
Travel Report

Madam President, distinguished guests, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that I present the Travel Portfolio Report for 2021.

2020 was an unusual year for everyone. Because of the Covid restrictions, State Council were not able to go to Sydney for their annual Deputation, but we were able to hold zoom meetings in October with Ministers and other stake holders from a few rooms at the Cattlemen's Motel in Dubbo. Those we had meetings with regarding travel issues were,

The Hon. Paul Toole – Minister for Regional Transport and Roads
Lewis Clark – A/Executive, Customer Services Division, Transport for NSW (TfNSW)
Gail Le Bransky PSM - Director, Transport Social Policy ,Transport for NSW (TfNSW)
Anna Andrews - Director Operations ,Transport for NSW (TfNSW)
Matt Threlkeld – Executive Director, Bus NSW
Mick Veitch - Shadow Minister for Industry and Trade, Rural Roads and Western NSW.

For many years now ICPA-NSW have been requesting the Minister for Transport to include preschool aged children in the School Drive Subsidy (SDS) and the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS). We are still concerned that some preschool aged children in rural and remote areas still do not access a preschool at all due to the cost of travel and bus services are also a very important tool for preschool aged children in rural and remote areas to receive the universally recommended 600 hours prior to starting school.

In 2019 The Department of Education provided Transport for NSW (TfNSW) with a list of preschools in remote and very remote areas, this includes some long day care centres that provide accredited preschool programs. TfNSW are using this list to do a costing model to include preschool children in the SDS in these areas. ICPA-NSW applaud this but would like centres in outer regional areas that provide accredited preschool programs included in the list, because those centres such as Hay and Balranald are providing preschool programs to children who live in a remote or very remote area and travel to them.

According to the Interim report into support for drought affected communities in NSW June 2020. Chapter Four – Training and Education (support for education costs)

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Transport amend the eligibility requirements for the School Drive Subsidy to include pre school children who live in an area that is classified as outer regional, remote, or very remote.

The SDS is administered by TfNSW and is available to NSW residents. The subsidy is for driving school students to school or to the nearest transport pick up point and is only intended to partly offset the cost of using a private vehicle.

Students from Kindergarten-Year 6 are eligible if:

- they are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education
- aged 4 Years 6 months, or older
- from their home address:

- The distance to school exceeds 1.6 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.3 km walking distance, **and** the distance to the nearest transport pick up point (where available) exceeds 1.6 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.3 km walking distance.

Secondary school students from Years 7-12 are eligible if:

- they are a resident of NSW or an overseas student who is eligible for free government education
- from their home address:
 - The distance to school exceeds 2 km (straight line distance) or 2.9 km walking distance, **and**
 - The distance to the nearest transport pick up point (where available) exceeds 2 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.9 km walking distance.

TAFE students are eligible if:

- they are a resident of NSW or an overseas student eligible for free government education
- they are under 18 years of age at 1 January of the year of application
- they are enrolled in a full-time TAFE course for a minimum of 16 hours per week
- they are not employed
- from their home address:
 - The walking distance from home to TAFE exceeds 3.2 km, **and**
 - The distance to the nearest transport pick up point (where available) exceeds 2 km (straight line distance) or is at least 2.9 km walking distance.
- they attend the closest TAFE where enrolment is available.

Boarding school students and weekday boarders attending day school:

Students who board away from home to attend school may be eligible for the SDS.

If no public transport is available, boarding school students are eligible for subsidised travel between the family home and school at weekends and school holidays.

- Students that are weekly boarders are entitled up to 22 trips per semester
- Students that are term boarders are entitled up to 9 trips per year

Students who board in town and attend a day school during term may also be eligible for subsidised travel between the family home and the place of boarding at weekends and school holidays.

There is no subsidy cap on the distance travelled.

Distance Education students attending mini-schools:

The NSW Department of Education (DoE) operates a number of face to face mini-schools to compliment the distance education program. Distance Education students who are full-time and geographically isolated are eligible for the SDS.

To be considered for the SDS, students are required to be enrolled in accordance with section 2.2 of the Distance Education Enrolment Procedures set out by the NSW DoE. There is no limit to the number of trips that can be claimed to attend mini-schools during term time (subject to school attendance records being checked).

University students are not eligible for the SDS. ICPA-NSW have and will continue to ask the Minister to provide them with some sort of travel subsidy. At present, they may be eligible for Fares Allowance which covers the cost of the least expensive and most available form of public transport in Australia between your permanent home and your place of tertiary study. Where it is not practical to use public transport, you can travel by private transport if you need to move belongings that exceed strict luggage limits or are difficult to move around.

To get Fares Allowance you must be a tertiary student living away from home to study and you must also receive one of these payments:

- Youth Allowance as a full time student,
- Austudy as a full time or part time student or
- Pensioner Education Supplement as a full time or part time student
And you must also be one of these:
- dependent and get a higher rate of Youth Allowance when living away from home,
- independent and living away from your partner to study,
- a parent living away from your dependent children to study,
- were dependent and living away from home in the last study year and you are now independent due to:
 - turning 22 or
 - supporting yourself through work, or
- are studying a distance or online course and need to do compulsory travel to your institution.

Secondary students and Australian Apprentices cannot get Fares Allowance.

The School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) provides eligible school students with free or subsidised travel from home to school.

The scheme includes:

- Free travel to and from home and school on approved train, bus, ferry and light rail services during school term.
- Discounted travel on buses between home and school with a School Term Bus Pass.
- Free travel on NSW TrainLink Regional services and long distance coach services for boarding school students

Students from Kindergarten-Year 2 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- Aged 4 Years 6 months, or older.

No minimum walking distance criteria applies to these students.

Primary school students from Years 3-6 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- The straight line distance from their home address to school is more than 1.6 km.
- The walking distance from home to school is 2.3 km or further.

Primary school students who live too close to the school to be eligible for free travel may qualify for a School Term Bus Pass which provides bus travel at a discounted price for the whole school term.

Secondary school students from Years 7-12 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW or an overseas student who is eligible for free government education,
- The straight line distance from their home address to school is more than 2 km, or
- The walking distance from home to school is 2.9 km or further.

Secondary school students who live too close to the school to be eligible for free travel may qualify for a School Term Bus Pass which provides bus travel at a discounted price for the whole school term.

TAFE students are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- They are under 18 years of age at 1 January of the year of application.
- They are enrolled in a full-time TAFE course for a minimum of 16 hours per week.
- They are not employed.
- The walking distance from home to TAFE is 3.2 km or further.
- They attend the closest TAFE where enrolment is available.

Tertiary students studying at TAFE may be eligible for concession travel on public transport.

Boarding school students:

Eligible boarding school students can apply for a free school travel pass for either:

- daily travel to and from school if they reside away from home but do not reside at the school, or
- weekend/vacation travel on NSW TrainLink train and coach services.

Students are not able to apply for both.

The Department of Education Assisted School Travel Program:

This program provides specialised transport assistance for eligible students with disability to travel to and from school. The Program provides travel support services primarily between a student's permanent place of residence and school. The program is targeted towards supporting eligible students who are unable to travel independently and need transport assistance in order to attend school.

Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS):

This is a NSW Government initiative providing financial assistance towards travel and accommodation cost when a patient needs to travel long distances to specialised allied health clinics. Speech Pathology is an example.

Number of students needed to start a bus run:

Consideration may only be given to establishing a new non-commercial school bus service where at least 15 school age students reside 3.2 kilometres or more by the shortest most practical route to their school or the local route bus service and the majority live beyond eight kilometres from the school. The number of students is to be calculated on the basis that all children use the bus each morning and afternoon. ICPA-NSW will continue to ask TfNSW to lower the requisite number of students required to start a bus run from 15 to 12, (the seating capacity of a category 1 bus). Once again if preschool aged children were included in the SSTS many bus runs would continue to run or we could see new ones commence.

Seat belts on school buses:

The installation of seat belts on school buses in rural and remote areas commenced in 2013. In 2017 the program was fast tracked and to be completed by December 2019. At present about 198 have been fitted and the 847 new buses replacing old ones have seatbelts. With retrofitting at six places should see the program finished at the end of 2021.

Thank you to my fellow Councillors for their support during the past year.

David Butler

Travel Portfolio

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