

Department of Education update on motions from the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) 2024 State Conference

| Motion  | Department response – July 2024  |
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| <b>Special needs</b>  |  |
| <p><b>1. Katherine branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT requests that the Dept of Education and the Dept of Health provide targeted support to 'Special Needs Teachers' at Schools of the Air. To better educate and support Home Tutors and families of students who are Geographically Isolated and have recognised additional needs.</p>   | <p>The Department of Education (the department) can confirm that Katherine School of the Air and Alice Springs School of the Air each have an allocated Key Contact in Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Programs and Services (SWIPS) Client Services team that is available to provide advice and support to the school.</p> <p>The schools are able to request a service for support and this has been discussed as part of the School Service Plan. This includes planning for support to special education teachers, home tutors and students through professional consultancy, professional learning sessions and individual supports (e.g. assessments and counselling) as required.</p> <p>The School Service Plans are reviewed regularly by the Key Contact and school leadership to ensure that needs identified by the school are supported.</p> |
| <b>Allowances</b>   |  |
| <p><b>2. Katherine Branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT requests the Department of Education annually review the Student Assistance Boarding Allowance, including the zone methodology and allowance amounts, to ensure all geographically isolated boarding students are adequately and fairly financially supported to complete their compulsory schooling.</p>   | <p>The first annual review of the simplified Student Assistance Scheme will occur in 2024.</p> <p>Planning for the Review of the Student Assistance Schemes (Stage 4) commenced in April 2024. One year after the major changes (Stage 1 and 2) were implemented and following the processing of the 2023 grandfathered applications which closed on 31 March 2024.</p> <p>The implementation review plan will include a collaborative approach and scheduled meetings with key stakeholders, including the Isolated Children's Parents' Association.</p> <p>Future review cycles will be considered as part of this review.</p>   |
| <p><b>3. Alice Springs Branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT lobbies the NT Department of Education for an increase in all allowances within the Student Assistance Scheme, including the kilometre travel rate, to more closely reflect the real cost of travel and the actual distance families must travel in kilometres instead of the radius travelled &amp; zone restrictions which is currently being used, especially in light of the number of kilometres our members travel on dirt roads to access education.</p> | <p>As part of the simplified Student Assistance Scheme, families no longer receive allowances based on a per kilometre travel rate and instead are provided with lump sum amounts. This provides families with the flexibility to choose how best to use their funding.</p> <p>Under the new scheme, a majority of recipients receive increased support and it is expected that additional families have access to support through the new schemes.</p> <p>Implementation challenges will be considered as part of the review of the scheme.</p>   |
| <p><b>4. Katherine Branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT requests the NT Student Assistance Scheme includes all students eligible for the <u>Federal Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme</u> - under the '<i>Isolated Conditions - No reasonable Access to School</i>' Clause, where families are required to work onsite at various geographically isolated locations throughout the school year preventing them from being able to enrol in a conventional public school.</p>  | <p>Planning for the Review of the Student Assistance Schemes (Stage 4) commenced in April 2024. One year after the major changes (Stage 1 and 2) were implemented and following the processing of the 2023 grandfathered applications which close on 31 March 2024.</p> <p>The implementation review plan will include a collaborative approach and scheduled meetings with key stakeholders, including the Isolated Childrens Parents' Association.</p> <p>Guidance resources to support efficiency of the scheme will be considered as part of the review.</p> <p>The new policy and procedures for the updated Internet Subsidy Scheme for Distance Education Students includes provisions for families who work across various geographically isolated locations.</p>  |

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| <p><b>5. Alice Springs Branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT requests that the Department of Education offer training sessions for all Northern Territory based subsidies available for Geographically Isolated students and families enrolled in schools of distance education.</p>   | <p>In 2024, department representatives provided information sessions tailored to the requests of the distance education schools. One session was held in Katherine on 8 February 2024 and another held in Alice Springs on 27 February 2024. Additional information sessions can be provided upon request.</p> <p>Guidance resources to support efficiency of the scheme will be considered as part of the Student Assistance Scheme review.</p>  |
| <p><b>6. Katherine Branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT encourages the NT Education Department to continually improve the Student Assistance Scheme application, re-application and processing systems and ensure the scheme subsidies and assistance is appropriate to the needs of isolated students.</p>   | <p>Planning for the Review of the Student Assistance Schemes (Stage 4) commenced in April 2024. One year after the major changes (Stage 1 and 2) were implemented and following the processing of the 2023 grandfathered applications which closed on 31 March 2024.</p> <p>The implementation review plan will include an engagement approach and scheduled meetings with key stakeholders, including the Isolated Childrens Parents' Association.</p> <p>Guidance resources to support efficiency of the scheme will be considered as part of the review.</p>   |
| <p><b>7. Katherine Branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT requests that the Department of Education extend the Back to School voucher scheme to all Northern Territory Geographically Isolated Students that are required to Board Interstate to complete their compulsory schooling.</p>   | <p>The department has committed to reviewing the Back to School payment scheme policy in 2024 with the updated policy to take effect in 2025.</p> <p>The review will include engaging with stakeholders.</p> <p>The Back to School payment scheme is a Northern Territory (NT) Government initiative to assist families with certain school related costs at the beginning of the school year. The entitlement to purchase educational items can only be redeemed at the student's school.</p> <p>Students enrolled and attending a NT school are eligible for the scheme. This includes students enrolled at a NT Government school, non-government school and NT home-educated students.</p>  |
| <p><b>8. Alice Springs Branch</b></p> <p>That NT ICPA requests that the Department of Education review the current policy that guides Schools of Distance Education for the "Back to School Voucher" scheme, to allow more flexibility for Geographically isolated families enrolled in schools of Distance Education to purchase what is needed for their remote classrooms.</p> | <p>The department has committed to reviewing the Back to School payment scheme policy in 2024 with the updated policy to take effect in 2025.</p> <p>The review will include engaging with stakeholders.</p> <p>The Back to School payment scheme is a NT Government initiative to assist families with certain school related costs at the beginning of the school year. The entitlement to purchase educational items can only be redeemed at the student's school.</p> <p>Students enrolled and attending a NT school are eligible for the scheme. This includes students enrolled at a NT Government school, non-government school and NT home-educated students.</p> <p>School representative bodies decide the appropriate goods and services on offer within their school community.</p> |
| <p><b>9. Alice Springs Branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT lobbies the NT department of Education to provide student assistance scheme funding via an enrolment base model rather than state based model.</p>  | <p>The Student Assistance Scheme is an NT Government scheme and is aimed at supporting families who reside in the NT. There is no plan to extend the eligibility of the Distance Education Allowance to students who reside outside of the NT.</p> <p>Families who reside interstate may wish to contact their local state government to address support for cross-border distance education.</p> <p>We understand some financial assistance is available to geographically isolated students in South Australia through the Travelling Allowance.</p>  |

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| <b>Distance Education</b>  |  |
| <p><b>10. Katherine Branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT ensures the NT Department of Education subsidises the full amount of school room internet to families, and remains a key participant and advisor to the Department of Education regarding the provision required for distance education.</p>                      | <p>Under the Internet Subsidy Scheme for Distance Education Students, geographically isolated families are provided assistance with internet costs for the purpose of accessing distance education.</p> <p>In 2023, the department conducted a review of the scheme and following consultation with principals from distance education, have developed new policy and procedures to strengthen the application and eligibility assessment process.</p> <p>The subsidy will be implemented in 2 stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>from Term 1, 2024 Katherine School of the Air and Alice Springs School of the Air will continue to facilitate payment of \$165 per month to eligible households for the 2024 school year</li> <li>from Term 1, 2025 the subsidy will be centrally managed through the NT Government's grant management system - GrantsNT and the subsidy paid will match the applicant's internet tax invoice of up to \$174 per month (based on Starlink Roam).</li> </ul> <p>The department presented at the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Katherine School of the Air School Representative Board (SRB) meeting on 8 February 2024, where the SRB endorsed end semester payments to eligible families</li> <li>Alice Springs School of Air Home Tutor Conference held on 27 February 2024 and this included information on the Student Assistance Scheme on Distance Education Allowance and the Back to School payment scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Families may be able to access additional assistance towards internet or other related costs under the Australian's Government's Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme or the Student Assistance Scheme the Distance Education Allowance.</p> |
| <p><b>11. Alice Springs Branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT direct the Minister for Education and NT Government to ensure that Schools of Distance Education are funded appropriately for permanent and adequate Information &amp; Communication Technology (ICT) positions within each School of Distance Education.</p> | <p>The department provides annual funding to government schools using the School Resourcing Model methodology. The School Resourcing Model methodology provides distance education schools with additional funding through the distance education weighting in the Student Needs Based Funding Model.</p> <p>Schools have autonomy about the use of school managed resources to meet the needs of their student cohort. This includes the staffing profile and operational expenditure within this funding allocation having regard to strategies and initiatives identified through strategic and operational planning.</p>   |
| <p><b>12. Katherine Branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT continues to relay the importance of Northern Territory Schools of the Air to all relevant Ministers and Government departments.</p>  | <p>Noted – no action for the department.</p>   |
| <p><b>13. Alice Springs Branch</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT works with and encourages NBN to continue exploring low latency internet connection options for students enrolled and studying at schools of distance education.</p>  | <p>Noted – no action for the department.</p>   |
| <p><b>14. Alice Springs Branch</b></p> <p>That NT ICPA requests that the Northern Territory Department of Education partner with internet providers (such as NBN) to ensure educational connections are available to Schools of Distance Education.</p>  | <p>The Department of Corporate and Digital Development (DCDD) manage relationships with major telecommunications providers, including NBN co., Telstra, Vocus and Speedcast. This request should be referred direct to DCDD.</p>   |

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| <p><b>15. Alice Springs Branch (motion lost)</b></p> <p>That NT ICPA lobbies the Department of Education to provide remuneration to families with students enrolled in Schools of Distance Education to cover monthly costs incurred with portable internet connections.</p>   | <p>No response required – motion lost.</p>   |
| <b>Early Childhood</b>   |  |
| <p><b>16. Alice Springs Branch:</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT lobbies the relevant NT Government Departments to ensure registered Early Childhood Services operating in the Central Australian region are financially supported to implement their program into the geographically isolated areas of Central Australia, which are not receiving such services.</p> | <p>The department continues to liaise regularly with ICPA NT regarding access to early childhood programs. Expanded access to supported playgroups in Central Australia has been offered through Families as First Teachers (FaFT), including establishing an ICPA specific supported playgroup for families when attending Alice Springs School of the Air in-school events.</p> <p>ICPA has lobbied the department for mobile playgroups for Central Australia for many years. The department has raised this with the Australian Government, as the primary funder for these programs.</p> <p>Playgroup NT is supporting RAISEducation (a business that provides isolated families with resources to support distance education) to deliver face to face and online early learning playgroups across Central Australia under the federally funded <i>Helping Families Learn and Grow with Playgroups (FLAG) stream of the Children and Parenting Support (CaPS) program</i>. The program will run from 2024 to 2026. FaFT has supported RAISEducation through offers of training (Abecedarian, ASK-TRAK, participation in regional forums and online mentoring support), materials and scoping of areas of need in Central Australia.</p> |
| <b>Miscellaneous</b>   |  |
| <p><b>17. Katherine Branch:</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT implores the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics to increase maintenance of roads to ensure safe conditions for families travelling to attend for educational purposes and school staff.</p>   | <p>Noted – no action for the department.</p>   |
| <p><b>18. NT State Council:</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT make urgent appeals to relevant Ministers and Senators of the absolute importance of the need for the speedy installation and activation of the Tennant Creek BOM Radar.</p>   | <p>As noted at the 18 June 2024 School Education Advisory Group (SEAG) meeting, the department will raise the issue of installation and activation of a new Tennant Creek weather radar at the Territory Emergency Management Council.</p>   |
| <p><b>19. Alice Springs Branch:</b></p> <p>That ICPA NT be acknowledged and congratulated in their ongoing efforts throughout the year in attending delegations and lobbying Government on our behalf for a brighter future for our children in rural and remote Australia.</p>  | <p>The department acknowledges and gives thanks to the ICPA NT for their ongoing advocacy and support to isolated children and their families.</p> <p>The department will work with ICPA executives to determine an appropriate public acknowledgement that responds to this motion.</p>   |