

PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

ALLOWANCES REPORT

Sally Brindal – Portfolio Holder, March 2019

There are several allowances available to students throughout their compulsory and post compulsory education. The following are governed by the Federal Government:

- Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance
- AIC Additional Boarding Allowance (parent income tested)
- AIC Second Home Allowance
- AIC Distance Education Allowance
- Youth Allowance - Dependent and Independent (Post Compulsory)
- Student Start-Up Loan
- Relocation Scholarship
- Fares Allowance (Post Compulsory)
- Living Away from Home Allowance (Apprentices)

The following are governed by the State Government:

- Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA)
- Student Subsidised Travel Scheme (SSTS)
- Road Travel Subsidy (RTS)
- Conveyance Allowance

BAHA is available to:

- students who qualify for AIC
- students in respite because of physical or intellectual disabilities, health related conditions or learning difficulties
- students attending and boarding at a Western Australian College of Agriculture
- students enrolled in a Gifted and Talented program at a public school and is boarding at City Beach Residential College

Allowances motions raised at the 2018 State Conference sought ICPA (WA) lobby the State Government for the reinstatement of the Royalties for Region (R4R) component of the Boarding Away from Home Allowance (BAHA) in addition to seeking a substantial increase.

In response to the motions raised, letters were sent to both the Minister for Education and Training, Hon. Sue Ellery and the Minister for Regional Development, Hon. Alannah MacTiernan outlining the important role BAHA plays in providing additional assistance to families who have to send their children away to boarding school. In response, and further correspondence, whilst Minister Ellery understands our concerns she stated "... the Government has to prioritise funding and is regrettably not in a position to increase the current BAHA rates or reinstate the R4R component." Minister Ellery also reiterated that "the McGowan Government is committed to providing high-quality education to all students across Western Australia, regardless of location, and this has been demonstrated by the significant investment in regional education through a range of election commitments and the ongoing subsidisation of boarding fees for Government Residential Colleges and Agricultural Colleges. Currently the State Government funds between 50 and 55% of the costs to operate the boarding facilities at the Residential and Agricultural Colleges

to ensure this option remains affordable for regional students.” Unfortunately, it would seem the one factor that has been overlooked is that the public residential colleges are all in regional areas and due to location and logistics that option is not available to many families. Where Perth is the only feasible option, there are no Government Residential Colleges available. The only residential college in Perth is located in City Beach and is for Gifted and Talented students enrolled in specialised programs attending senior high schools in Perth. Consequently, remote, rural and regional families have to send their children to private boarding schools at considerable expense, so every cut no matter how big or small is severely felt.

Boarding fees at the Residential Colleges continue to rise, up just under 2% again in 2019, an increase of 20% over the last 6 years. The Federal Government increases the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) payment each year in line with CPI, but unfortunately this is soon eroded by the reduction in the R4R component of BAHA. The only increase there has been to BAHA was back in 2010 when the \$785 R4R component was added, taking the payment from \$1320 to \$2105. By 2022 the BAHA payment will be back to \$1320, back to where it was 12 years earlier!

Year of Schooling	Number of Applications
2018	1244*
2017	1453
2016	1503
2015	1397
2014	1247

The reduction of the R4R component over 5 years equates to an annual increasing reduction of \$157 per child per year. For the 2018 school year the removal of the R4R component has saved the Government \$195,308 to date.

*applications still being accepted and paid

As we all know the cost of boarding both public and private is continually rising leaving remote, rural and regional families even more disadvantaged.

Boarding Hostels Govt. (net cost)	AIC	BAHA	Parents (pay annually)	
2013	\$11,550	\$7,487	\$2,105	\$1,958
2014	\$11,780	\$7,667	\$2,105	\$2,008
2015	\$12,660	\$7,897	\$2,105	\$2,658
2016	\$13,510	\$8,015	\$2,105	\$3,390
2017	\$13,660	\$8,095	\$2,105	\$3,460
2018	\$13,900	\$8,249	\$1,948	\$3,703
2019	\$14,143	\$8,422	\$1,791	\$3,930
20% increase				
2019	\$22835* non-public schools	\$8,422	\$1,791	\$12,622

*those students utilising Government Residential Colleges but attending private school

Letters sent to Minister MacTiernan unfortunately remain unanswered. As Minister for Regional Development one would think it is of great importance for her to encourage families and businesses to remain in remote, rural and regional areas, as well as the need to attract new businesses and families. Access to education is one critical factor in attracting (or not) families to such areas, and for them to remain. As the cost of boarding increases and assistance from the Government diminishes, we have already seen families leave these areas due to the affordability of access to education. It is imperative that any Regional Development Plan factors in education.