



School Travel Portfolio

2024 Conference Report

Portfolio Leader: Jennifer Ruska

I feel fortunate to deliver my first report as leader of the Federal Student Travel Portfolio.

It has been a productive year advocating for the portfolio which has seen the Federal Council send letters, issue surveys and have many discussions at both state and federal level, particularly regarding the motions carried in Darwin in 2023.

Currently there are huge inequities in student travel allowances offered by the commonwealth. The Federal Government has in place Fares Allowances to assist with student travel under the ABSTUDY and the Youth Allowance Schemes, however, there is no provision for travel in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme which is the assistance category many geographically isolated children fall within. Federal Council has continued to impart these inequities to the Federal Government.

ICPA (Aust) has also focused on raising rural students' travel needs outside of government with letters distributed to all domestic, major and some smaller airlines that operate within our regional, remote and isolated regions requesting consideration for the introduction of capped airfares for students from rural and remote areas when flying to and returning home from educational institutions.

As a result of this correspondence, Federal Council has commenced discussions with Chris Kwong, Senior Manager, Government and Public Affairs Qantas around the issues facing our members, student travel costs and the cancellation of flights and routes post-COVID-19.

At the end of November 2023, the Federal Council issued a survey to all members at the request of Qantas, seeking information regarding students' current travel, and the choices available to them. We received over one hundred responses and the information was passed on to Qantas. Following this, Qantas are constructing a new 'how to use' pamphlet, around the use of their Resident Fares program. The new pamphlet will be issued to all ICPA members via email once completed. ICPA (Aust) understands that this does not help all members and we will continue to advocate with Qantas and all other airlines for a Capped Student Fares program.

ICPA (Aust) has also continued its lobby for the installation of sensors that not only detect sound but also movement with all vehicles used within Australia that transport students to and from their place of education.

As part of this advocacy, the Federal Council sought feedback from all State Councils on movement within their state regarding this issue. New South Wales State Council advised that some news from "BusNSW," that New South Wales has implemented the passenger alarm check system which is to be installed in all new rural and regional buses.. They also noted they are advocating for the addition of such devices with the Minister for Transport.

With this knowledge ICPA (Aust) sent correspondence to the Federal Minister for Transport the Hon Catherine King MP, urging the federal government to work with state jurisdictions to make this program a federal one.

The Minister responded informing ICPA (Aust) that the matter was of importance to the Federal Government, and they had formed a working group in February of this year that will be working with the United Nations World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations.

We look forward to accessing these notes and outcomes from these meetings once they are released.



I would like to thank all ICPA members for their contributions towards the School Travel Portfolio. Thanks also go to fellow portfolio members who have made my first year on Federal Council so much more relaxed. They are always on hand to assist with letter writing, helpful thoughts and support. I could not have done this without such a supportive team.