Bachelor of Education degree.

Correspondence was sent to the Deans of Education at Notre Dame, Edith Cowan University (ECU), Curtin, Murdoch and University of WA (UWA) thanking them for discussing this point with the Director General, Lisa Rodgers and for their support of this issue.

Jeff Brooks from Curtin University and Peter Whipp from Murdoch University thanked me for the letter and offered their continued support. Paula Mildenhall from ECU also thanked us and asked for information as to the next steps to take as she was not at previous meetings. No further replies were received.

NORTHERN TERRITORY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS (PST)

At the last Tertiary and Training Federal Joint Council catch up in October 2022 the Northern Territory (NT) State Council shared their success of having Charles Darwin University (CDU) implement a trial of creating a career pathway for home tutors and governesses.

We contacted Kyia Broard from the NT State Council, who completed a significant amount of work on making this happen. She provided us with some information on whom they spoke to and the steps they took to make this happen.

It is planned to continue these discussions with the NT State Council, and facilitating a meeting between the WA State Council and CDU after the 2023 Federal Conference.

A flyer for this program is attached below.

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOME TUTORS

ICPA NT IS WORKING WITH
CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY TO
CREATE TRAINING PATHWAYS FOR
HOME TUTORS



QUALIFICATION

Certificate III in School Based Education Support.
15 units - 10 core and 5 elective units.

Cert IV in School Based Education Support.
17 units - 13 core and 4 elective units.
Once completed equates to 40 credit points towards an education degree.

Diploma of Educational Studies
Once completed equates to the first year off an education degree.

LEARNING

- Learning is online and self-paced.
- Weekly 1-hour online training sessions via TEAMS with CDU lecturer.
- Online lessons to commence Mon 17 October 2022.
- Face to face training sessions in Alice Springs and Katherine during In-School.

FOR MORE INFO & TO ENROL
 steve.kiya@gmail.com

CAREER IN EDUCATION

Make your 'gap year' in the bush count towards your future.

RECOGNITION

Due to the nature of the role home tutors play in our classrooms, you may be eligible for recognition of prior learning for some of the course units as well as reduced classroom time.

FEE EXEMPTION

- Current enrollments free, to be reviewed in Dec 2023.
- RPL admin fee waived for 2022.
- Must be an Australian Citizen and NT Resident

AN INITIATIVE OF ICPA NT STATE COUNCIL WWW.ICPA.COM.AU/NT



MINISTER FOR EDUCATION ANNOUNCEMENT

In early December, the Minister for Education announced further initiatives to attract, retain and support teachers. This follows the recent one-off Attraction and Retention Initiative (ARI) payment for teachers working in identified remote and secondary regional schools.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION INITIATIVES FOR EDUCATION SUPPORT SCHOOLS AND CENTRES

ARI payments of \$5,000 will now be made available to both new and existing teachers, and administrators with a teaching load, from all 59 education support schools and centres for 2023.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER RECRUITMENT POOL

A pre-service teacher recruitment pool has been established to fill fixed-term vacancies arising in 2023. Appointments from this pool can only be made where other recruitment options have been unsuccessful. Schools will have access to teachers in their final year of their qualification from Australian universities for part-time (up to 0.8 FTE) positions. If selected, these teachers will have access to induction and professional learning. Teachers will have access to paid study leave if undertaking their professional experience placement during their appointment. Teachers appointed from this pool will need to meet all the usual pre-employment requirements including teacher registration. This pool is open for applications. Schools making appointments from this pool will be provided additional funding, equivalent to 0.1 FTE, to assist them to support the pre-service teacher.

Pre-service teachers must continue to complete their degree.

CHANGES TO TEACHER QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENT

Schools can now employ a teacher provided they are registered with the TRBWA and have a recognised 3-year teacher qualification. This change supports the opportunity for high quality local and international teachers to work in WA public schools, removing an obstacle which disqualifies a quality teacher from working in a public school because of the number of years they spent at university. All teachers appointed must be registered and meet the registration standards through the TRB.

To support this initiative, schools will be provided with further supports for those who employ 3-year trained teachers who are new to our system including:

- A Targeted Initiative (TI) to provide 2 days teacher relief for each new staff member
- This TI is to provide access to targeted training relevant to 3-year trained teachers entering our system from the non-government sector or from overseas.

HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED AND LEAD TEACHER (HALT) STRATEGY

Twenty regional schools have been identified and will be invited to express interest in a trial to create HALT positions. This will be an incentive for high quality, aspirational teachers to teach in schools that have been identified as requiring support to attract staff.

ADDITIONAL STIPENDS FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS (PST)

A stipend is currently paid to all teachers undertaking a professional experience placement in a regional area.

New stipends are:

- Final year PSTs undertaking a STEM placement in metro areas: \$250/week
- Final year PSTs undertaking a STEM placement in regional areas: Double their original allocation.

A final year secondary pre-service teacher undertaking a placement in STEM will receive a new or increased stipend of up to:

- \$250/week in metropolitan schools (new)

- \$500/week in Southwest schools
- \$700/week in Goldfields, Kimberley, Midwest, Pilbara and Wheatbelt schools.

Many of these initiatives are designed to attend to the staffing challenges in 2023 and beyond. The initiatives announced today complement the ARIs and are designed to strengthen the relationship between pre-service teachers and their schools. 82 percent of pre-service teachers who undertake professional experience accept ongoing employment in WA public schools.

TERTIARY, TRADE AND TRAINING REPORT

Chandra Ridley – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

There were 10 Regional Skills Summits held across Western Australia between August and December 2021. Feedback from these summits has led to the development of Regional Action Plans. These plans will be implemented by Regional Coordinating Committees (RCC's) to deliver practical actions that respond to a region's unique workforce needs.

RCC's are currently comprised of the relevant regional TAFE college, Regional Development Commission and Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and supported by the Department of Training and Workforce Development. The aim is to get more people onto jobs in regional areas and ensure the unique workforce needs of each region are met.

The State Government's Skills Summits in 2021 identified access to a driver's licence as a common barrier to employment as an apprentice. The Construction Training Fund (CTF) includes a \$1.3 million initiative to assist young people with gaining the experience and skills needed to obtain a driver's licence for entry into a construction trade apprenticeship.

The State Budget for 2022-23 was handed down in May. The McGowan Government is continuing to invest in TAFE and training to provide new opportunities for Western Australians to reskill and find work in local jobs throughout the State. There were record TAFE course enrolments in 2021 as a result of the "Lower Fees, Local Skills" initiative.

The 2022-23 State Budget funds initiatives to meet skill shortages, informed by ideas generated from the Perth and Regional Skills Summits. The \$76.5 million in training initiatives in the 2022-23 State Budget includes:

- \$38.4 million additional funding for Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative;
- \$11 million boost for defence industry's workforce;
- \$4.9 million in support for Collie workforce transition; and
- \$2.4 million to attract international students to the regions to help address skills shortages.

The McGowan Government also continues to roll out the TAFE capital works program, with \$216 million committed to deliver state-of-the-art facilities providing high-quality, industry-relevant training across the State.

The budget also included a \$14.3 million Construction Training Fund (CTF) which included \$4.5 million for a new tool rebate to support apprentices and trainees to purchase trade-related tools and safety equipment. Eligible apprentices will be able to claim up to \$500 each from the CTF for purchases made between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

Upon election in May, Labor made numerous promises regarding post compulsory education, including a \$1.2 billion 'Future made in Australia Skills Plan' to focus on closing the gap on key areas of skills shortages with new places at university and TAFE. They also promised to deliver up to 20,000 new university places.

Places will be prioritized for universities offering more opportunities for under-represented groups, including people in remote, regional and outer-suburban areas.

The \$4 million Geraldton creative industries' hub was officially opened on 3rd June 2022 by Education and Training Minister Sue Ellery. The upgrade is part of the McGowan Government's investment in TAFE infrastructure. The new facility will be used to deliver training for fashion and textiles, multimedia, photography, graphic design, jewellery making, pottery and glassmaking, ensuring students are learning in industry-standard facilities and graduating job ready.

Apprentice and traineeship numbers reached a record high of 47,700 in June 2022 surpassing 45,000 for the first time in a decade. Completions have also risen, with more than 10,300 people completing an apprenticeship or traineeship in 2021-22.

Apprenticeships with the most significant completion increases were mechanical fitters (up 71 percent), automotive electricians (up 70 percent), heavy mobile mechanics (up 46 percent) and heavy welding/fabricators (up 42 percent).

In September, the \$2 million upgrade of Central Regional TAFE's Northam Campus was officially opened. The upgraded facilities will help to meet the needs of industries in the Wheatbelt region – including metal fabrication and construction – by training students in industry-standard facilities to leave TAFE job ready.

Fee free TAFE courses have been introduced in 2023. All job ready skills sets will be fully fee-free in 2023. These skill sets contain units from nationally recognized vocational training and offer a great pathway to more skills' knowledge.

The eligibility criteria has been expanded so more people are able to access the free courses.

TRAVEL REPORT

Samantha Greay – Portfolio Holder, March 2023

The Student Travel Subsidy Scheme (STSS) 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 (DRA) 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 offering classes in the grade or level in which the student is enrolled, or
 - Regular passenger transport (bus stop, airport or train station - please visit the TransWA – Plan Your Journey 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.

At present, when applying for a refund or travel voucher through STSS, a student is only eligible to submit a request for flights via the most direct route by air/bus/train between the principal family home or usual place of residence and where they are being educated. ICPA (WA) wrote to Minister Saffioti outlining a need for flexibility as there are times when students may need to travel to an alternative town to meet their families if, for example, the family has been at a School of the Air camp.

At the 2022 ICPA (WA) State Conference, three travel motions were presented related to the eligibility criteria of the STSS Road Travel Subsidy, which is now precluding members from receiving the Road Travel Subsidy. Responses to correspondence advised members to email 'richard.roberts@transport.wa.gov.au' as cases will

be assessed on an individual basis. To date, no response has been received by those members who sent emails.

ICPA (WA) has written to the Minister of Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti, MLA several times and have informed her that we meet 3 times a year in Perth requesting a delegation meeting to discuss the eligibility criteria, again, with no response received. ICPA (WA) would greatly welcome the opportunity to clearly outline how the application of the Road Travel Subsidy eligibility criteria is not appropriate to rural locations. When the proximity to a transport hub, aka a bus stop, makes you ineligible to receive the Road Travel Subsidy even if that bus services only travel to Widgiemooltha, as acknowledged by On-demand Transport, questions need to be answered how the eligibility criteria is assisting rural and remote families with equitable access to education.

ICPA (WA) wrote to John Bailly of School Bus Services (SBS) and also had a successful meeting with him at the July face-to-face meeting to discuss members school bus issues and how to lodge a concern or complaint. Mr Bailly explained the process on the website to follow to lodge a concern and speak with the Contact Officer responsible for the area. This information has been forwarded to members.

Feedback from ICPA (WA) members who use the Orange School Buses suggests that there is a lot of confusion with the terms 'eligible' and 'complimentary' and this was also the feedback from Mr. Bailly. Members often feel that the rules that SBS are governed by do not fit with the complexities of distance, schools, education needs and families in regional Western Australia.

In mid-2021 there had been an ABC News article outlining the major impact that removing a bus route can have on our families and towns, siting Munglinup where there was the possibility that a route may close. Unfortunately, the issue with the Hyden bus routes remains unresolved after a number of meetings.

In August 2021, ICPA (WA) welcomed the news that the Minister for Transport had referred the School Bus Services policy to a parliamentary committee for review. In October ICPA (WA) submitted in an extensive submission to the committee and attended as witnesses at a public hearing to discuss matters raised in the submission including the operation of the Policy.

SCHOOL BUS SERVICES REVIEW 2022

The first School Bus Services review in 25 years was conducted in 2022. The '*Bus Fair*' report was released in December 2022 some of the key recommendations included:

- Enhancing collaboration between the Department of Education and the Public Transport Authority
- Providing greater notice to the community when Transport services expand to replace school bus services
- Enabling families to keep their child on a wait list seat while also receiving a conveyance allowance
- Creating a formal process for parents and careers to appeal decisions made by school bus services
- Establishing a dedicated complaints management process
- Improving school bus service advertising and application processes for families
- Making information for applicants more accessible, including providing information in languages other than English; and
- Updating guidelines to include information on conduct of school bus contractors and drivers

In total, there were 40 recommendations from the Bus Fair report. The Government's response accepted 28 in principle, supported 1 in principle and noted 11 recommendations. One of those 11 was the recommendation to review the conveyance allowance. ICPA (WA) have been advocating for an increase to this allowance for a number of years, so here's hoping!

Travel in a State the size of Western Australia is going to be costly for any purpose. From 1947 a State scheme had been in place to assist isolated children to access education but was limited to two free return flights

annually. Lobbying by ICPA (WA) resulted in the scheme being extended to three return fares from 1976. The current entitlement is four return trips for students under a subsidised fare. In 1977 the State Government agreed to subsidise part of the cost of travel from a child's home to the nearest approved regular passenger transport service, known as Road Travel Subsidy. It was a significant benefit given the vast distances travelled by many remote families every year just to reach the nearest airport, bus or train service.

In a submission to the Minister for Transport regarding Road Travel Subsidy in October 1988 ICPA (WA) recommended the Road Travel Subsidy rate be increased from 9c/km to 20c/km. Interestingly, some 34 years later the current rate of Road Travel Subsidy is 22.04c/km.

RURAL & REMOTE EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (RREAC) REPORT

Naomi Obst – Appointee, March 2023

Throughout 2022 no face-to-face RREAC meetings were held. A meeting via Teams was held on 6th May 2022 to introduce new members and address possible areas of concern that RREAC could visit. This was the first meeting held since November 2020.

The first meeting for 2023 was held via Teams on 20th February though unfortunately I was unable to attend. The agenda outlined a welcome to members and website discussions. At the time of this report, no minutes from this meeting have been received.

A new chairperson, Dr Chris Chuck has been appointed. Dr Chuck is a Principal Consultant, School Planning with the Department of Education. Additionally, there are quite a few new members who all seem very invested in making RREAC work positively for rural and remote education.

On 7th February 2023 I received a letter from The Hon. Dr Tony Buti MLA advising that cabinet had approved my re-appointment to the RREAC board as a representative for ICPA (WA). The term of appointment is for two years, effective from this date. Appointments may be renewed by Cabinet, subject to a maximum tenure of 10 years.

It is hoped that the injection of a new chairperson and some new representatives together with more long-standing representatives will form a stronger and united voice to support ICPA's calls for a more equitable education outside of Perth.

Further, it is hoped that with the changes in Education Ministers this important body will be re-energised.