
ALLOWANCES REPORT

**Madame President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen.
It is with great pleasure that I present the Allowances Portfolio report.**

I am sure I am not the only State Councillor that will stand up here over conference and say that the last year has flown by, but indeed it has at lightning speed. Between the busyness of our day to day lives, we squeeze in ICPA and represent our members, which is something we all feel very passionate about.

We are all in this room today because we have some affiliation with rural and remote education and for some of us that can come at a much greater expense than our city friends. Thank you for making the huge effort to attend State conference. I find that these two days reinvigorate our passion and reinforce the need to continue advocating for our members and their families.

After a busy few years in the Health and Wellbeing and Boarding portfolios, I made the jump to Allowances portfolio after the 2023 Moree State Conference. I have enjoyed learning about the many allowances and subsidies available to rural and remote families and bringing issues related to this portfolio to the attention of relevant state ministers, departments, and organisations.

Spreading awareness, knowledge, and information on allowances available at both a state and federal level is an important part of my role and something I have really enjoyed.

Like many portfolios, this is an area where there is continuous change and so many variants to most allowances to understand and decipher.

I definitely do not know the answer to all questions but have been happy to find the answer. A big thank you to our President and prior Allowances portfolio holder, Tanya, who has been my go-to this year with many a question.

We are very lucky to have state and federal allowances that can assist with the financial commitments that many of our members face. Although they are not designed and definitely do not cover all costs associated with educating our children, they provide much needed assistance to rural and remote families and access to opportunities that otherwise might not be possible. A huge topic of conversation of late is the increased cost of living; and the effect of this is evident on educating rural and remote students, from early childhood to tertiary.

ICPA is aware that our advocating for the increase of state and federal allowances is more urgent in these financially trying times. Providing much needed financial assistance, relative to the costs of education, will go a long way in bridging the educational gap between rural and remote and metropolitan students. In turn, this assistance will hopefully improve the educational outcomes of our rural and remote children.

Unfortunately, not all children who are disadvantaged by geographical location qualify for these much-needed allowances and this is something that ICPA continues to bring to the attention of the relevant government departments.

At this point I would like to thank our fellow ICPA Federal Councillors, who spend a considerable amount of time lobbying federal allowance issues which affect ICPA-NSW members.

Federal Council have lobbied tirelessly for an increase to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC), Basic Boarding Allowance (BBA). In their recent Pre Budget-Submission, they have asked the federal government to cover 55% of average boarding fees for families who have no other choice but to access boarding school for compulsory secondary education.

The Pre Budget Submission can be found here –
<https://icpa.com.au/au/news/icpa-aust-presents-pre-budget-submission>

They have also asked for an extension of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education allowance to 3–4-year-olds accessing an approved distance education early learning program.

These changes would have a positive effect on many ICPA-NSW members, so thank you Federal Council. It really is fantastic that we can work together and fight to increase the financial support offered to rural and remote families from State and Federal governments.

The beginning of 2024 has seen an increase in many, if not all, the allowances, and subsidies available to our members.

ICPA-NSW provides a list of available State and Federal allowances, with a summary of eligibility criteria, closing dates and contact details. This spreadsheet can be found in the next issue of Topwire, or by contacting ICPA-NSW State Council.

I recommend that everyone checks out the allowances and subsidies available, you never know what you may qualify for. And as always get in contact with State Council if you have any questions or need clarification.

When applying for any allowances, we urge families to not self-assess their eligibility, but encourage them to provide all the information that is required for each application and allow the assessment processes to occur. You never know, you may be pleasantly surprised.

It is great to see many new Allowance motions have been put forward by ICPA-NSW branches. Each year new issues arise, and we have our members to thank for bringing these to State Council. Rest assured that State Council will take these on board, advocate and update members of any progress made.

It has been a pleasure to present my first Allowances Portfolio report and unfortunately my last, as I have made the difficult decision to step off NSW State Council this year.

One positive of the COVID-19 pandemic is that I joined State Council to advocate for interstate boarders. The people I have met and the friends I have made have had such an impact on my

life. I have learnt new skills, had incredible experiences, and laughed so much. They are a special bunch of people, so I would highly recommend joining State Council, you won't regret it!

Bree Wakefield
Allowances Convenor