



# ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

## BOARDING/HOSTELS/SECOND HOME PORTFOLIO 2022 FEDERAL CONFERENCE MOTION UPDATE March 2023

In 2022, ten motions were carried at the Federal Conference relating to the Boarding, Hostels and Second Home Portfolio. These motions related to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance, the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) School Funding Model, the effects of a pandemic and the physical and emotional toll on boarding students, staff and families and the affordability of boarding and ensuring schools were aware of their impact on geographically isolated students' education.

Motion letters were sent to relevant Ministers, Members of Parliament, Senators, Departments and organisations in October 2022 following Federal Conference. While not all official replies have been received at the time of writing, we have received correspondence from the Federal Education Minister.

### **Boarding and COVID-19**

It came as no surprise that four motions regarding boarding staff to be considered as Essential Supervisory Staff at all times, classified as Essential Travellers in emergency management plans, creation of an essential traveller exemption for interstate students and their families and emotional well-being considerations were brought to the conference. Members were still experiencing challenging restrictions associated with boarding and COVID-19 through early to mid-2022 and this was reflected in these motions.

Following conference, Federal Council wrote to all relevant Ministers, MPs and Senators to ensure that the motions passed at conference were given their due consideration and noted to ensure there is sufficient awareness and understanding of the issues raised. It is of vital importance to have these documented to ensure students and families do not suffer the same adversity as per the COVID-19 pandemic in any future situations. Federal Council received a response from the Hon Jason Clare MP, Education Minister, who explained the complexities for COVID-19 management and also the further difficulties of the various State and Territory jurisdictions setting their own pandemic control plans. The implementation of the National Code for Boarding School Students remains in line with the relevant health advice and State, Territory or non-governmental education authorities.

### **Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance**

Three Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance motions were presented at Federal Conference. Two called for an increase in the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance citing that this would help ease the financial burden on families who grapple with increased boarding fees from their educational facilities. Another motion relating to the AIC requested a separation of the AIC to include a standalone category for Geographically Isolated Children (AGIC) to ensure that given the growing number of students who receive the AIC for reasons other than geographical isolation, adequate recognition of the unique needs of families who require this payment due to their geographic location and lack of other viable educational options for the student continues. These issues were included in a motion letter sent to the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services.

While ICPA (Aust) has not received an official response from Minister Rishworth, Federal Council attended a virtual meeting with the Department of Social Services and Services Australia to discuss the issues raised in the motions for the Boarding Schools/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio along with the Tertiary and Distance Education Portfolios. The opportunity to discuss these issues one on one with the relevant departments added a human element, gave the issues context in a rural and remote setting and fostered a broader understanding within these departments of why our members request increases and changes to AIC. These meetings now

occur quarterly, where we have the opportunity to discuss AIC, Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY and the Tertiary Access Payment. It is pleasing to have a strong and fluid relationship with both departments for the benefit of not only our members but also the departments with the building of their knowledge.

For members' information, the Department of Social Services provided the 2023 AIC payment rates and payment dates in late 2022. These are available on our website [here](#).

### **Direct Measure of Income (DMI) School Funding Model**

The motion regarding the impact of the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) funding model for non-government schools and the flow on effect that this will have on school fees, particularly to boarding families is of concern. Federal Council wrote to the Minister for Social Services and other relevant Ministers in regard to this and at the writing of this report, a response had not yet been received. The topic was also raised during our October 2022 delegations and it was noted by Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education. ICPA (Aust) has been working with the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) and has requested examples of the direct impact on our member families, specifically in regard to any increase in fees as a result of the new funding arrangements. We will continue to advocate for equity for members and students and would like members to also know that independent schools (including boarding schools) throughout Australia also have access to their own support organisations to ensure that they have a voice in situations like this. Federal Council's priority is always to ensure educational equity, school viability or educational choice is not diminished for rural and remote students with the implementation of this methodology.

### **Accessing Affordable Boarding for Geographically Isolated Students**

ICPA (Aust) has written to ABSA requesting they ensure that their member schools take into consideration and have a deep understanding of the unique challenges that geographically isolated families face with sending their children to boarding school. Whilst there is appreciation of the financial subsidies from Government and the schools themselves in assisting families with financial support, it is imperative that the schools remain educated on the adversity that families are facing.