



# Isolated Children's Parents' Association Queensland

## Submission to Treasury 2023

### STRENGTHENING RURAL & REMOTE COMMUNITIES THROUGH EDUCATION

Each and every student in Queensland deserves a quality education to carry them into the future. ICPA Qld is passionate about ensuring rural and remote communities remain vibrant and sustainable through the provision of equitable access to education. Without equitable access to education in rural and remote areas, attraction and retention of families will continue to be a constant challenge.



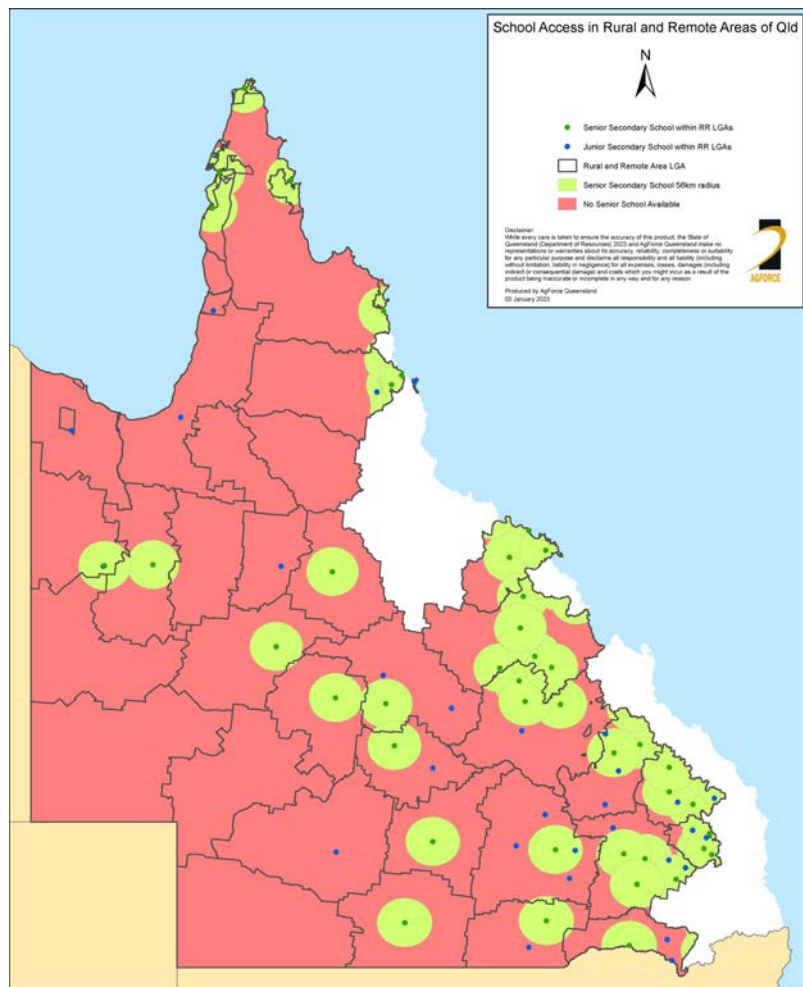
# SUBMISSION TO THE QUEENSLAND TREASURY

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (Qld) Inc. represents the interests of over 1200 rural and remote Queensland families. The organisation consists of forty-five Branches throughout rural and remote Queensland. ICPA seeks to gain equitable access to educational opportunities for all rural and remote children. ICPA Qld thanks the Queensland State Government for the opportunity to present this submission.

## ICPA Qld seeks: A \$4000 increase to the (RATuA ) component of the Living Away From Home Allowance then an ongoing yearly increase in line with the Consumer Price Index.

The Living Away from Home Allowance Scheme (LAFHAS) is a Queensland Department of Education allowance payable to rural and remote students who do not have reasonable, daily access to a high school, and attend boarding school to access their education. LAFHAS is made up of four components: Remote Area Travel Allowance (RATrA), Remote Area Allowance (RAA), Remote Area Disability Supplement (RADS) and the Remote Area Tuition Allowance (RATuA). The RATuA component of the allowance which currently supports approximately 1400 students is paid biannually directly to the boarding school. ICPA Qld seeks an increase to the RATuA.

There are vast areas of Queensland where students have no, or limited access, to secondary education with twelve Local Government Areas (LGAs) with no secondary school available at all and a further seven LGA's which do not cater for Years 11 and 12. This is indicated by the red areas on the map. Distance Education, for families in these LGAs, is the only readily available secondary school option, as they live too far from local secondary schools for viable daily travel.

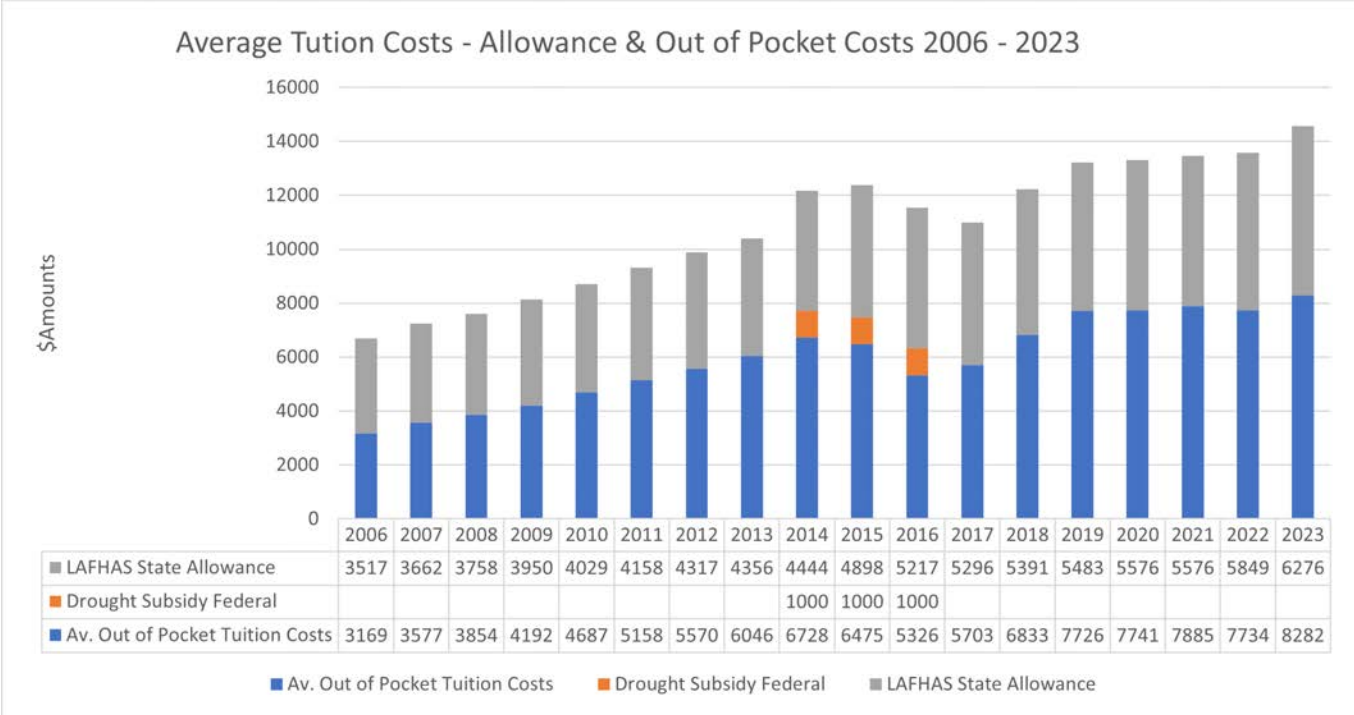


Boarding school is the only realistic opportunity for students to receive a fully integrated education which includes face to face interaction with peers, sporting, musical and cultural opportunities as well as extra-curricular activities.

Many families who own or work on properties, in businesses or in the public sector are finding it increasingly difficult to afford boarding school fees without markedly increased additional support. To achieve the best possible educational outcomes for their children, it is imperative the Queensland Government provides an immediate increase to the RATuA component of the Living Away from Home Allowance. This allowance has not seen a permanent increase since 2015, however during the exceptionally bad drought years in 2016 and 2017 a temporary additional \$1,250 was paid as a drought subsidy in recognition of the exceptional circumstance's families were enduring.



ICPA seeks an immediate one off \$4,000 payment to address the ever-widening gap of out-of-pocket expenses which is visible in the graph below, followed by a yearly increase adjusted annually in accordance with CPI, Education Sub Index to offset the rising cost of tuition fees for boarding students. The reality is without an increase from the government, many rural families have little option but to leave their communities to find a more affordable option to undertake the compulsory education of their children.



In addition to the \$8,282 out of pocket expense for tuition, families also incur boarding fees. The average out of pocket expense for boarding is \$11,709. The combined yearly out of pocket expenses for families per child is \$19,991 per year. For full transparency, it must be noted that the Federal Government provides an allowance called the Assistance for Isolated Children Allowance (AIC) to also help alleviate costs. Most children attend boarding school for six years with the total out of pocket cost, based on 2023 figures equating to at least \$119,946.

Out of Pocket Education Costs for Queensland											
Year	Av. Tuition Costs	LAFHAS State Allowance	Drought Subsidy State	Av. Out of Pocket Tuition Costs	Subsidy % of Tuition cost	Av. Boarding Costs	Maximum AIC Federal Allowance	Drought Subsidy Federal	Av. Out of Pocket Boarding Costs	Total Avg out of pocket Costs	Subsidy % of Boarding cost
2006	6686	3517		3169	52.6%	10348	7246		3102	6271	70.0%
2007	7239	3662		3577	50.6%	11015	7536		3479	7056	68.4%
2008	7612	3758		3854	49.4%	11688	7694		3994	7848	65.8%
2009	8142	3950		4192	48.5%	12533	8085		4448	8640	64.5%
2010	8716	4029		4687	46.2%	13467	8221		5246	9933	61.0%
2011	9316	4158		5158	44.6%	14493	8507		5986	11144	58.7%
2012	9887	4317		5570	43.7%	15232	8813		6419	11989	57.9%
2013	10402	4356		6046	41.9%	16190	8919		7271	13317	55.1%
2014	11172	4444		6728	39.8%	17145	8133	1000	8012	14740	47.4%
2015	11373	4898		6475	43.1%	17288	8407	1000	7881	14356	48.6%
2016	11793	5217	1250	5326	44.2%	17836	8548	1000	8288	13614	47.9%
2017	12249	5296	1250	5703	43.2%	18252	10417		7835	13538	57.1%
2018	12503	5391	279	6833	43.1%	19294	10615		8679	15512	55.0%
2019	13209	5483		7726	41.5%	19009	10838		8171	15897	57.0%
2020	13345	5576		7769	41.8%	20052	11011		9041	16810	54.9%
2021	13461	5576		7885	41.4%	20371	11011		9360	17245	54.1%
2022	13583	5849		7734	43.1%	20987	11396		9591	17325	54.3%
2023	14558	6276		8282	43.1%	21105	12091		11709	19624	57.3%

Currently a skills shortage exists across Australia in all areas of employment. This has exacerbated shortages already in existence in rural and remote communities where traditionally it's difficult to attract professional and skilled people such as teachers, doctors, council workers and early childhood educators due to the perceived shortcomings of living beyond the urban fringe. Workers with children either ready to attend or on the cusp of attending secondary school are not interested in these jobs due to the extra cost of schooling given they need to factor in an extra \$19,991 per year, on average, to pay for education freely available in urban areas.

Retention of staff and businesses is also at risk as many families choose to leave rural and remote communities to educate their children. With only a small pool of people willing to move to rural and remote areas, taking those with secondary school aged children out of the equation makes the pool smaller still. When communities cannot attract staff such as doctors and day care facilitators there is a flow on effect as others do not want to move to communities which they consider lacking in basic facilities and services. Ultimately this leads to rural towns, which contribute so much to Queensland's economy, becoming unsustainable.

ICPA Qld, and our members, are extremely grateful for the allowances State Government has put in place but we firmly believe it is time to review the needs of rural and remote students and increase the investment to ensure ongoing equitable access to educational opportunities as afforded to their urban contemporaries. An increase to the RATuA component of LAFHAS would show that this government is truly invested in rural and remote Queensland and doing all they can to help these communities remain strong viable and vibrant. Whilst an increase in the LAFHAS is a cost to the Department of Education, not increasing it will be at a huge cost to our rural and remote communities and to the State as a whole.

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*“Advocating for equitable access to education, opportunities and support for all rural and remote students”*



The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) Queensland is a voluntary, not-for-profit, apolitical parent body dedicated to ensuring that all rural and remote students have equity of access to a continuing and appropriate education.