



2025 Travel Federal Conference Report

Jennifier Ruska – QLD

Over the past 12 months, the Travel Portfolio team has worked actively to address the real and growing costs of travel faced by families living in geographically isolated areas. Access to secondary education for rural and remote students continues to come with significant financial burdens, and our focus has remained on seeking practical, achievable solutions to reduce those barriers.

ICPA Australia wrote to the Hon. Catherine King, Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development regarding the prioritisation of maintenance on roads used on school bus routes. In her response, the Minister highlighted significant federal investment in regional roads:

- \$120 billion Infrastructure Investment Pipeline
- Doubling of Roads to Recovery funding to \$1 billion annually from 2027–28
- \$1.9 billion in maintenance over four years
- \$150 million per year in Black Spot funding
- New Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program

These programs provide welcome progress, and we will continue monitoring to ensure school transport routes are included.

As we are all too familiar, road travel is only part of the equation when transporting our students to and from school each term.

At one of our meetings with Qantas this year, they confirmed the heavy use of its Resident Fares program but unfortunately currently they have no plans to extend it.

During these meetings ICPA has continued to advocate for flexibility in the Resident Fares program to allow for multiple departure and return points—particularly critical in times of weather disruption or remote access challenges.

Qantas has shown interest in developing a discount code for rural and remote students, using the WA government's program as a model. Discussions on logistics and eligibility are ongoing.

ICPA delegates met with the Department of Social Services in February 2025. It was recommended that we collect further evidence to highlight the inequities AIC families face compared to other schemes. Following advice from DSS, ICPA launched State-based travel cost surveys to collect firsthand data from families. These surveys capture detailed information on flights, fuel, accommodation, and income loss. This data is already shaping our conversations with policymakers and stakeholders.

We are pleased to report that **over 100 responses** have been collected so far. The **survey will officially close after Conference on August 1**.

Thank you to all families and branches who contributed motion content, survey responses, and case studies. Together, we keep our students connected to opportunity—no matter how remote the road.