

# The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia

ICPA (Aust) Inc



# POLICIES

Updated October 2023



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## **BOARDING SCHOOLS, SCHOOL TERM HOSTELS** **AND SECOND HOME**

*It is recommended that this Policy be read in conjunction with the Education Allowances Policy, other individual Portfolio Policies and associated ICPA Aust documents*

### **POLICY**

ICPA seeks to have boarding schools, school term hostels and second home arrangements as recognised forms of access to education for students from rural and remote areas who must live away from home for appropriate primary and/or secondary education.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Boarding facilities are of an adequate standard and provide, at reasonable cost, suitable supervision and pastoral care.
2. Resources are available for families to make informed and considered choices regarding boarding schools for their children.
3. Pastoral care courses, including units regarding student mental health are available for boarding facility staff.
4. Mental health programs are available in boarding schools that support the unique needs of boarding students including COVID-19.
5. Provision is made in boarding facilities for children with disabilities.
6. A nationally accredited professional development program is available to train residential staff in the knowledge and skills required to work in boarding facilities.
7. Recurrent funding is available to government and non-government school term hostels.
8. Capital funding is available to government and non-government school term hostels.
9. Support mechanisms are in place which assist in reduction of costs associated with educating rural and remote students living away from home to access schooling.
10. Commonwealth school funding models support geographically isolated students regardless of where they are educated.
11. Unified approach by all governments to support students who must live away from home to access their education regardless of the state they live in.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

*It is recommended that this Policy be read in conjunction with the Education Allowances Policy, other individual Portfolio Policies and associated ICPA Aust documents*

### **POLICY**

ICPA seeks to ensure, as the minimum standard of communications for rural and remote residents, services at a level at least equivalent to that available to the majority of urban Australian residents.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Quality communication services, comparable to those available in urban areas and demonstrating similar reliability, economy, features, voice quality and data rate, are available at no greater cost to people residing in rural and remote Australia.
2. That the Universal Service Obligation and the Universal Service Guarantee obligations, for telephone and internet services, are fulfilled in the provision and functionality of essential communications services that are:
  - a. reliable
  - b. fit for purpose
  - c. maintained at a fully functioning standard.
3. New Universal Service Guarantee voice services exceeds the reliability and quality of existing voice services.
4. Fast, reliable and affordable two-way voice and data communication be available for all students, including those whose families work in remote areas away from a permanent place of residence for the majority of the school year.
5. Appropriate communication services and resources be available for rural and remote students to access, participate in and complete remote learning across all levels of education.
6. Appropriate, suitable, independent information and advice be easily accessible for rural, regional and remote residents to assist with the set up and maintenance of any communication service, software and hardware required and/or utilised.
7. Mobile phone service coverage be increased throughout rural and remote Australia, with areas including rural and remote schools as a priority and coverage to extend beyond school grounds.
8. Mobile towers have consistent and uninterrupted service delivery.
9. Communication services installation, fault reporting and repairs are:
  - a. prioritised for rural and remote students,
  - b. completed within Customer Service Guarantee Guidelines (CSG),
  - c. reviewed regularly, and
  - d. provided by call centres based in Australia.

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10. Students have a dependable, affordable voice service for education and:
  - a. voice services in rural and remote areas are not replaced unless an equivalent or better voice service is available,
  - b. rural and remote students have at least two independent forms of communications for voice and data.
11. Uniform price objective of the Universal Service Obligation (Postal) be retained to protect the economy of services in rural and remote areas.
12. Australia Post uphold their Customer Service Guarantee to provide a twice weekly mail delivery service, where requested, to the resident's nominated point of access.
13. Universal Service Obligation (Postal) includes parcel delivery for rural and remote residents.
14. School materials be classified as essential mail and their delivery prioritised during mail disruptions, such as a natural disaster.
15. Federal Government retains the Remote Air Service Subsidy (RASS) Scheme and ensures it provides a free regular mail service, where required, and a regular and affordable passenger and freight service to isolated remote families and communities where there is no reliable alternative.
16. Residents in rural and remote Australia have access to at least one free-to-air commercial television channel.
17. Universal Service Guarantee obligations are fulfilled in the provision and functionality of essential communications services that are:
  - a. reliable
  - b. fit for purpose
  - c. maintained at fully functioning standard.
18. New Universal Service Guarantee voice services exceeds the reliability and quality of existing voice services.
19. State and Territory Governments deliver and maintain a high-speed internet connection to geographically isolated families with children enrolled in Schools of Distance Education and Schools of the Air at no cost.

## **CURRICULUM**

*It is recommended that this Policy be read in conjunction with the Education Allowances Policy, other individual Portfolio Policies and associated ICPA Aust documents*

### **POLICY**

ICPA seeks to ensure that students from rural and remote areas have access to a curriculum which provides educational opportunities at least equivalent to those available to urban students.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Curriculum design and implementation considers the unique needs and circumstances of rural and remote children.
2. The attainment of basic literacy, numeracy and computer literacy be regarded as essential to all students on the completion of primary school, regardless of location.
3. Governments recognise the need for, and make available, adequate funds for the development, production and distribution of relevant curriculum materials, including training for those utilising new technologies.
4. The responsibility for developing distance education courses to be undertaken by those who have a working knowledge of the needs of rural and remote students and consideration for the time commitment required by distance education tutors for course implementation.
5. Input from experienced distance education tutors be considered an integral part of the design of the curriculum in distance education courses.
6. The education of rural and remote students with specific learning needs be a vital consideration in curriculum development.
7. A National curriculum which allows for a smooth transition between educational systems.
8. A National curriculum which contains relevant, accurate representations of agriculture, including explicit components on Food and Fibre production, to be taught and integrated into primary and secondary school curriculums.
9. National testing and reporting programs consider the individual circumstances of rural and remote students.
10. National uniformity in school starting age.
11. Timely testing timeframes for national testing programs assisting with accessing support and appropriate learning support for rural and remote students.

## **DISTANCE EDUCATION**

*It is recommended that this Policy be read in conjunction with the Education Allowances Policy, other individual Portfolio Policies and associated ICPA Aust documents*

### **POLICY**

ICPA seeks a distance education service for Early Childhood Education – Year 12 rural and remote students including services delivered by schools of distance education and Schools of the Air (SOTAs).

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Recognition of the importance and value of Schools of the Air and schools of distance education with geographically isolated student enrolments being based in and part of their respective rural and remote communities.
2. Support mechanisms are in place which assist in reduction of costs associated with educating rural and remote students to access distance education.
3. Provision of a nationally accredited distance education course for distance education tutors.
4. Experience gained as a distance education tutor is acknowledged as Recognition of Prior Learning.
5. Distance education tutors are paid a government allowance in recognition of the essential work they perform.
6. That schools of distance education are not overlooked in initiatives made available to mainstream schools.
7. A distance education skills component is available in teacher training courses.
8. Schools of distance education provide pre-service courses for new staff.
9. Provision of home visits by suitably qualified personnel to support students and distance education tutors.
10. Mobile diagnostic and service support units be available to test students in consultation with respective teachers.
11. Regular face-to-face activities be conducted by schools of distance education.
12. A free call phone number for students studying by distance education be provided to enable access to teachers.
13. Fast, reliable and affordable two-way voice and data communication be available for all students.
14. Technology to enhance rather than replace face-to-face interaction for students, teachers, parents and distance education tutors.

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15. A hard copy of distance education material be made available to families on request at no additional cost.
16. Financial support be available to families to assist with providing required communication equipment for distance education lessons.
17. Universal Service Guarantee (Postal) to ensure distance education material is delivered as a letter delivery service, regardless of a person's place of residence or mode of delivery.
18. Provision of subsidised travel cost for mail collection where no regular mail service exists.
19. Provision of a nationally accredited pre-employment security screening program for those choosing to work with children.
20. Support for volunteer educator programs for geographically isolated students.
21. Commonwealth school funding models support geographically isolated students regardless of where they are educated.



## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE**

*It is recommended that this Policy be read in conjunction with the Education Allowances Policy, other individual Portfolio Policies and associated ICPA Aust documents*

### **POLICY**

ICPA seeks to ensure that an appropriate and affordable range of early childhood programs and child care be available to support children and families who live in rural and remote areas.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Early childhood programs with optional enrolment be available for two years prior to the commencement of school for rural and remote children.
2. Provision of recognised early childhood distance education programs where there is no reasonable daily access to an education centre.
3. Opportunities for face-to-face social activities be available for rural and remote children participating in early childhood programs.
4. Appropriate learning resources be available for rural and remote children participating in early childhood programs.
5. Appropriate technology and equipment be available for access to distance education early childhood programs.
6. A commitment to establishing and maintaining support networks and ongoing professional development for early childhood professionals and parents in rural and remote areas.
7. Provision of funds for travel and accommodation to assist early childhood professionals from rural and remote areas to access professional development.
8. Flexibility in the funding and provision of early childhood education and care services for service models, funding models, legislation and regulation and training opportunities to address the unique needs of rural and remote families.
9. Employment incentives and training opportunities are available to support rural and remote early childhood education services.
10. That geographically isolated families have access to an affordable in home child care program that meets their unique needs.
11. An ongoing commitment by the Federal Government to implement and deliver a wide range of children's services to families who live in rural and remote areas.
12. Child care services in the rural and remote homes be affordable and accessible.

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13. Rural and remote families to have access to respite child care.
14. Financial assistance be available for all pre-compulsory school students enrolled in a recognised early childhood distance education program.
15. Implementation of a national working with children check that ensures consistency and efficiency in child protection across all States.

## **EDUCATION ALLOWANCES**

*It is recommended that this Policy be read in conjunction with individual Portfolio Policies and associated ICPA Aust documents*

### **POLICY**

ICPA seeks equity of access to an appropriate education for rural and remote students by ensuring the provision of suitable government allowances which assist with compensating the families of these students for the additional costs incurred in educating their children.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. All components of the current Federal Government funded Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme be continued.  
The components of AIC are:
  - a. a non-means tested distance education allowance for students who do not have reasonable daily access to a government school and are studying primary or secondary education by distance education.
  - b. a non-means tested basic boarding allowance for students who do not have reasonable daily access to a government school and must live away from home to access an education.
  - c. an additional boarding allowance, based on a parental income test, for students living away from home to access an education.
  - d. a non-means tested second home allowance, equivalent to the basic boarding allowance, for families who establish a second home to access an appropriate education for their children.
2. Assistance for Isolated Children allowance be:
  - a. adequately meeting the needs of geographically isolated students
  - b. reviewed annually.
  - c. increased annually by at least the CPI Education sub index.
  - d. exempt from income tax.
3. AIC allowance be available for all pre-compulsory school students enrolled in a recognised early childhood distance education program.
4. Distance education tutors are paid a government allowance in recognition of the essential work they perform.
5. Geographically isolated students be categorised separately within the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme.
6. Fares Allowance be added to the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme.
7. The Federal Government establish a fund to assist students living in rural and remote areas with the cost of accessing an education in times of rural hardship.
8. The Federal Government introduce and maintain a tertiary access allowance as financial assistance for rural and remote students who must live away from home to access tertiary education.

9. Scholarships and bursaries be excluded from assessable income for the purpose of student income support.
10. Support payments and adjunct payments be appropriate and commensurate with the costs incurred by rural and remote students who have to live away from the family home to access a tertiary education.
11. Eligibility criteria for Youth Allowance:
  - a. be exclusive of the assessment of family assets and family actual means for rural and remote students,
  - b. be responsive to exceptional circumstances and
  - c. takes into consideration the rural and remote students' unique disadvantage.
12. Parental Income threshold used to determine Youth Allowance eligibility and calculate payment, reflect the ability of the family to support rural and remote dependent student/s when having to relocate to access a tertiary education.
13. Rural and remote tertiary students, who must live away from home to access further education upon completion of secondary school and do not qualify for Youth Allowance as a dependent be classified as independent for Youth Allowance purposes.
14. Youth Allowance eligibility for independent rural and remote students be irrespective of Parental Income criteria.
15. Students in receipt of Youth Allowance as an independent due to family assessment based on entitlement to the Farm Household Allowance and due to assessment based on drought, fire, flood or other natural disaster impacts remain eligible for payments at that rate until the completion of their course.
16. The Federal Government annually reviews the following for students applying and in receipt of Youth Allowance:
  - a. the personal income limit,
  - b. the liquid asset limit and waiting period and
  - c. the student income bank limit.
17. Scholarships for relocation be made available to rural and remote students and all Youth Allowance recipients who need to relocate to access tertiary study.
18. Financial assistance for travel for students who must live away from home to access further education be maintained and reflects the needs of rural and remote students.
19. The Federal Government departments dealing with student financial assistance ensure:
  - a. staff have adequate training and knowledge around allowances and assistance for rural and remote students,
  - b. wait times on student helplines are reasonable and
  - c. services are suitable for rural and remote families.
  - d. information on the website is clear and concise in respect to eligibility criteria, information and application details and

- e. processing of financial assistance payments is timely.
- 20. Financial assistance be available for tertiary students who must relocate to undertake compulsory practicums.
- 21. Financial incentives be available for teachers and health professionals working with students in rural, remote and very remote areas.
- 22. A Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA) be available for apprentices and trainees who are required to move and live away from their family home to access components of their qualification.
- 23. The LAFHA for apprentices and trainees closely reflects the actual cost of living away from home and is indexed to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- 24. The LAFHA for apprentices and trainees' eligibility period post-school, be longer than 36 months for rural and remote school-based apprentices who transfer, at the completion of secondary schooling, to full-time employment with the same apprenticeship.
- 25. Travel and accommodation allowances be paid to apprentices and trainees when required to travel to access a training provider.
- 26. Relocation assistance be available for rural and remote apprentices and trainees who need to relocate away from their family home to pursue their qualification.

## **RURAL SCHOOLS**

*It is recommended that this Policy be read in conjunction with the Education Allowances Policy, other individual Portfolio Policies and associated ICPA Aust documents*

### **POLICY**

ICPA seeks to ensure delivery of quality educational services to students in rural and remote schools.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Specialist teachers and student support services are available in rural and remote schools.
2. Staffing allocation considers the individual enrolment needs of rural and remote schools.
3. Appropriate resources are allocated which address the unique needs of rural and remote schools.
4. All students in rural and remote schools have access to up-to-date educational technology.
5. All school staff receive professional development in the use of technology.
6. Technology enhances rather than replaces face-to-face interaction for students, teachers and parents.
7. All secondary core subjects are delivered face-to-face by teachers who are trained in and qualified to teach those core subjects.
8. A rural education unit is available in teacher training courses and universities encourage pre-service teachers to undertake practicums in a diversity of teaching situations including rural and remote schools.
9. AIC eligibility includes rural and remote schools where English is the second language and schools where the syllabus and teaching arrangements are modified resulting in a limited curriculum on offer compared to the general curriculum of schools in a state or territory.
10. Extra resources and funding are made available specifically for students in rural and remote areas to provide access to a wide range of educational opportunities.
11. Funding is provided to further incentivise experienced teachers to teach in rural, regional and remote locations.

## **SCHOOL TRAVEL**

*It is recommended that this Policy be read in conjunction with the Education Allowances Policy, other individual Portfolio Policies and associated ICPA Aust documents*

### **POLICY**

ICPA seeks the provision of affordable travel services and associated allowances ensuring access to school, place of board or educational facility by the most appropriate means.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. A national safety standard for all buses used for the transportation of school children and children attending early childhood education including:
  - a. buses transporting school children are fitted with seat belts,
  - b. school bus passenger sensors are installed on buses.
2. Student concessional travel fares are established for rural and remote students attending educational institutions within Australia travelling between their home residence and the educational establishment they attend.
3. Expanded airfare discount incentives and programs for regional, rural and remote students.
4. Fares Allowance is available for recipients of the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance.
5. Regional and remote road networks are maintained in a safe and all-weather access standard for the safe travel of children, families and associated personnel while travelling via road to attend education and related services.
6. Student travel allowances are reciprocal between states and territories.
7. Federal Government retains the Remote Air Service Subsidy (RASS) Scheme and ensures it provides a free regular mail service, where required, and a regular and affordable passenger and freight service to isolated remote families and communities where there is no reliable alternative.

## **SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS**

*It is recommended that this Policy be read in conjunction with the Education Allowances Policy, other individual Portfolio Policies and associated ICPA Aust documents*

### **POLICY**

ICPA seeks equity of access and opportunity to appropriate services and facilities to identify and assist children from rural and remote areas who require support for specific educational needs.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Provision of financial assistance for telehealth appointments for children with specific learning needs to access a variety of specialist services in rural and remote Australia.
2. Provision of age appropriate, suitable and high-quality mental health resources and programs specifically designed for the unique needs of rural and remote children including the issue of bullying.
3. Access to early identification of learning difficulties and early intervention.
4. Provision and continuation of specific learning needs centres to cater for children with learning difficulties, learning disabilities or those who are gifted and talented.
5. Provision of mobile units and itinerant specialists and therapists to consult in rural and remote areas on a regular basis, enabling the early identification and ongoing support of children with specific learning needs.
6. Availability of suitable accommodation for those accessing specific learning needs centres.
7. Availability of travel and accommodation assistance for rural and remote families travelling to access face-to-face specialist services for students with specific learning needs.
8. Students with specific learning needs, studying by distance education or in rural and remote schools, have regular access to specific learning needs teachers and therapists.
9. Identification of and assistance for children with specific learning needs, to be a component of teacher-training courses.
10. Educators in rural and remote areas are trained and supported to identify and cater for children with specific learning needs.
11. Funding for the delivery of regular workshops and seminars in rural and remote areas to assist children with specific learning needs.
12. Adequate Federal Government funding to assist with the provision of specialist services for both school and home-based education and therapy programs.



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13. Co-operation of all relevant agencies, (government, private and voluntary), to better service the requirements of rural and remote children with specific learning needs.
14. Availability of incentives and financial assistance to attract qualified organisations, professionals and graduates to rural and remote areas to enable continuity of specific learning programs.
15. Rebates provided by private health insurers extends to allied health services delivered via telehealth.
16. Geographically isolated children have access to diagnosis and ongoing treatments of health issues that impede their ability to learn and thrive.

## **TERTIARY EDUCATION**

*It is recommended that this Policy be read in conjunction with the Education Allowances Policy, other individual Portfolio Policies and associated ICPA Aust documents*

### **POLICY**

ICPA seeks to ensure that students from rural and remote areas have access to tertiary education options which will enable them to pursue the career path of their choice.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. The Federal Government introduce and maintain a tertiary access allowance as financial assistance for rural and remote students who must live away from home to access tertiary education.
2. Commonwealth-supported places be available at universities for all qualifying applicants.
3. Services be available to assist students with specific learning needs undertaking tertiary study.
4. The Federal Government and education providers continue to assist rural and remote students by providing equity scholarships.
5. Scholarships and bursaries be excluded from assessable income for the purpose of student income support.
6. Support payments and adjunct payments be appropriate and commensurate with the costs incurred by rural and remote students who have to live away from the family home to access a tertiary education.
7. Eligibility criteria for Youth Allowance:
  - a. be exclusive of the assessment of family assets and family actual means for rural and remote students,
  - b. be responsive to exceptional circumstances and
  - c. takes into consideration the rural and remote students' unique disadvantage.
8. Parental Income threshold used to determine Youth Allowance eligibility and calculate payment, reflects the ability of the family to support rural and remote dependent student/s when having to relocate to access a tertiary education.
9. Rural and remote tertiary students, who must live away from home to access further education upon completion of secondary school and do not qualify for Youth Allowance as a dependent, be classified as independent for Youth Allowance purposes.
10. Youth Allowance eligibility for independent rural and remote students be irrespective of Parental Income criteria
11. Students in receipt of Youth Allowance as an independent due to family assessment based on entitlement to the Farm Household Allowance and due to assessment based on drought, fire, flood

or other natural disaster impacts remain eligible for payments at that rate until the completion of their course.

12. The Federal Government annually reviews the following for students applying and in receipt of Youth Allowance:
  - a. the personal income limit,
  - b. the liquid asset limit and waiting period and
  - c. the student income bank limit.
13. Scholarships for relocation be made available to rural and remote students and all Youth Allowance recipients who need to relocate to access tertiary study.
14. Financial assistance for travel for students who must live away from home to access further education be maintained and reflects the needs of rural and remote students.
15. The Federal Government departments dealing with student financial assistance ensure:
  - a. staff have adequate training and knowledge around allowances and assistance for rural and remote students,
  - b. wait times on student helplines are reasonable,
  - c. services are suitable for rural and remote families,
  - d. information on the website is clear and concise in respect to eligibility criteria, information and application details and
  - e. processing of financial assistance payments and debt repayments is timely
16. Teacher Education courses to:
  - a. offer a major study area in Rural and Remote Education.
  - b. include units relating to supporting learning difficulties such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and Dyslexia in the rural and remote education environment.
  - c. offer Certificate qualifications to assist geographically isolated distance education home tutors.
  - d. make early childhood education qualifications more accessible for rural and remote students.
17. Financial assistance be available for tertiary students who must relocate to undertake compulsory practicums.
18. On-campus accommodation be available to cater for rural and remote students and that bursaries and scholarships offered by residential university colleges be subject to need.
19. Students be able to choose their preferred mode of study when undertaking tertiary education.
20. Financial incentives are available for teachers and health professionals working with students in rural, remote and very remote areas.

## **TRAINING**

***It is recommended that this Policy be read in conjunction with the Education Allowances Policy, other individual Portfolio Policies and associated ICPA Aust documents***

### **POLICY**

ICPA seeks to ensure that students from rural and remote areas have access to affordable training opportunities and options which will enable them to pursue the career path of their choice.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Financial assistance and incentives for rural and remote Australian Apprentices and Vocational Education and Training (VET) students who must live away from home to access employment and training.
2. The Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA):
  - a. is available for apprentices and trainees who are required to move and live away from their family home to access components of their qualification.
  - b. closely reflects the actual cost of living away from home and is indexed to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
  - c. eligibility period post-school be longer 36 months for rural and remote school-based apprentices who transfer, at the completion of secondary schooling, to full-time employment with the same apprenticeship.
  - d. apprentice recipients have access to packages/schemes available during specific economic crisis.
3. Travel and accommodation allowances be paid to apprentices and trainees when required to travel to access a training provider.
4. Maintenance and support of agricultural colleges in regional areas.
5. Relocation assistance be available for rural and remote apprentices and trainees who need to relocate away from their family home to pursue their qualification.
6. Students studying Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses deemed 'part time' be eligible to apply for Youth Allowance.
7. Registered Training Organisations ensure all students meet appropriate standards and competencies for their level of accreditation.
8. Regional training facilities are not overlooked when funding and initiatives are implemented.
9. Regional, rural and remote Australian Apprentices receive adequate and timely support from Australian Apprenticeship Support Networks (AASNs).