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## **POLICY and OBJECTIVES**

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The goal of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association Inc. of New South Wales (ICPA-NSW) is to seek for the geographically isolated children of its member's equitable access to an appropriate education with that which can be readily obtained by their non-isolated peers.

In this context "*geographically isolated students*" are defined as those whose home is too far away from an appropriate school for them to attend on a daily basis. The Association lobbies on behalf of all geographically isolated students without discrimination of gender, race or creed, regardless of party-political affiliation or whether the student attends a government or non-government school. Membership is open, without exception, to any individual or family who abides by the rules and objectives of the Association.

In pursuit of its objectives, ICPA-NSW has developed policies based on motions carried at Annual Conferences. Policies are updated at intervals in the light of changing circumstances.

The Association supports a range of options by which students can obtain access to education, involving:

### **1. LOCAL SCHOOL**

All schools shall offer a high-quality curriculum. Where small numbers of students limit the curriculum offering, students shall be entitled to access assistance to another school providing a wider curriculum or more advanced strands in keeping with the students' aspirations and abilities.

### **2. TRANSPORT TO EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**

The provision by the State Government of affordable access to school & tertiary facilities by offering subsidies for private vehicle, bus or coach, train, boat or (where necessary) air services.

### **3. DISTANCE EDUCATION**

A modern Distance Education system which makes use of up-to-date technology and gives appropriate recognition of the role of the home tutor (especially during the primary years of schooling).

### **4. ACCESS ALLOWANCES TO LIVING AWAY FROM HOME FACILITIES**

Financial allowances from Federal and State Governments designed to assist in obtaining access to boarding facilities at schools or hostels, for private board or for establishing a second home.

In addition to seeking equity in school access, it also supports a student being able to attend a school which will maximise his or her opportunity to attain their full academic potential, including the elements of cultural experiences and peer group interaction at social, sporting and other competitive activities.

ICPA-NSW seeks equality of access and opportunity with the development of policies for:

**Education Allowances**

**Boarding, Hostels & Agricultural High Schools**

**Communications**

**Distance Education and AHVISE**

**Early Childhood Education**

**Rural Schools & Curriculum**

**Specific Student Needs**

**Tertiary Education**

**Travel**

With the appropriate objectives for the attainment and implementation of these policies.

**[Ratified 2025]**

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## EDUCATION ALLOWANCES

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### **POLICY:**

*Payment of an allowance for living away from home equal to the cost of gaining access to a continuing primary, secondary or tertiary education*

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. The payment by the Commonwealth Government of a non-means tested allowance equivalent to the average cost of maintaining a child in a boarding school, private board or hostel, for forty weeks of the year less the average cost of maintaining that child at home.
2. An amount to remunerate the cost of educating a child at home by Distance Education which continues to the completion of Secondary Schooling.
3. State living away from home allowances to make up for the short fall in the amount paid by the Commonwealth Government.
4. The payment of an additional allowance which gives recognition to the hardship imposed on low-income families who have no choice but to educate their children in boarding schools or board their children away from home.
5. The means tested allowance to be subject to a sibling concessional abatement rate applicable to all dependent children in the family, including those attending full time tertiary study.
6. The allowance may be paid directly to the hostel or the place of board and where this is not the case, paid directly to the person responsible for meeting the boarding fees.
7. Parents who establish a second home specifically to provide their children with daily access to an appropriate school to qualify for an amount equivalent to the basic boarding allowance.
8. The above allowances to be indexed annually in line with the price movements for the maintenance of children at home and the average cost of boarding.
9. Reciprocity between state allowances to apply to children who attend school across state borders.
10. Assistance for access to tertiary studies by students from rural and remote areas including placement,
11. All allowances to be non-taxable.
12. State and Federal Governments to recognise that the allowances for access to school give the isolated child equitable entitlements as other children in Australia to receive an appropriate education.

**[Ratified 2025]**

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# BOARDING, HOSTELS, AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

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## POLICY:

*ICPA-NSW seeks to have Government and Non-Government Boarding Schools as a recognised form of access to education for geographically isolated students which offer the standard of curriculum and pastoral care appropriate to their needs at Primary and/or Secondary level.*

## OBJECTIVES:

1. Geographically isolated students to be given priority for enrolment where appropriate. Consideration notifying families on the outcome of the student's application should allow for alternate arrangements in the event of non-acceptance.
2. The establishment of co-educational residential high schools in regional centres where the need is demonstrated.
3. State Government funding indexed annually to fully complement the Federal AIC Allowance to assist geographically isolated students to gain access to education through boarding.
4. Boarding Schools which cater for the specific curriculum, pastoral care and facilities needed by geographically isolated students funded by State and Federal Governments on a recurrent equitable basis; such funding to be indexed annually on a per-capita basis.
5. Provision of Australian Government short-term emergency financial assistance to be available to all schools that provide boarding.
6. All Boarding Schools to be exempt from fringe benefit tax on facilities for residential supervisory and tutorial staff on duty or on call that are located on the school premises.
7. Counsellors to be available in the Boarding Schools to support children who are living away from home.
8. Provision of, classes and/or accommodation in boarding schools for children with specific needs.
9. Introduce boarding facilities at the designated NSW public sports high schools.

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## AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

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### **POLICY:**

*Agricultural Boarding High Schools as a recognised form of access to education for geographically isolated students offering a standard of pastoral care and curriculum appropriate to their needs with an emphasis on agriculture to enable students to enter tertiary studies at all levels and/or equip them for a career in their chosen pathway.*

### **ENTRY PRIORITY**

1. Geographically isolated students to be given priority for enrolment.
2. Special consideration is given to siblings of a student already in attendance.

**[Ratified 2025]**

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## STUDENT HOSTELS

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### **POLICY:**

*Promote recognition by State and Federal Governments of school term hostels as “educational access” facilities for geographically isolated students with funding to be on a regular and equitable basis, ensuring quality accommodation and pastoral care.*

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. School term hostels to offer a high standard of pastoral care and supervision with adequate living facilities and all basic living requirements at a reasonable cost.
2. To offer isolated students the widest choice of educational access so families can choose an education most appropriate to their changing needs and circumstances.
3. State and Federal Governments recognise the role school term hostels play in providing daily access to quality education for isolated students whose ability to reach their optimum potential would otherwise be limited.
4. The Federal and State Governments to supplement school term hostels on a per capita basis in recognition of hostels’ special needs, particularly the high cost of appropriate staffing for up to seven days per week, twenty-four hours per day.
5. Capital funding by both State and Federal Governments for establishment, extension or reconstruction of student hostels.
6. Donations to hostels’ building or foundation funds to be tax deductible as are donations to independent schools’ building and foundation funds.
7. The provision of quality training courses for residential staff in student term hostels.

**[Ratified 2025]**

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# COMMUNICATIONS

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## **POLICY:**

*The Australian telecommunication system be accessible to all Australians regardless of geographic isolation at an equivalent cost and offer comparable two-way data capacity to assist in the alleviation of isolation, delivery of education and the safety of students.*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

### **1. Provision of high quality:**

- a) Telecommunication services with unlimited data capacity be supplied to rural and remote Australia at an equitable cost
- b) Broadband telecommunications services be available in rural and remote Australia to enable high quality two-way audio, two-way data and two-way video for the provision of Distance Education,
- c) Direct television by terrestrial or satellite transmission at an affordable cost, [OBJ]
- d) Effective mobile and landline telephone services be available throughout rural and remote NSW providing call quality and effectiveness for the lives of rural and remote people.

### **2. Continue to evaluate and provide when deemed most appropriate:**

- a) new technologies which facilitate broadband communications such as ISDN, frame relay and satellite delivery of Distance Education,
- b) equipment which supports Distance Education distribution and teaching such as computers, electronic write pads, audio and video conferencing equipment and printers
- c) Software solutions which enhance the teaching process.

### **3. Move towards the electronic delivery of educational materials where possible for Distance Education students, Schools of Distance Education and Small Rural Schools.**

### **4. Adequate teacher and home supervisors training on the use of new technology when it is introduced.**

### **5. Consultation with telecommunications providers offering reliable and continuous services to rural and remote areas and participation in the decision-making process.**

### **6. Provision of twice weekly or more frequent mail services.**

### **7. All Telecommunications companies and governments be lobbied for mobile service coverage in rural and remote blackspot areas and that better mobile coverage be available in rural and remote areas.**

### **8. All rural and remote schools be prioritised for any expansion of the mobile coverage footprint in regional Australia.**

### **9. Ensure the universal service obligation remains on the standard telephone landline for all rural and remote families in NSW.**

**10.** Rural and remote customers be offered a rebate to upgrade their equipment when telecommunications change. Eg. 3G to 4G.

**11.** When services are upgraded that the new service be equivalent or better than before and that comprehensive information be provided to customers in all available formats.

**12.** Customer service with Telecommunication companies needs to be a direct line, with the customer service available on shore.

**[Ratified 2025]**

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# DISTANCE EDUCATION AND AHVISE

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## **POLICY:**

*Quality education centred on personal interaction, from Kindergarten to Year 12, of an equivalent standard to mainstream NSW Schools for students living at home in geographically isolated areas to be provided through a system of co-educational services delivered to students' home and remote schools.*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

### **Home Supervisors:**

1. Promotion, recognition and understanding for the key role played by parents/home supervisors within Distance Education and be included in any planning and decision-making processes.
2. Home supervisors working in geographically isolated classrooms should have access to incentives such as being recognised with an academic accreditation or work experience/placement for those studying appropriate courses.
3. Distance Education centres provide appropriate training for home supervisors particularly around the technology and supporting children's reading.

### **Facilities:**

1. Distance Education centres established at strategic and appropriate location within reasonable access of the homes of students.
2. Allow Distance Education families access to the hostel accommodation at Dubbo School of Distance Education.
3. Access to existing Primary School facilities in remote and very remote locations for Secondary Students studying via Distance Education.
4. Improve and expand infrastructure at School of the Air Broken Hill.

### **Administration:**

1. Ensure Distance Education centres have a point of contact for advocacy, and centralised management by the Department of Education body to continually oversee and co-ordinate communication between distance education centres and promote the use of improved technology.
2. Work collaboratively with all parties (staff, parents, supervisors, and students) in any Review into Distance Education.

### **Technology:**

1. Use of new technologies to enhance, not replace the personal contact between teacher/student, teachers/supervisors and student/student, such as access to online breakout rooms.

2. Continue to explore new technologies and provide up-to-date technology for all Geographically Isolated Distance Education students.
3. Ensure consultation with parents and supervisors before upgrading and technology in the home school classrooms.
4. Investigate the option of reimbursement/subsidies for the use of own technology in the home classroom.

### **Curriculum/Resources:**

1. A range of relevant resources to facilitate personal interaction between teacher and student, students and students, with provision for the special needs children requiring additional support or extension including;
  - Electronic returns and feedback to and from teachers
  - Relevant educational resources encompassing local conditions
  - Sharing of resources between Distance Education Centres
  - Mini schools, home visits and appropriate staffing levels implemented at all distance education centres to cater for these services.
  - Students receive their printed material, required in colour format.
  - Mandated intensive block swimming lessons as a compulsory part of their sporting programme.
2. To Investigate learning options for Stage 3 students to help transition into Secondary School.
3. Consistent Policy for Geographically isolated Distance Education students to have appropriate interaction with teachers and peers both in person and using video conferencing for both Secondary and Primary students.
4. Distance Education students are informed when immunisations are available for appropriate ages, and these be administered during school hours.

### **Staffing:**

1. The appointment of Distance Education teachers by merit selection and a parent representative of the Distance Education community included on the review panel for Distance Education centres.
2. A compulsory teacher training component specialised pre-service training and in-service opportunity for teachers to prepare them for teaching Distance Education with recognition of the particular needs and conditions of students and families living in remote areas and the specialised knowledge required in the use of technology.
3. Additional funding for the employment of specialist education support teachers to assist with the delivery of educational outcomes for 2.8 and 2.9 categories in Distance Education.
4. Financial support for secondary students in rural and remote areas studying Distance Education to employ a part-time supervisor if required.



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# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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## **POLICY:**

*Appropriate Early Childhood Education to be available for all geographically isolated children at least one year prior to the commencement of primary school for a minimum of two days per week. For children to achieve 600 hours of program delivery prior to starting school as per the Australian Government Preschool Reform Agreement.*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Where children do not have reasonable daily access to Early Childhood Education, appropriate programs to be provided via Distance Education for children continuing on Distance Education or small rural schools. Maybe add something relating to the Community Safety Net Program and small schools.
2. Appropriate learning resources are provided for all children in Early Childhood Education.
3. Parent education to be an aspect of early childhood programs for geographically isolated children so that parents will be aware of the importance of early childhood programs for the child in the intellectual cognitive development including speech and language development; pre reading and prewriting skills; social and emotional development; physical development including fine and gross motor skills and creative development and the importance of early detection and intervention programs for children with specific learning needs.
4. Provision of ongoing funding for Mobile Resource Vans with suitably qualified staff to provide Pre-School/Playgroup activities and information to isolated groups and communities.
5. A commitment to ensure the Early Childhood Sector is adequately resourced with trained professional educators incentivised to work in rural and remote locations.
6. Early childhood Services to be supported with governance.

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# RURAL SCHOOLS & CURRICULUM

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## **POLICY:**

*Rural Schools must have equity of access to Australian Education Standards.*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Practical access for secondary students for the length of time that they are required to be at school.
2. Appropriate teacher housing in rural and remote areas must be maintained to a high standard.
3. Comprehensive handover between TP1 and TP2 schools' staff and must include at least a 5-week educational program where applicable.
4. Rental Subsidy and Rural Teacher incentive to become individual enticements.
5. In TP1 and TP2 schools the complaints should be directed to the Directors of Educational Leadership as well as the "Tell them from Me" parent and student feedback surveys.
6. More autonomy for Principals on how Routine Planned Maintenance funding is spent.
7. Connected Communities Directors to be included in regular meetings with ICPA-NSW and Department of Education representatives.
8. Communities to be informed prior to the end of the school year plans which affect employment and enrolments for the following year.
9. Strongly promote and emphasise the benefits of early transition programs into rural and remote schools throughout NSW.
10. The Directors of Educational Leadership attending TP1 and TP2 schools at least twice a year and meet with the community on these occasions.
11. More accountability from the schools when a complaint has been made.
12. Mandatory minimum standard of training for student support officer (SLSO) positions, either prior or following employment.
13. An appropriate vehicle in the incentive package of rural and remote principals whose school is on unsealed roads.
14. That the numbers of students registered at the school for the limited program schools be increased.

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## SPECIFIC STUDENT NEEDS

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### **POLICY:**

*Equity of access to services and facilities to identify and assist all geographically isolated children requiring Specific Learning support o to achieve to their maximum wellbeing and potential.*

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Early intervention and assessment to enable establishment of ongoing programs appropriate to learning and living skills throughout life.
2. Flexibility in education provision and delivery with no upper age limit, in recognition of the continuing nature of the learning process.
3. Students with specific needs, who are geographically isolated, can access their educational needs through a combination of service delivery, such as but not limited to Royal Far West programs.
4. Co-operative interagency co-ordination between government, non-government and voluntary services in the provision and funding of education and health services for children with specific needs.
5. All teachers qualifications to incorporate training in neuro diversity and specific learning needs.
6. Provision of medical and allied health services in regional and remote areas
7. Incentivise allied health positions in rural and remote areas.
- 8 . Provision of adequate funding and curriculum for all specific student needs.
- 9 Expansion of Isolated Patients' Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) to cover specialist medical, paramedical and therapist services for children with special needs to be seen in a timely manner
10. Quality wellbeing support in boarding and schools with trained and qualified staff catering for individual needs.

**[Ratified 2025]**

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# TERTIARY EDUCATION

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## **POLICY:**

*Awareness of and provision for affordable access to all forms of recognised Tertiary Education and to guarantee equity of participation for all geographically isolated students.*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Appropriate reciprocal accreditation provision promoted by all tertiary providers with complimentary bridging arrangements available should a student transfer from one academic transcript to another or moves from one university to another.
2. Provision for students with specific needs.
3. Provision of appropriate government scholarships.
4. Suitable accommodation, on campus or in subsidised housing, provided for enrolled students.
5. Availability of living away from home assistance immediately the student leaves home eg: Independent Youth Allowance
6. Provision of training facilities, so that all apprentices from rural areas should not be disadvantaged by facilities being located too far from their homes.
7. Continue to advocate for a Tertiary Drive Subsidy, similar to the School Drive Subsidy
8. Seek collaboration with Country University Centres to establish Regional University Study Hubs in TAFE Connected learning centres, therefore providing improved and streamlined access to both higher education and vocational opportunities in rural communities.
9. Continued funding for Country University Centres (CUC's) to assist rural students to undertake study in their local areas.
10. To seek an increase to the allowance rates for VTAS (Vocational Training Assistance Scheme) for travel, accommodation, relocation and rental assistance for Apprentices and Trainee's in NSW.
11. Financial support for regional and rural tertiary students and apprentices who have to undertake placements to complete their qualification.

**[Ratified 2025]**

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# TRAVEL

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## **POLICY:**

*Travel services and associated costs, ensuring access to school/educational facilities by the most appropriate means to be provided and such to be reciprocal between New South Wales and all adjoining states.*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

### **1. The mode of acceptable transport to educational institutions are:**

1. **Car** – a scaled rate School Drive subsidy to realistically compensate family travel to or school transport pick up point (daily, weekly, termly)
2. **Charter Bus** – free return bus travel between home or pick-up point and school
3. **Long Distance Coach** – free travel for students where coach travel is required from a train line to either school or home.
4. **Rail** –Free travel for students on NSW trainlink train and coach services. -Air - Subsidised flight travel for Lord Howe Island students from home to their school on the mainland.

### **2. Transport to Educational Activities through:**

1. Subsidised travel for families/students attending mini schools/workshops conducted by Schools of Distance Education
2. Subsidised travel for rural students obliged to attend seminars or courses not available locally, within curriculum or elective options
3. A subsidised scheme to enable an escort to accompany to meet the specific needs of a child travelling between home and place of board/assessment/therapy.

### **3. Travel Safety**

To increase safety on country buses the NSW Government implement the following measures:

1. Every child travelling on country buses to be provided with a separate seat with seatbelts attached
2. On country roads “pull off” areas to be provided to alighting passengers
3. Shires and Councils to ensure that “School Bus” Stop or Route signs are clearly distinguishable, in a lime green colour and well maintained to give oncoming and overtaking traffic clear warning
4. School buses operating in country areas to travel with headlights switched on to alert oncoming traffic.
5. Motion sensors on school buses to prevent children being left on a bus.
6. Bus routes roads are funded and maintained.

**[Ratified 2025]**