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## Allowances

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

The difference in educational outcomes between rural and remote students compared to those in metropolitan areas is well documented. The allowances that ICPA-NSW and ICPA (Aust.) advocate hard for, go a long way to bridging this educational gap, by providing greater equity and access to education for rural and remote children. There are however many families still unable to access quality education due to financial restraints and the rising costs of education, particularly for those children who have no alternative but to board or live away from their families.

Rural and remote students continue to be under-represented and this disparity adversely impacts these individuals and their communities. The myriad of issues resulting in this disparity include financial, cultural, personal, educational and social support factors and the Australian education system must strive to deliver excellence and equal opportunity for all Australian students. The rural and remote cohort is more likely to be willing to return to their rural and remote communities ensuring viability, economic development and resilience of these communities.

State Council is aware that many families mistakenly believe that ICPA administer or distribute funds for allowances, this is not the case and never has been. Rather ICPA-NSW is here to make the process easier for families by having up to date information available and fostering contacts within the relevant departments. This information is published quarterly in Top Wire or can be accessed via the website. Further to this, if there are specific issues or queries that families are unable to resolve themselves then the Allowance Convenor is available to assist families to get the answers they need. There are many allowances available to families, the criteria for eligibility, dates for application and all information relating to them is ever-changing and as such we are available to assist members and we provide a brief overview of the available allowances.

### **New South Wales State Allowances:**

These allowances are administered by the Department of Education (DoE).

**Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA):** The LAFHA is an allowance granted to students in New South Wales who live in an isolated area and need to move away from home in order to obtain a secondary education.

**Boarding Scholarship for Isolated Students (BSIS):** Similar to LAFHA, BSIS is an equity provision for rural New South Wales secondary school students whose family has a low income, whose geographic location severely affects access to secondary schooling and whose circumstances require that they board away from home to attend a government school.

### **Federal Allowances:**

These allowances are administered by Centrelink, which is a part of the Department of Human Services.

**Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance:** AIC allowances are for students who

cannot attend the nearest government school due to distance, road conditions, or some other special needs categories. There are five different AIC allowances members may be eligible for, here is a brief overview of the allowances.

- **Distance Education Allowance**, for families who must educate their children via Distance Education due to distance, road conditions or other special needs conditions.
- **Basic Boarding Allowance**, a basic rate for isolated children who attend boarding school.
- **Additional Boarding Allowance**, an amount above the Basic Boarding Allowance for low income families.
- **Second Home Allowance**, a provision for families who need to rent or buy a home closer to a school in order to educate their children.

**Youth Allowance:** is financial help if you're 24 or younger and a student or Australian Apprentice, or 21 or younger and looking for work. If you are applying you will be assessed as either dependent or independent.

- **Dependent:** If you are 21 or younger, you're dependent, unless you meet one of the conditions that make you independent.

- **Independent:** If you're 22 or older, you are considered independent. If you're 21 or younger, you may be considered independent if certain criteria apply.

#### **Independent through work:**

**Full time work:** You may be independent if you support yourself through full time paid work for a certain period of time. See if you're considered independent using the check independence through work history tool.

**Part time work or earnings for rural and remote students:** You may be independent if you meet all the following criteria:

- your parental home is in an inner regional, outer regional, remote or very remote area
- you need to move away from your parental home to study
- you've worked since leaving secondary school. Use the Student Regional Area Search to find out which area your family home is in.

**Fares Allowance:** This helps with the cost of travel between your permanent home and your place of tertiary study in Australia for one return trip. Fares Allowance covers the cost of the least expensive and most available form of public transport in Australia. Where it is not practical to use public transport, you can travel by private transport, there are further eligibility criteria to be met, for further information go to;

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/fares-allowance>

**\*\* Secondary students and Apprentices CAN NOT get Fares Allowance.**

**The Regional Apprentice and University Student Travel Card:** provides eligible apprentices, trainees and university students living in regional, rural and remote areas of

NSW with a \$250 prepaid card to help ease the cost of travel and support access to education and training.

The program is available for a 2-year trial period, which has started in early 2023.

**\*\* When applying for any allowances, families are encouraged not to self-assess their eligibility, but are encouraged to provide all the information that is required and allow the assessment processes to occur.**

**Some of the issues coming from motions include:**

**Tertiary Access Payment** of \$5000 for all school leavers who relocate for full-time higher-level tertiary education of at least one-year duration from an outer regional or remote area. However this is only for students who study in the year immediately after finishing Year 12.

**Independent Youth Allowance** - allowing greater flexibility in pathways to qualify for independent Youth Allowance. This recommendation enables rural and remote students who successfully undertake their first year of tertiary study externally, including at a Regional Study Hub, to access independent Youth Allowance or independent ABSTUDY.

**Fares Allowance** - recommends expansion of the Fares Allowance to enable students who have relocated to return home at the end of a semester to visit family during their first year of study.

**Liquid Assets Waiting Period** – The Department of Families and Social Services reinforced that the Liquid Assets Waiting Period is applied if liquid assets are over \$5,500 for a single student and is tapered up to \$11,500 meaning there is a maximum 13-week waiting period

**Centrelink staff and misinformation** - ICPA (Aust) has been assured once again that Centrelink staff manning the 132490 phone line have extensive training, have the resources to answer all queries efficiently and where a Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY or Austudy enquiry is complex, staff have access to specialist staff. While we cannot contact Centrelink on behalf of a member because of Privacy Laws, we can contact them with the issue generally.

**Proof of Identity** - ICPA (Aust) has been told the reason a student is required to present to a Centrelink office, access point or agent to prove their identity is to protect individuals from identity theft and other forms of identity fraud. We do understand that due to distance from a Centrelink office this can lead to delays in applications and our students being able to attend in person.

**Relocation Scholarship** - ICPA (Aust) is continues to push for the Relocation Scholarship to extend to Independent Youth Allowance recipients to address the continued disparity in the level of financial assistance provided to help with relocation costs for rural students who have qualified for independent Youth Allowance compared to Dependent Youth Allowance assistance. Aligning the TAP with the Relocation Scholarship amounts will benefit the youth allowance students qualifying as an independent as well as students' ineligible for Youth Allowance.

**The Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships Program (RRESP)** has supported students in rural, regional and remote areas with the costs of studying at university or a

vocational education and training institution.

Allowances are not designed to cover all the costs associated with educating our children, but they can and do provide an opportunity of support to families that may never have been able to access these educational opportunities. The Allowances that ICPA NSW advocates hard for, go a long way to bridging the educational gap in providing greater equity and access to educational institutions for rural and remote children. However, we always need to do more, especially when we still have so many rural and remote students unable to access any financial support.

I want to thank you all for attending conference and your presence reinforces the need for us to continue all the hard work that we do as members and State Councillors. ICPA members are the policy makers of the Association. This means that branches bring their issues to our Annual State Conference for other guests to hear the passionate debates. These issues are then taken further, usually to politicians and department advisors to be acted on. ICPA advocates to ensure that ALL students throughout rural and remote areas have equity of access to an education appropriate to their needs - whatever the educational/learning institute.

Sometimes we present motions for a long time before finally seeing progress. Sometimes we need to review what we are asking for and see how we can word it differently to change the way a situation is viewed by those with the power to approve or make policy changes. Personal stories make great case studies to present on deputation and help to give real life experiences to our motions.

Each year both State and Federal ICPA Councils bring your issues to respective state and federal governments for increased financial support through various allowances to assist with educating rural and remote children.

On behalf of all ICPA-NSW members, I would like to thank our Federal Council colleagues and NSW State and Federal governments in working together to increase the financial support offered to our rural and remote families. ICPA families are truly grateful.

When applying for any allowances, families are encouraged not to self-assess their eligibility, but are encouraged to provide all the information that is required and allow the assessment processes to occur. ICPA-NSW continually updates and provides an annual allowance spreadsheet as a summary of what allowances are available, eligibility criteria, closing dates and contact details. It is available in editions of Top Wire, on the website, Facebook posts or by contacting the allowances convenor.

In closing I would like to thank my fellow State Councillors for all their support and for all the time you give voluntarily in providing assistance to our members.

**Tanya Mitchell**  
**Allowances Convenor**

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