



While these long-term advocacies are ongoing for Federal Council, it is pleasing to report that a supplementary motion carried at conference requesting that Federal Council seek an update to the AIC Renewal Form to allow 'Assessment for Additional Boarding Allowance' to be selected when students transition from Distance Education to Boarding School has been actioned and the request fulfilled. Federal Council works closely with representatives from Services Australia and were able to raise this with them soon after conference. Pleasingly, the form was reconfigured to encompass this request, which members would have noticed when completing their AIC Renewal Forms at the end of 2023. Federal Council is tremendously grateful for the continued support and assistance we receive from the Services Australia team, along with Department of Social Services personnel.

Direct Measure of Income (DMI)

The impact of the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) funding model for non-government schools and the flow on effect that this will have on school fees, particularly for boarding families continues, to be addressed by Federal Council. Following conference we wrote to the Minister for Education Hon Jason Clare MP and other relevant ministers raising these concerns. In our correspondence, Federal Council suggested that an increase of the AIC Basic Boarding Allowance could be a solution to address the expected increase in boarding school fees incurred by families as a result of the methodology.

In a response from Assistant Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm, it was noted that the DMI methodology is deemed to be a robust and accurate funding model. Concerns raised by Federal Council on the impact of the methodology were acknowledged by the Senator and he cited the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship (Pilot) Program as potentially helping to address these concerns. While Federal Council welcomes this Program, its scope in its first year has provided assistance to only a limited number of families. We firmly believe an increase to the AIC BBA would address the shortfall brought about by fee increases for the majority of families who must send their children to schools impacted by the DMI methodology.

As mentioned above, Federal Council is currently undertaking a dedicated campaign to the federal government requesting an increase to the AIC BBA and this is ongoing. Federal Council would welcome any further information or data related to the impacts of the DMI on schools and the families who must utilise them to access compulsory education which may assist our advocacy.

Commonwealth Scholarship Program

In 2023, the federal government announced a pilot program known as the Commonwealth Scholarship program which aimed to provide scholarships for low and low to middle income families from regional, rural, and remote areas to assist with boarding school fees and associated costs. ICPA (Aust) worked closely with the Federal Department of Education as this program was developed and had the opportunity to suggest criteria for eligibility including those requested in a motion carried at conference. The program eligibility and criteria were finalised in late 2023. More information can be found here:

<https://www.education.gov.au/commonwealth-regional-scholarship-program>. ICPA (Aust) understands that the first roll out of the scholarship saw 100 recipients gratefully receiving the assistance.

Federal Council looks forward to future developments and liaising with the Federal Department of Education regarding this program as its pilot year is reviewed. However, we have some concerns as to the limited scope of the program, particularly the modest number of scholarships available. We will continue to maintain and advocate that all rural and remote families who do not have access to equitable education require adequate financial assistance.

Fringe Benefits Tax

Members voted at Federal Conference for the removal of the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) for businesses who assist their employees residing in geographically isolated areas, by providing financial assistance to enable their children to attend boarding school. This topic was raised in a motion letter following conference to the

