

## PORTFOLIO REPORT – STATE COUNCIL

### Travel Report

#### **Elyce Donaghy – Portfolio Holder, March 2020**

The 2019 WA State conference saw fewer travel and transport motions raised than in previous years. The motions raised by ICPA (WA) members asked State Council to lobby for an increase to the per kilometre payment received when applying for the Student Travel Subsidy Scheme (STSS) Road Travel Conveyance Allowance; a full policy review of the “Orange Bus Service” for rural students; and a review of the Public Transport Authority (PTA) Operational Policy Manual.

#### **Road Travel Subsidy**

**Motion A9** was raised at conference requesting an increase to the payment per kilometre for the STSS Road Travel Conveyance Allowance. This motion actually relates to the STSS Road Travel Subsidy, as provided by the Department of Transport, which is different to the conveyancing allowance provided by the Public Transport Authority in relation to school bus services.

In a letter to the Minister for Transport, Hon. Rita Saffioti MLA, State Council advised that in previous years, the payment per kilometre for travel paid by the Department of Transport’s Subsidy was sufficient to cover the costs associated with transporting children to boarding school where there is no access to school bus services. It was highlighted that, in the past two years, the cost of fuel and parts in remote areas of WA has meant that this allowance no longer contributes even 50% of the cost families incur transporting children to boarding school. State Council asked that the Department review the current rate of subsidy and increase it greater than the current CPI so that the burden of cost on families to transport children to boarding school is reduced.

A letter of response from Minister Saffioti was received stating that the Road Travel Subsidy was adopted in 1999 and was based on making a contribution to car running costs and not to totally recompense car running costs. The Minister then went on to state that the current rate of 21.50 cents per kilometre is still within a range comparable to other similar State transport assistance schemes and therefore no increase will be made.

Recent concerns from members has been brought to State Councils attention in relation to the rejection of applications for STSS – Road Travel Subsidy for the 2019 school year. Delegates from State Council have met with the Department of Transport – On Demand Services to discuss or concerns and to clarify the departments guidelines for eligibility.

#### **Orange Bus Service Policy Review**

A letter requesting a full policy review of the “Orange Bus Service” for rural students was sent to the Minister for Transport, Hon. Rita Saffioti MLA. The letter conveyed that one of the greatest challenges for regional, rural and remote families in accessing appropriate education, for their children, is the tyranny of distance. ICPA (WA) acknowledged that the Department of Transport greatly assists in minimising that disadvantage. However, there are still a number of situations where families are at a great disadvantage under the current Orange School Bus Policy. The policy has not been reviewed for many decades and no longer covers all contingencies.

Minister Saffioti gave the following response; *“The Orange School Bus policy is provided according to published criteria and a set entitlement framework. It is applied in a manner that is reasonable and equitable for all communities in Western Australia and does not allow exclusivity by establishing rules for some groups or to give preference for school of choice consideration. The rules governing school of choice are covered by the granting of complimentary status and, as such, complimentary rules cover students who have no eligibility to transport assistance but can access the school bus network on a case-by-case basis. As the Government funds the orange school bus network to provide a reasonable level*

*of transport assistance, there is currently no intention to change the current policy. While school of choice poses many different transport scenarios, any decision to alter the current policy for the provision of transport assistance for all students in Western Australia by allowing school of choice, would be cost prohibitive. The Government has to manage a balance between a reasonable level of student transport service to the community while operating within budget constraints.*

*In respect to any specific cases questioning the application of the Student Transport Assistance Policy, ICPA (WA) should liaise directly with Mr John Bailly, Manager of School Buses at the Public Transport Authority (PTA). While families will not necessarily get a school of choice outcome, Mr Bailly can ensure there is flexibility in decisions made by the branch for better transport solutions for eligible students under the operational rules used to deliver orange school bus services”*

### **Public Transport Authority Operational Policy Manual Review**

**Motion F2** requested that ICPA (WA) lobby the PTA to review the Operational Policy Manual with a view to ensure more remotely affected families can get better transport solutions under the existing policy transport assistance framework. State Council wrote a letter to Mr John Bailly, Manager School Bus Services, Public Transport Authority asking for a review of the Operational Policy Manual.

In response, Mr Bailly requested case studies to further investigate where the Operational Policy Manual needed reviewing. State Council approached the branch that raised the motion requesting such case studies and Member contact information that could be passed on to the PTA. The limited information State Council received was shared with Mr Bailly, who then consequently investigated the members’ application for 2020. There has been no application made for 2020 by the member and ICPA (WA) have been advised that there will be no further investigation made by the PTA.