

ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



2023 FEDERAL CONFERENCE TERTIARY PORTFOLIO MOTIONS

Access Allowance

A39. Clermont Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to relevant federal ministers and government departments that the first payment of the Tertiary Access Payment for rural and remote students relocating to access tertiary studies be expedited to ensure funds are available when upfront relocation expenses are being endured.”

Explanation:

The Services Australia website states that the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) is “A payment to help students with the cost of moving from regional or remote areas for tertiary study. Our Branch thoroughly appreciates the Tertiary Access Payment now available for eligible students however we harbour concerns that currently the first payment of the Tertiary Access Payment is not paid to students until 42 days (six weeks) after the qualifying tertiary course commencement date.

Given the costs associated with relocating are endured before the course commences, it seems incongruous that a payment designed to assist with the costs of relocating are not available to students when they are actually doing so, with the waiting period to be deemed eligible and to receive this assistance being well after these costs must be met.

This is a concern as it may result in students not being able to afford those upfront costs regardless of their eligibility and in turn meaning they either must find other sources of funding to assist with their relocation costs or in a worst case scenario will not be able to commence their course in the year after completing year 12 which would then render them ineligible for the TAP. Our branch understands that the Relocation Scholarship is available to students at the commencement of their course.

Our Branch wish to see a system in place whereby part of the funding can be paid to students at least at the start of their course, or alternatively sooner, such as when their enrolment in the course is confirmed, to ensure assistance is available for the upfront costs of relocating.

Explanation:

At present the TAP is only available to school leavers and should include those taking a gap year or deferring traineeships and include Australian Apprenticeships.

Youth Allowance

A40. Walgett Branch (NSW)

WITHDRAWN

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant ministers to change the criteria for the Relocation Scholarship to include all students from remote areas relocating who do not qualify for Youth Allowance.”

Explanation:

There are instances where students take a gap year after year 12 with the aim of earning enough to qualify for Independent Youth Allowance before moving away from home to commence their university degree.

Despite their best efforts and often due to circumstances beyond their control (such as drought, no harvest, economic downturn, or pandemics) their capacity to earn money may be limited. As a result, earnings fall short of the requirements to meet the Independent Youth Allowance criteria.

They struggle to meet living costs, let alone save to relocate hundreds of kilometres to university. These students are moving from remote or very remote areas like Walgett to the city or possibly interstate, which is a substantial burden on their family's financial circumstances.

The Relocation allowance would give them the opportunity and time to move, settle and commence studies before seeking employment to subsidise their living costs away from home.

A41. Bourke Branch (NSW)

WITHDRAWN

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant federal ministers to change the criteria of the Relocation Scholarship so that tertiary students from remote and rural areas, who are not eligible to receive other student allowances, still receive the Relocation Scholarship if they are leaving home to study.”

Explanation:

Tertiary students who are eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance are also able to apply for the Relocation Scholarship which is a welcome injection of funds for any student having to leave the principal place of residence and set up a new place to live to attend Tertiary studies. However, it is not available to students who are deemed independent or not eligible for any other allowance. The meaning of relocate is ‘to move or to establish in a new place’. Regardless of whether a student is eligible to receive certain student allowances, they are still relocating. This scholarship was established to ensure students who had to undergo a process of relocation would not have the unfair financial burden of a move compared to those who are able to live and study from their family home. It actually means that they are not only unable to access Youth Allowance but are also ineligible for the Relocation Scholarship.

A42. Western Australia State Council

WITHDRAWN

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government review the criteria for the Relocation Scholarship to ensure all geographically isolated students who must relocate from their usual place of residence for the purpose of undertaking post-compulsory studies are eligible.”

Explanation:

In the primary school years assistance for access to education is offered through the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance and a conveyance allowance to access a school bus service or drive directly to school. In the secondary years, the AIC – Boarding and Second Home Allowances assist with the significant financial cost incurred when children are living away from their primary residence to access education. Yet, for many of these families when their children commence tertiary studies there is no assistance unless the child qualifies for Youth Allowance, which is very few.

It is recognised across all levels of government that geographically isolated children face barriers in accessing an appropriate education, and to overcome these barriers involves significant financial contribution. But when it comes to post-compulsory tertiary education our children are not sufficiently catered for.

Having incurred the initial cost of relocating the ongoing costs associated with living away from home can become unmanageable for many families. Rental properties in Western Australia are at a premium and it is extremely difficult to find any shared accommodation below \$250 per week plus utilities. This equates to \$13,000+ per annum urban-based students do not have to fund. Students often seek employment to supplement the cost of living, which can become difficult to navigate with university timetabling, and as a result of the financial burden many rural and remote students fail to complete their studies.

The requirement for a student to be receiving Youth Allowance to access the Relocation Scholarship is disadvantaging rural and remote students.

For many geographically isolated students the barrier in accessing Youth Allowance and hence relocation scholarships, along with other such scholarships, is impacted by being able to provide evidence of financial need. Children do not have a choice where their parents live and yet they are continually being disadvantaged because of this. Urban children do not need to find accommodation and other associated costs to attend university, but it is a necessary cost for geographically isolated families. Evidence of being geographically isolated should be sufficient, for example, qualifying for receipt of the AIC should also be deemed a component of the qualifying eligibility criteria.

Ineligibility for Youth Allowance is a major barrier in accessing a range of financial supports for geographically isolated families who face financial barriers that their urban counterparts do not.

A43. Bourke Branch (NSW)

WITHDRAWN

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government to change the criteria for gaining Independent Youth Allowance so that rural and remote students who have to leave home to study at tertiary level, and are not eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance, are eligible for Independent Youth Allowance as soon as they commence the tertiary course of their choice.”

Explanation:

Students who are unable to access Youth Allowance due to the Parental Means Test are having to support themselves until they prove they are independent. The Parental Means Test is not indicative of what income is available to support the family. We are not wanting to include students moving out of home because they feel like moving. The students we represent move hundreds of kilometres to major regional centres or cities and pay inflated rent and utilities for accommodation near their university. Having to move so far away from the family home and set up a second home is a fair indication that these students are the very ones that should be eligible for Independent Youth Allowance. They then have to support themselves through finding work while studying. These students should be focusing on studying their chosen degree. It is great if they find part time employment however finding a job in a new environment and supporting themselves is a major concern. It leads to high dropout rates and increased stress and anxiety on individuals.

A44. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government to change the eligibility criteria for Independent Youth Allowance, so that those rural and remote students who choose to save or invest their earnings during the working period prior to attending university are not disadvantaged by the Liquid Assets criteria.”

Explanation:

Students who choose to save their earnings during their gap year should not be deemed ineligible or disadvantaged because of savings. Many students work hard to save their earnings to buy a car or perhaps equipment to assist with their studies but instead have to use their savings to support

themselves and pay rent while attending University. Other students who earn enough to be considered eligible for Independent Youth Allowance but spend everything they earn can be eligible for the Allowance but those who have saved their earnings are not eligible for the Allowance, and therefore not eligible for the Relocation Scholarship, Tertiary Access Payment or Rent Assistance. Instead, they have to use those savings and support themselves for a waiting period or until the money runs out which again may lead to financial strain and dropout rates.

A45. Katherine Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for the removal of the parental threshold from the Independent Youth Allowance for students applying under rural and remote work criteria.”

Explanation:

Rural and remote students can be eligible for Independent Youth Allowance before they turn 22 if (i) their parental home is in an inner regional, outer regional, remote or very remote area (ii) they need to move away from your parental home to study and (iii) they have worked since leaving secondary school. Students also need to have either: earned 75% or more of the National Training Wage Schedule rate in any 14-month period or worked at least 15 hours a week for at least 2 years. The current parental threshold is \$160,000 increasing by \$10,000 for each additional dependent sibling.”

Parental income should not enter into Independent Youth Allowance criteria at all. Rural incomes are so fickle, even being given three financial years of parental income to choose from cannot always give these students a fair assessment of the ability of this family to support a tertiary or training student. These students clearly demonstrate independence through working for a least a year and leaving home to study. They take a gap year because they need to be financially independent but that can also place them at risk of being one of the statistics: students who take gap years are less likely to continue to further education. Any hurdles to these rural and remote students qualifying for Independent Youth Allowance, such as parental income thresholds, threatens their tertiary education.

Tertiary - Other

A46. Louth Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Social Services to increase Centrelink Rent Assistance payments for rural and remote students.”

Explanation:

Obviously regional, remote and very remote children need to factor in rent to their study plans. Rent is the biggest component of a student’s costs and is often prohibitive therefore to study, for example, in a larger city may mean that a student has to work so much that their course suffers. It was pleasing to hear of an increase in rent assistance (maximum rate of rent assistance by 15%) in the recent budget, but further is required for the rural and remote students.

A47. Hay Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the relevant ministers to continue commitment to the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships Program or replace with a similar program.”

Explanation:

This Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship Program or similar program needs to be extended beyond the commitment of the 2023 scholarships to benefit rural and remote students in the future.

Children of Hay Branch members, who have commenced Tertiary Studies for the first time in 2023, had tried to apply for the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship through the QTAC web site since

February 2023. Unfortunately, when they have accessed the web site the information only showed the previous 2022 Scholarships. After phone calls to the QTAC office they had been told that the government funds have not been received to fund this program yet and to check back on the web site for updates. Fortunately, just when the first trimester of university was nearly complete in May 2023, they were alerted that the Scholarship round had opened. We are thankful that this scholarship is available for 2023.

However, tertiary students, especially those who have done a year or two working since school and don't qualify for the Tertiary Access Payment have budgeted on receiving this funding (as other students or siblings have received it in previous years) for the duration of their course. They need a firm commitment that these funds will be available as they struggle with the financial commitment of accessing university away from the family home.

A48. Tasmania Branch (TAS)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that the relevant ministers and government departments extend the current scheme to reduce the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt for teachers, to include teachers who commit to teaching in rural and remote Australia not just very remote Australia."

Explanation:

The current initiative that either waives the indexation on accumulated HELP debt or reduces the accumulated HELP debt for teachers who commit to working in very remote areas of Australia is appreciated. This initiative must be extended to teachers who commit to teaching in rural and remote areas as well to assist in the current issues around recruitment and retention of teachers in rural and remote Australia.

Incentives like this measure would go a long way to encouraging teachers to consider teaching in these areas and must include teachers who are teaching in early childhood education, preschool, primary and secondary schooling.

A49. Alpha Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) requests that the relevant ministers and government departments extend the current scheme to reduce Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt for rural doctors and nurse practitioners to include all health professionals who work in rural, remote or very remote areas of Australia including those who work with geographically isolated children with specific education needs."

Explanation:

While we applaud the Federal Government for recognizing the importance of having qualified doctors and nurse practitioners in areas that are sometimes a very long way from medical services, we believe that nurses, physios, speech pathologists, psychologists and many other health professionals also need to be living in rural and remote areas as well to fully understand the needs of their client base and provide an essential service.

If this incentive were offered to all health professionals, we would see a reduction in patient travel to big cities as there would be much more chance of seeing a qualified professional not so far from home. We don't believe that this offer needs to be extended to all professions who have Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debts as for instance seeing a solicitor, accountant, surveyor or a banker can certainly happen on a yearly basis and can be planned, whereas health emergencies and health problems cannot.

It is a well-known fact that a Speech Pathologist plays a pivotal role in the identification and management of specific needs issues in children which will enable educational development. In a rural

area, while not defined as a “health care emergency”, a delay in seeking the help and advice of a Speech Pathologist is having a profound impact on these student’s education and many families in rural areas simply cannot afford to travel with their children to big cities for face-to-face consults and therefore they miss out completely. HELP debt relief for all health professionals would certainly be useful in recruitment and retention of these workers for the benefit of geographically isolated children.

This motion is dual purpose- not only will it encourage health professionals to work in rural and remote areas, it will also persuade the young people who grew up in such areas to gain qualifications as health professionals and come back to work in their familiar environments. It is common knowledge that people who grow up in regional and remote areas are pre-disposed to returning to these areas for work once they graduate, if the opportunities exist.

A50. Collarenebri-Mungindi Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and the Minister for Skills and Training to ensure that HECS debt repayments are forwarded by employers and applied each time it is deducted from the employees’ wage to assist rural and remote graduates in the repayment of their HELP debt.”

Explanation:

At the moment those people who are paying back HECS debts are only having the payment applied to their debt each six months, whilst the payment is being deducted each fortnight from their wage. On the 1st June 2023 the HECS Debt owing is being indexed by 7.1%. This is the highest indexation in 11 years. It is unfair for the amounts being deducted from wages to not be attributed immediately to the HECS Debt. With the already high cost of living for everyone this indexation is creating greater financial struggles for those still paying off a HECS Debt. Over a 10 year period this indexation would add \$12 084 to a \$50 000 HECS Debt.

A51. Alice Springs Branch (NT)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates to the Federal Government and relevant ministers to support the inclusion and availability of ‘Certificate IV in School Based Education Support’ in all tertiary institutions across all States and Territories in Australia to assist geographically isolated distance education Home Tutors.”

Explanation:

NT ICPA have been working in conjunction with Charles Darwin University to write and deliver a new course; a Certificate IV in School Based Education Support (course code CHC40221).

This ensures that Home Tutors/parents who are employed to teach our children that are enrolled and studying in schools of distance education can obtain formal recognition for the outcomes they achieve in delivery of lessons in these remote school rooms.

The Alice Springs ICPA Branch would like to see all states and territory ICPA branches support the National roll-out of this Tertiary Course as it provides pathways for Home Tutors to live and be employed in remote Australia while studying and working towards obtaining a Certificate IV in School Based Education Support.

This new course that is being delivered via Charles Darwin University equates to 40 credits towards a degree in Education. People that are partaking in this current trial of the course, will have formal recognition of the role they fulfil as a Home Tutor when they finish employment at the end of the school year.

A52. Walgett Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) requests that the relevant ministers and Universities Australia continue to work with universities and other educational providers to help make Diplomas and Early Childhood Degree’s more accessible and achievable in order to address the severe shortage of Early Childhood Educators in rural and remote areas.”

Explanation:

Universities, TAFE and other educational providers need to continue to be able to provide a variety of affordable flexible pathways (such as School Based traineeships, TAFE, Open Universities etc.) to gaining a Diploma or Degree in Early Childhood.

Early Childhood degrees are lengthy and often expensive degrees. These degrees need to be flexible and at least partially subsidised by the government. With the high cost of living, it is very difficult to study and support oneself, especially with the huge cost of rentals and campus accommodation.

We would like to acknowledge and thank those universities and other providers that are offering flexible and accelerated pathways for students to gain the necessary qualifications to become an ECE. Accelerated Early Childhood Degree’s such as that offered by the University of Wollongong as an example, are a great way of encouraging people into the industry. These degrees, however, need to be incentivized and flexible for those wanting to further their education.

A53. Tasmania Branch (TAS)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) urges the Federal Government to implement the recommendations from the *Education in remote and complex environments Report* relating to rural and remote tertiary students.”

Explanation:

Rural and remote students continue to face many barriers in their pursuit of a tertiary education and these have been highlighted in reviews that have been undertaken nationally. The *Education in remote and complex environments Report* recommended that the government announce an implementation plan for the recommendations and actions from the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education* (Halsey Review) and *National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy* (Naphthine Review). The reports have recommended measures that would improve the pathway of tertiary education for rural and remote students. While some measures that have been implemented including the Tertiary Access Payment, the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships, the Regional University Centres and improvements to the Fares Allowance have benefited and been greatly appreciated by rural and remote tertiary students, other recommendations from the *National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy* (Naphthine Review) need to be implemented to ensure improved participation, achievement and affordability for rural and remote students aspiring and undertaking tertiary education.

Implementation of all the recommendations would make a significant difference including:

- the access to Youth Allowance as an independent for rural and remote students who successfully complete their first year of tertiary study externally if they relocate to continue study for a further minimum of one year,
- the reduction of the earnings required for rural and remote students who are qualifying for independent Youth Allowance under the Concessional Workforce test and
- the review of the changes to the parental means test cut-offs for independent Youth Allowance under the Concessional Workforce test.

A54. Queensland State Council

CARRIED

“That ICPA Qld requests that ICPA (Aust) thanks the Federal Government for its ongoing commitment to the Country Universities Centre (CUC) program for which is making a substantial, proactive contribution to the completion of post compulsory years education in rural and remote areas.”

Explanation:

ICPA Qld acknowledges the value of these facilities in rural and remote areas to provide students with options to study close to home and we hope to see the program continue to expand.

F2. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) request the relevant Federal Ministers expand the criteria of the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) to better suit the needs of rural and remote students.”